

MINNESOTA FOREST RESOURCES COUNCIL

Site-Level Committee

1:00– 3:00 pm, Friday, October 7th, 2022

Members present: Kory Cease (Chair), David Wilson, Katie Fernholz, Ashlee Lehner, Scott Pittack, Rick Horton

Members absent: Deb Theisen

Staff present: Anna Stockstad, Eric Schenck, Dick Rossman

Guests present: None

1. Meeting convenes and introductions (as needed)

The group introduced themselves to Ashlee Lehner, who will now be representing MFI on the Site-Level Committee.

2. Discuss revision strategy going forward

Kory stated that the goal for the meeting is to determine the strategy for revisions going forward. He proposed that the RAC be able to be involved in the two items needing further review for the revision process going forward, especially for the topical areas needing further review. He opened it up for discussion from the group to hear their thoughts on the process going forward.

It was brought up that the science behind the already-existing guidelines is solid, and the revision process did not show a need to make major adjustments to the guidelines – however, in topical categories with lower implementation, some guidelines may need clarification and improved education. For the areas identified as needing further review, it may be beneficial to conduct a deeper literature review in these topics to determine if the current guidelines align with the science. However, there was also the opinion expressed that the review showed that the current FMGs agree with the science, and that we need to focus our efforts on clarification and improving education/outreach.

There was consensus in the committee ~~group felt~~ that the SLC needs to start drafting recommendations for revisions instead of doing another literature review and/or asking for more stakeholder input. The monitoring results clearly identify areas that need to be clarified or need improved education. There was also consensus to direct staff to begin drafting these recommendations. Staff can reach out to RMZ experts to get their opinions on the state of the current guidelines. Since the recommended changes to the RMZ and leave tree guidelines were suggested by DNR Fish and Wildlife, staff can look deeper into the research and authors (including pre-2012 research) that they submitted. **Staff should look at recent literature related to RMZ and leave tree guidelines to determine if there is any new research that can provide additional information. Staff may reach out to experts if needed for consultation.** This will involve narrowing down the type of literature/type of expertise needed for this process going forward. Staff should start by summarizing the major points that are “sticking points” for the RMZs and leave trees (e.g.,

why did we not choose to say “no major revisions” for these topical sections? What are the specific areas that we/stakeholders are concerned about?). It is also important to keep in mind that the FMGs are not meant to be species-specific. It was also suggested that this work should be done in the context of drafting specific recommendations for revisions to the guidelines (what does the guideline say now? What would the guideline say with the proposed change?). This way, the committee could review current and draft FMG language in side-by-side comparison. While many of the submitted recommendations were relevant to specific scenarios, we also need to acknowledge that there are often unique and local conditions that are outside the scope of the guidelines, and to give managers the flexibility to adapt the guidelines for these conditions. This could involve acknowledging these unique scenarios in the FMG instead of making specific changes to the guidelines, and recommending that practitioners consider such circumstances when conducting management activities and to consult local experts when needed.

There was an update from the Ad Hoc Committee on Climate Change and Carbon. The Committee will likely not be able to provide specific recommendations on climate change until 2024 (research will be in progress until then), which will be outside the timeline of FMG revision, but there was consensus that the FMGs cannot be silent on climate change. Discussion continued on climate/carbon issues related to this revision, it was stated that the FMGs ~~need to~~ should point landowners to resources on climate change and climate adaptation, as well as identify FMGs that will be most important with climate change. There was also discussion on the importance that the FMGs acknowledge climate change as an additional consideration when conducting management, and also on managing for forest resiliency as a key objective. It was suggested that FMG users need to do their due diligence with keeping up-to-date with climate change issues as related to forest management, that the FMGs are already in alignment with climate change issues, and that they need to have a long shelf date.

The MN DNR Conservation Explorer was suggested as a method to improve implementation of the ETS FMGs for non-industrial private forest owners (many NIPF owners did not check for ETS). This resource would be beneficial to include in the new revision of the guidelines. This would require minor re-writing of the FMGs, specifically the section of the ETS FMGs that give instructions on where to find resources related to ETS. It may be useful to improve the language related to identifying ETS species “on or near the site” – we need to clarify what “on or near” means, because there are likely multiple definitions based on the practitioner. There is already considerable content already developed on this for users of the DNR’s Natural Heritage Database which can be used to develop guidance for use of the application.

Staff should lead minor revisions since the areas in need of minor revisions have already been made clear by monitoring and the summary report. Staff should consult with the SLC as needed. It was suggested that staff reach out to Charlie Blinn (led original RMZ FMG efforts) to better understand what has already been done to create the RMZ FMGs.

The conversation shifted to invasive species, which was identified as another area for further review. Staff should once again bring forward proposed language for invasive species, which was already developed by Rob Slesak during the last round of revisions.

Meeting adjourned.