



MINNESOTA FOREST RESOURCES COUNCIL PUBLIC CONCERNS REGISTRATION PROCESS 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

OVERVIEW

In 1998, the Minnesota Forest Resources Council (MFRC) established the Public Concerns Registration Process (PCRP) to “accept comments from the public on timber harvesting or forest management practices” (MN Statutes 89A.07, Subd. 5). The MFRC worked closely with its 17 Council members and their associated organizations to develop this comprehensive oversight process, allowing citizens to register concerns about timber harvesting or forest management practices that they have observed.

The PCRP is intended to be educational in nature and not punitive. The names of the parties involved are handled in a confidential manner. The focus of the PCRP is to inform and provide education to the involved parties and work to improve forest management in Minnesota, thus protecting our forest and other natural resources.

FOREST MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES (FMGs)

The voluntary site-level forest management guidelines (FMGs) are a set of recommended practices to mitigate impacts to forest resources during forest management activities such as timber harvest. These practices were first adopted in 1999 and have since been revised three times based on stakeholder feedback and best available science, most recently in 2012. The practices are widely used by practitioners and landowners across the state.

Monitoring of guideline implementation by the DNR reports fairly high levels of implementation for forest management guidelines including those related to riparian management zones, leave tree retention, filter strip disturbance, and rutting occurrence. These trends were reported in the most recent statewide monitoring report, which provides the results of monitoring that occurred from 2014 - 2018. The report also highlighted areas for improvement, including avoidance of wetland crossings, use of erosion control when needed, retention of fine woody debris during harvesting, and awareness of visual quality sensitivity ratings.

The MFRC has initiated a process to evaluate and update the FMGs. This process includes a stakeholder survey (which was conducted in the summer of 2020), a thorough review of the guideline monitoring results, a review of scientific-based literature relating to forest management and best management practices, and a series of focus groups on specific topics identified for revision. Following this process, any proposed revisions to the FMGs will be made available for public and stakeholder review and comment, prior to publication.



PROCESS AND INVESTIGATION PROTOCOL

The PCRP is initiated when a citizen reports a concern via the PCRP hotline (1-888-234-3702) or by using the web form on the MFRC website at <http://mn.gov/frc/public-concerns-registration.html>. Following receipt of a report, MFRC staff determines whether the registered concern falls within the scope of the PCRP. If the concern is determined to be valid, it is forwarded to an independent consulting forester for further investigation.

Reported concerns are investigated under a protocol that is regularly reviewed and revised in coordination with Minnesota's voluntary site-level forest management guidelines (FMGs). These guidelines can be reviewed on the MFRC website at <http://mn.gov/frc/forest-management-guidelines.html>.

EDUCATION

As determined by the PCRP investigation and consulting forester, educational materials about forest management in Minnesota are provided to all parties to the registered concern. Guiding documents include, but are not limited to, the following:

- [*Protecting Water Quality and Wetlands in Forest Management \(BMPs\)*](#) (1995), DNR;
- [*Visual Quality Best Management Practices for Forest Management in Minnesota*](#) (1994);
- [*Forest Cover Type Guidelines*](#) (for individual species, e.g. aspen, birch), DNR;
- [*NPC Silviculture Strategies for Forest Stand Prescriptions*](#), DNR;
- [*Minnesota Forest Resources Management Directory – Online search tool*](#), MLEP and the Minnesota Forestry Association;
- [*Sustaining Minnesota Forest Resources: Voluntary Site-Level Forest Management Guidelines for Landowners, Loggers and Resource Managers*](#) (2012), MFRC;
- [*Biomass Harvesting Guidelines for Forestlands, Brushlands, and Open Lands*](#) (2007), MFRC;
- [*Wetland Conservation Act Requirements and the Silvicultural Exemption – Guidance for Loggers*](#) (2010), MLEP;
- [*Temporary Stream, Wetland & Soft Soil Crossings*](#) (2009), Minnesota Erosion Control Association;
- [*MN DNR State Land Rutting Guidelines and Decision Tree*](#), DNR.



