

MINNESOTA FOREST RESOURCES COUNCIL

COUNCIL PER DIEM AND EXPENSES POLICY

Fiscal Year 2024-2025

BASIS FOR POLICY

Minn. Stat. § 15.059, Subd. 3 provides:

Compensation. Members of the advisory councils and committees may be compensated at the rate of \$125 a day spent on council or committee activities, when authorized by the council or committee, plus expenses in the same manner and amount as authorized by the commissioner's plan adopted under section 43A.18, subdivision 2. Members, who, as a result of time spent attending council or committee meetings, incur childcare expenses that would not otherwise have been incurred, may be reimbursed for those expenses upon council or committee authorization. Members who are state employees or employees of political subdivisions must not receive the daily compensation for activities that occur during working hours for which they are compensated by the state or political subdivision. However, a state or political subdivision employee may receive the daily payment if the employee uses vacation time or compensatory time accumulated in accordance with a collective bargaining agreement or compensation plan for council or committee activity. Members who are state employees or employees of the political subdivisions of the state may receive the expenses provided for in this section unless the expenses are reimbursed by another source. Members who are state employees or employees of political subdivisions of the state may be reimbursed for childcare expenses only for time spent on board activities that are outside their working hours. Each council and committee must adopt internal standards prescribing what constitutes a day spent on council or committee activities for purposes of making daily payments under this subdivision.

POLICY

- A. It shall be the policy of the Minnesota Forest Resources Council (Council) with regard to duly appointed Council members to:
 - 1. Pay expenses in the same manner and amount as received by state employees under the commissioner's plan and per diem at the authorized rate of \$125 per day for each day required for regular and special Council meetings, including travel days when appropriate.
 - 2. Pay expenses in the same manner and amount as received by state employees under the commissioner's plan and per diem at the authorized rate of \$125 per day for each day of other scheduled Council activities, such as tours, including the travel day.

3. Pay per diem at the authorized rate of \$125 for one day per calendar month, if reasonable and necessary in furtherance of Council duties and responsibilities, for direct consultation and meeting with Council staff and other persons.
 4. Pay expenses in the same manner and amount as received by state employees under the commissioner's plan and per diem at the authorized rate of \$125 per day for individual Council members to attend meetings, seminars, and tours not scheduled as Council events provided that:
 - a. The Chair/Vice Chair authorize such travel in advance and certify that such travel is for the primary benefit or representation of the Council; and
 - b. Funds for such travel are available.
 5. Pay expenses for childcare, if such expenses are incurred as a result of time spent attending Council meetings and would not otherwise have been incurred by the Council member.
 6. Pay telephone call expenses if such expenses are directly related to Council business and upon prior approval of the Council Chair/Vice Chair. Request for payment must be accompanied by documentation showing date/time of call placement, number called, length of time billed and dollar amount of call (i.e., copy of phone bill).
- B. It shall be the policy of the Council regarding Council Member Alternates, Regional Committee Co-Chairs, and Invited Volunteers to:
1. Pay travel expenses of Council Member Alternates, registered as a Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Volunteers, in the same manner and amount as received by DNR Volunteers under the commissioner's plan to attend regularly scheduled Council and/or Committee meetings as set by the Council Chair and Committee Chairs.
 2. Pay travel expenses of Council Member Alternates, Regional Committee Co-Chairs, and other Invited Volunteers in the same manner and amount received by DNR Volunteers under the commissioner's plan to attend Council and/or Committee meetings, seminars, field tours, or other authorized Council events provided that:
 - a. The Council Chair authorize such travel in advance and certify that such travel is for the primary benefit or representation of the Council;
 - b. The Council Member Alternates, Regional Committee Co-Chairs, and other Invited Volunteers register as a DNR Volunteers; and,
 - c. Funds for such travel are available.

PROCEDURE

Each Council member eligible to receive expenses and/or per diem as outlined in the Policy section above must claim them on the *Minnesota DNR Advisory Committee Appointee Reimbursement Form*. Council Alternates, Regional Committee Co-Chairs, or other invited Volunteers must register as a Minnesota DNR Volunteers and claim expenses only on a *Minnesota DNR Volunteer Reimbursement Form*. Forms must be submitted to the Executive Director for approval and processing. Expense reimbursement shall be in accordance with the current commissioner's plan for state employees.

For Council scheduled events as described in items A1 through A3, and B1 above, no special request or permission shall be required other than showing the expense on the *Minnesota DNR Advisory Committee Appointee Reimbursement Form* or *Minnesota DNR Volunteer Reimbursement Form*.

Approval of all expense requests must be communicated to the Executive Director by the Council Chair/Vice Chair. The availability of funds must be confirmed with the Executive Director. Notification of action on all requests must be made by the Council Chair/Vice Chair to the Council member or Council Alternate, or by the Executive Director at the request of the Council Chair/Vice Chair.

Travel Expenses that will be reimbursed are:

1. **MILEAGE:** Mileage at the current rate as specified by the IRS (the rate in 2025 is \$0.70 per mile) for travel to and from approved Council meetings and on approved Council business. Mileage must be calculated on the most direct route according to the Department of Transportation records.
2. **FOOD:** Food allowances are *actual* expenditures for meals and gratuity, not including alcoholic beverages to the maximum of \$11.00 for breakfast (if you are in travel status prior to 6 a.m.), \$13.00 for lunch, and \$19.00 for dinner (if you are in travel status after 7 p.m.).
3. **LODGING:** Hotel/motel will be reimbursed for actual expenditures providing good judgment is exercised in incurring lodging costs and that charges are reasonable and consistent with the facilities available. Safe room charges are not reimbursed. Itemized receipts for lodging must be submitted with the Reimbursement form. The itemized lodging receipt/folio must show the detailed charges with a zero-balance due. **Council members traveling on Council business are not to receive benefits issued such as free lodging, reward points, cash payments, discount coupons, and free tickets.**
4. **PHONE CALLS:** Phone calls placed on behalf of the Council or when conducting Council business will be reimbursed for the actual expense. A copy of the actual telephone bill must accompany the Reimbursement form showing the date and time of the call, place called, duration of the call, and the total cost of the call. Calls placed on behalf of and in the interest of stakeholders, environmental groups, and other organizations are not

reimbursable without prior approval of the Chair/Vice Chair. Calls placed in to a “home” organization must have prior approval to be eligible for reimbursement.

5. **MISCELLANEOUS EXPENSES:** Miscellaneous expense items will be reimbursed with prior approval from the Chair/Vice Chair. Receipts must accompany the Reimbursement form showing the vendor name, item purchased, date of purchase, and total cost.
6. **CHILDCARE EXPENSES:** Childcare expenses must be approved by the Chair/Vice Chair prior to occurrence. A written explanation of the circumstances necessitating the expenditure should be submitted to the Chair. If circumstances for approved childcare expenses remain unchanged, additional approvals are not necessary.