What is landscape-level forest management?

Landscape-level forest management is when public, private, and tribal landowners and citizens cooperatively develop and carry out a coordinated plan for forests covering thousands or millions of acres.

Why is it important?

Changes in land ownership are carving Minnesota’s forests into smaller and smaller parcels. Yet the benefits we seek from forests — timber, habitat, recreation, jobs, clean air and water — depend on their integrity on a much larger scale. If forests are to provide such benefits sustainably, we need to manage them in a way that reaches across ownership boundaries.

Regional Landscape Committees

The MRFC then brought together landowners, land managers, and others interested in forests within each landscape and gave them the job of answering three questions for their forests:

- Where have we been, and where are we today?
- Where do we want to go?
- How will we get there?

This brochure summarizes the Northern Landscape Committee’s response to those questions. It also provides concrete suggestions on what each of us can do to help achieve the committee’s vision.

Managing Forests at the Landscape Level

A cooperative approach to sustainability for public, private, and tribal landowners

Northern Landscape Region

Covers:
4.4 million acres

Includes:
Koochiching and Lake of the Woods counties, and the northern half of Beltrami County

How will we do it?

In 1995 the Minnesota Legislature created the Minnesota Forest Resources Council (MFRC) and gave it the job of ensuring that Minnesota’s forests are able to meet the state’s economic, environmental, and social needs now and in the future.

Recognizing the need to manage forests on a large scale, the MFRC set up a landscape-level forest resources program. A team of 50 individuals divided the forested part of Minnesota into six “regional forest landscapes”— multi-county areas with similar social, economic and ecological characteristics.

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Where have we been, and where are we today?

The Northern Landscape Region

The Northern Landscape Region covers 4.4 million acres in Koochiching, Lake of the Woods, and Beltrami counties. The Northern landscape region is 38% forested and sparsely populated, with 65% of all land publicly owned. The region is challenged socio-economically and includes the only heavily forested county in Minnesota to experience population decline from 1990 to 2000 (Koochiching). Most of the historically forested areas are still forested, though the mix of tree species has changed.

The region’s population is fairly stable but aging. Poverty and unemployment are higher than average.

Where do we want to go?

The Planning Committee believes the following goals should be pursued over the next ten to twenty years to promote sustainable forest resources across the region.

**Northern Landscape Goals**

**Economic**
- Goal 1. Stabilize and improve employment and incomes by sustainable use of landscape assets.
- Goal 2. Increase the Northern Landscape’s average mean annual increment (MAI) for timber growth as measured by the USDA FIA program.
- Goal 3. A stable or rising population as measured by census data.
- Goal 4. Stable employment figures within job sectors that pay at or above the living wage.
- Goal 5. Increase farm income.
- Goal 6. Maintain or increase timber harvest in the Northern Landscape in a sustainable manner consistent with site-level guidelines.
- Goal 7. Diversify the local economy.
- Goal 8. Ensure educational opportunities to promote economic stability.

**Social**
- Goal 1. Maintain and/or increase access to public lands and waters, and private lands open to the public, for sustainable multiple use.
- Goal 2. Increase the well being of the landscape’s population.
- Goal 3. Promote future development within existing transportation corridors.

**Ecological**
- Goal 1. Maintain viable populations of existing plant and animal species.
- Goal 2. Ensure the sustainability of natural resource uses.
- Goal 3. Ensure the consideration of the role of natural processes and disturbances in planning and implementing management activities.
- Goal 4. Improve information sources for management decision making.
- Goal 5. Encourage resource managers and private landowners to manage their forests by using ecological classification system concepts.

**Vegetation Goals**

**Mesic Hardwood Forest System**
- Use of even aged silviculture systems to perpetuate a diverse age class distribution with emphasis on younger aged, aspen-dominated forests or aspen trend to conifer or hardwoods.
- Provide for critical forest habitats such as upland cedar inclusions.

**Fire-Dependent Forest/Woodland System (FD)**
- Use of even aged silviculture systems to mimic natural disturbance and perpetuate a diverse age class distribution of pine, spruce/fir, and aspen/birch communities.

**Acid Peatland system (AP) & Forest Rich Peatland System (FP)**
- Use of even aged silviculture systems to mimic natural disturbance and perpetuate a diverse age class distribution of black spruce/tamarack and cedar communities.
- Provide for critical forest habitats and peatland ecosystems.

**Wet Forest Systems**
- For critical forest habitat (white cedar cover types).
- Maintain black ash within emergent ash forest context.
- Maintain forests in order to protect and maintain water table levels.

**Floodplain Forest System (FF)**
- Protect floodplain forests and retain riparian resources.
- Provide for critical forest habitat.
- Manage black ash within emergent ash forest context.

How will we get there?

**Get People Involved!**

Whether you’re an interested citizen, a city or township official, or a member of a lake association or other nonprofit organization, there are many ways to get involved. Remember, you don’t have to be a forester to be concerned about — and do something about — sustaining and managing our state’s forests.

**How can I get involved?**

Here are two initial steps for getting involved and learning more about the Northern Landscape Plan:

- Visit www.frc.state.mn.us and review a copy of the Northern Landscape’s Forest Resource Management Plan to learn more about the value of landscape planning, as well as the specifics of the Northern Landscape Plan.
- Incorporate appropriate landscape planning goals, objectives and action steps at your site.

Many more opportunities for active involvement are available to you on the MFRC Website and in the Northern Landscape Plan.

For more information, visit the following websites:

MFRC: www.frc.state.mn.us
DNR: www.dnr.state.mn.us
MFA: www.mnforest.com

Key Issues and Challenges

- Need more economic development
- Impacts from global economy
- Job retention and creation
- Protection of public access
- Parcelization of forestland
- Forest productivity
- Biodiversity
- Environmental awareness and public participation