

MINNESOTA FOREST RESOURCES COUNCIL

Research Advisory Committee

12:00 – 2:00pm, Wednesday, December 22, 2021

Present: Mike Kilgore (UMN/MFRC/RAC), Eric Schenck (MFRC), Pete Aube (MFRC), Sadie Mathison (MFRC), Shannon Lotthammer (DNR), Henry McCann (DNR), Rolf Weberg (NRRI/UMD/RAC), Eli Sagor (UMN/SFEC), Amber Ellering (DNR), Rick Horton (MFRC/MFI), Matt Russell (UMN), John Zobel (UMN), Sachi Graber (TNC), Kim Berns-Melhus (MFRC), Forrest Boe (DNR), Patty Theilen (DNR), David Ruff (TNC), Chris Edgar (UMN), Ann Pierce (DNR), Brendan Jordan (MFRC), Kory Cease (MFRC/RAC), Amanda Kueper (DNR/RAC), Erik Schilling (RAC), Doug Tillma (DNR), Katie Fernholz (MFRC), John Duplissus (UMD/NRRI)

After introductions, Mike Kilgore stated the purpose of the meeting is to communicate, coordinate, and collaborate between the team working on the MFRC draft Forest Carbon Strategic Plan and the DNR Natural & Working Lands team.

Henry McCann presented an overview of the draft Climate Action Framework which came out of Executive Order 19-37 and the formation of the Governor's Climate Change Subcabinet. He also highlighted that climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resiliency is a DNR Strategic Priority. The Natural Working Lands Action Team, which represents forestry among other working land types, developed a chapter devoted to climate challenges, opportunities, and strategies on Natural Working Lands. Henry shared the content of the chapter that relates to forestry.

Shannon Lotthammer expanded on Henry's presentation to say that the draft has been distributed widely to important stakeholder groups for feedback. The draft document will be released to the public at the end of January. At that point there will be an opportunity for broader input. Concurrent stakeholder focus groups, cochaired by a member from the Governor's Advisory Council on climate change and a member from the climate change sub-cabinet, will work on individual chapters in February, March, and April. The hope is to have the framework completed by end of June/early July 2022. This timing will make the framework available as a resource in the state budget planning process.

Shannon emphasized that this will not be a detailed plan, but more of a vision and a catalyst to accelerate action, yet broad enough that it can be utilized by as many partners as possible.

There was discussion of the need to get a handle on current levels of carbon absorption and storage for the purpose of setting a baseline to track success. The benchmarking for the report was based on the last greenhouse gas statewide inventory (MPCA) which was updated to reflect the effect on carbon stores by different types of cover, growth rate, and management activities. The main sequestration component,

regrowth, is an estimate based off FIA data of the increment of growth over a single year. There was acknowledgement that this figure does not reflect the full picture. All the questions cannot be answered by the time the framework comes out. There is room for refinement in the future.

Matt Russell provided an overview of Minnesota's Forest Carbon Strategic Plan (<https://z.umn.edu/MFRCcarbon>). The goal is to assemble and disseminate existing information on Minnesota's forests carbon resources and create a scoping document that identifies key information needs for state policy makers and forest land managers to better understand forest carbon. Workshops (recordings of Carbon Series presentations: <http://z.umn.edu/carbonseries>) and panels were utilized to gather input from natural resource professionals. The timeline for the Forest Carbon Dashboard is Jan 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022.

There was a discussion around the utilization of Lidar which only produces a current snapshot, however, there are other models that can estimate growth over time.

Mike suggested that the objectives and missions of the two groups are somewhat different but overlapping. He sees opportunities to use the work of one to help inform the work of the other and vice versa.

When asked if anyone has observed the work on Oregon and California and if their work is applicable and useful, Henry stated that Oregon is working on a statewide forest carbon inventory, which is step beyond what MN has done thus far. The Oregon Department of Forestry just published a carbon plan. Other than that, if there are any states ahead of Minnesota, it is not by much. He feels Minnesota is ahead of the game. Oregon forest report: <https://oregonforests.org/Carbon>

A report out of Michigan that is getting a lot of attention was shared with the group: https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-350-79134_103466---,00.html

Mike offered assistance to Shannon and Henry if needed around the role that forests can play in carbon storage and sequestration.

The group had several suggestions for a future RAC meeting in either April or February. Potential topics include further discussion around the three desirable collaboration outcomes from the meeting agenda (listed below) and a discussion of the potential utility of a vegetation simulator as an analytical tool to trace the fate of carbon as it moves into forest products or energy; both to help the Forest Carbon Strategic Plan process and identify information gaps.

Further discussion yielded an expression of the need for standardized language around carbon and for a carbon intensity score in preparation of the low carbon fuel standard, and another attendee suggested a future presentation to the RAC from Dan Sanchez at UC Berkeley, the author of Michigan study, and perhaps a presentation by the Oregon team.

With so much work to be done, there was a request for the RAC to reconvene soon.

Desirable Collaboration Outcomes:

- i. Consistent, unified Minnesota terminology, statistics, and diagrams for communicating forest carbon concepts, cycles, trends, and strategies.
- ii. Unified Minnesota strategy for statewide tracking and reporting of forest carbon sequestration/storage/emissions associated with both forests and harvested wood products.
- iii. Actions and analyses that comprehensively compare forest carbon sequestration/storage/emission outcomes associated with alternative forest management, forest product, and bio-energy/bio-fuel production strategies or scenarios.