ACTIVITIES DURING THE 2023 FISCAL YEAR

The MFRC contracted with Dick Rossman to provide independent consultation on concerns registered via PCRCP during the 2023 Fiscal Year (July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023). During this fiscal year, the PCRCP received no formal inquiries or concerns through either the PCRCP hotline or the web submission form.

One follow-up report on the Crow Wing County site from 2022 was completed and submitted to MFRC during fiscal year 2023.

July 1 – September 30, 2022

No concerns were registered during this first reporting period. Work was completed and reports filed for concern #043 and #044 registered in Fiscal year 2022.

Concern #043 was registered on June 3, 2022, and Concern #044 was registered on June 10, 2022. Both concerns related to the same timber harvest. These concerns included aesthetic, water quality, erosion control, and fire hazard concerns as well as how the site was to regenerate. Additionally, concern was noted regarding notification of nearby landowners and whether management actions followed the County management plan.

These concerns were forwarded to MFRC's independent consultant for further investigation. Report and follow-up are complete.

October 1 – December 31, 2022

No concerns were registered during this reporting period.

January 1 – March 31, 2023

No concerns were registered during this reporting period.

April 1 – June 30, 2023

No concerns were registered during this reporting period.

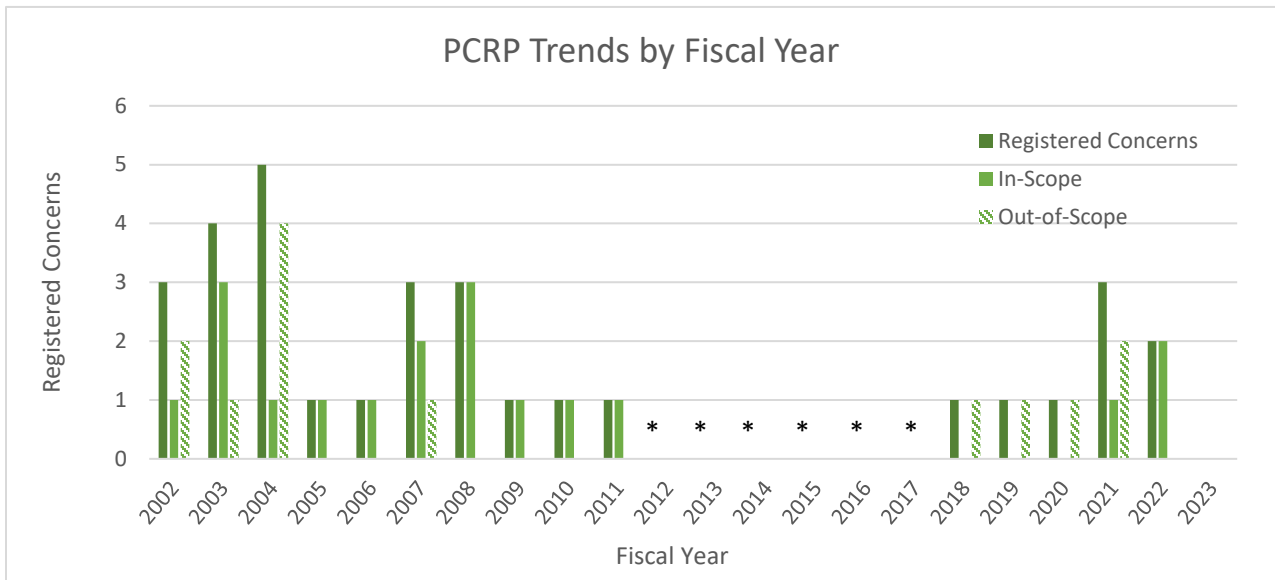
APPENDIX A

PUBLIC CONCERNS REGISTRATION PROCESS LOG

Date	Description of Concern	Location	Type of Educational Communications and Materials Sent
July 2022 – June 2023	No concerns were registered during this reporting period.		Report and follow up were completed for concerns submitted in June 2022. Contacts were made to all involved parties. A site visit was completed and final reports were submitted.

APPENDIX B

YEAR-TO-YEAR TRENDS IN PCRFP REPORTS



* No data, no PCRFP report published during these years