

# MINNESOTA FOREST RESOURCES COUNCIL

## Site-Level Committee

9:00 – 2:00 pm, Friday, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022

### NOTES

Members present: Kory Cease, David Wilson, Katie Fernholz, Scott Pittack, Rick Horton

Members absent: Deb Theisen

Staff present: Anna Stockstad, Dick Rossman, Eric Schenck

Guests present: None

### Review of FMG topical sections – survey, monitoring report, literature review results

- Filter strips
  - RMZ vs filter strip – may need to make the difference clearer during training or in guideline language
  - Monitoring – interaction between erosion control and filter strip, implementation is typically lower with erosion control measures, but filter strip monitoring results are great and pretty telling that implementation is good
  - Literature supports current FMGs
  - Filter strips support boundary around water bodies, protective component around water body, but need to differentiate between skid trails vs ATV trail in a filter strip (suggestion from UPM Blandin)
  - Current FMGs are effective
  - But filter strip compliance is poorer due to placement of landings, skid trails, and roads within filter strip → proper planning and communication with logger is the solution, better communication in FMGs?
  - Loggers take FMG training, but continued education is not required for foresters → would it be beneficial for foresters to take FMG training more often?
  - Katie → advocate for proposed action 3 → no revision of current FMG, strengthen guideline training
  - **Consensus: Action 3 – strengthen guideline training related to filter strips, add in photos later after training, emphasize don't place infrastructure in filter strips**
- RMZs
  - Survey - more respondents thought that the FMGs should be modified
  - Monitoring – overall good compliance/implementation
  - BA in RMZs is generally high, usually not taken to 60 sq ft BA minimum. RMZs are usually counted as leave tree area
  - 60 vs 80 sq ft is not a big difference for on the ground application, no need to nit pick
  - Katie proposed Action 3 – modify
    - Adding in slope as a determinant of RMZ width
      - History: first FMGs considered fixed width vs slope as determinant

- Lack of trust that RMZs would be managed if slope was used as determinant, so fixed width was chosen
- Fixed width as minimum, increasing with slope
- Function of RMZ is to protect waterbody, activity on slope leading to waterbody is alarming. How do you use slope? Could you use same recommendations as filter strip slope? Or would you need more width?
- Could get too technical/complicated for people on the ground
- Both a site-level and landscape scale issue
  - Forester training would help, they need to pay attention to slope and soil conditions, take into consideration when designing sale
  - More of a water quality issue
  - Substantial change, would require economic evaluation (changes amount of harvestable wood)
- Wider RMZs for streams that have natural floodplain that is wider than current RMZ recommendations
  - Is there a need for this?
- Not harvesting within RMZ next to trout stream, getting close to telling landowner what they can't do
  - As long as sticking to minimum BA, maintaining filter strip, how much does this impact trout stream?
  - These impacts don't need to be implemented, we just need to consider this more. We shouldn't dismiss NR professional
- **Consensus: Action 3, look more into recommendations from DNR FW and evaluate whether expanding RMZs is needed.**
- Visual quality
  - Visual quality guidelines only in 16 northern periods (83%), 66% in all sites statewide
  - Not supportive of removing visual guidelines because it drives concerns of the public
    - Take action 3 off the table
    - But need to acknowledge that we also shouldn't be hiding active forest management, we're lucky in MN that we have pretty good support for forest management
  - Action 2 sounds like a lot of work, seem like it's outside of the scope
  - Original visual quality guidelines were developed as an effort between forest industry and tourism
  - Is updating visual quality information even within the scope of the committee? Guidelines aren't wrong, the visual sensitivity ratings just need to be updated.
  - **Consensus: Action 1 - Don't change guidelines, but partner with other agencies to update visual sensitivity information**
    - Has wider implications than the FMGs
    - Could design a better process in collaboration with other agencies
    - More continuing education (MLEP) on visual quality
    - Counties haven't revisited in a while
- Cultural resources

- **Recommended improving education on cultural resources (action 2)**
  - General consensus
  - Can include NTFP in cultural resource education as well (action 3.a.iii)
- Spill kits
  - Lean towards Action 1, high compliance, but this issue comes up in SFI a lot
  - Comes up in SFI auditing often
  - Requirements for spill kits for foresters, not only loggers
  - **Consensus: Action 1 – no action, keep spill kit guidelines as is.**
- Seasonal ponds
  - Identifying NOWW needs to be done in season when they're visible, planning needs to be done often
  - Leave tree clumps should be around seasonal ponds
  - Education should clarify importance of litter input to seasonal ponds, diversity
    - Focus on education, not on specific guidelines
  - Filter strips are adequate protection, leave tree clumps are beneficial and should be encouraged
  - Guidelines are adequate as written
  - Focus on knowing the site, improve education
    - Can identify in winter based on soils, vegetation, topography/landforms → include as part of training
  - **Consensus: Action 2 - no guideline revisions, but improve education and field training on identification of seasonal ponds, ecology of seasonal ponds**
- Leave trees
  - Regarding NLEB HCP, FMGs cannot address habitat needs of every single species. Need to be aware of what you're working with and then consult the relevant information. This will stand the test of time better than specific recommendations
    - Refer to ESA for specific species, do not prescribe specific actions in FMGs.
      - do not refer to HCP because there will be multiple HCPs from multiple agencies
  - Monitoring sizes, quality of leave trees would be achievable and relevant (separate from guidelines)
  - Recommendations in guidelines are clear and adequate, "leave where practical"
  - There aren't snags or CWD in all stands (e.g. young stands aren't old enough to have snags or CWD)
  - More education? Yet to be determined, needs to be investigated.
  - **Consensus: Action #2, dig into more information and spend more time considering recommendations from DNR FW, improve training**
- Invasive species
  - Recommendations by Rob Slesak during last revision (2012) were useful – just consider invasive species during harvest
  - Action 2 – could use Rob's work from 2012 revision?
    - Could consider again.
  - More education on noxious weed laws? But we don't need to mandate something that is already mandated.

- **Consensus: Action 2 – follow up on previous effort, leverage previous work to improve education and resources**
  - **Separate piece of education, does this need to go into guidelines? We need to consider this more.**
- ETS species
  - Need to update ETS listings regardless, there is no option to do nothing since ETS listings have changed
  - Some of this is in jurisdiction of ETS information
  - Not within scope of guidelines to improve database accessibility → this is handled by DNR Eco Waters.
  - Could write letter to head of DNR Eco Waters to improve database accessibility.
  - **Consensus: Proposed Action 1: update ETS listings, reference special care using pesticides around rare plant communities. Make sure all information is current.**
- On-site infrastructure
  - Filter strip compliance is good except for on-site infrastructure (placing skid trails and landings within filter strip)
  - Need for more consistent use of erosion control structures when needed
    - Targeted education/outreach could help to address these issues
    - another problem is expense
  - Guidelines are adequate as written, implementation is low
  - Acknowledge low implementation on smaller sites – but infrastructure will naturally take up more space on smaller sites
  - **Consensus: Action 2 – improve education, look into it more, lots of different components.**
    - **Training could be used by multiple agencies**
- Rutting/compaction
  - Rutting can't really be defined
    - Lots of inconsistencies across the industry, within agency, between foresters about what a rut is
  - Certification has big emphasis on rutting
  - Rutting is different depending on sites, soils, equipment, etc.
  - Compaction is location, soils specific
  - **Consensus: No action, current guidelines are adequate and we can't be prescriptive because what is a rut? Compaction is so site specific, soils specific, etc.**
- Erosion control
  - Not much evidence of a problem
  - Guidelines are adequate
  - Erosion control – just needs to be implemented. Not a problem with the guidelines.
  - **Consensus Action #1: none, but recommend more education while acknowledging costs and need for pre-planning**
- Biomass harvest/slash management
  - Guidelines are sufficient
  - Those who came before us did a great job of looking at this issue from all angles.
  - Will need justification about why these guidelines don't need to change.

- Should send out this document alongside recommendations to Council.
  - This is a working document
  - Final report – more formal, what we did, what the results were, what we decided
  - No major issues with guidelines themselves, just some issues with implementation → but this is an education problem
  - Some lack of shared understanding surrounding guidelines → education problem
- Carbon issues related to biomass is an entire different topic
- Report to September Council meeting – reporting on progress (update report), not a final report.
  - Need to show that we've considered all available information
- **Consensus: No change**
- Climate adaptation
  - Most cited opportunity for additional FMGs (8 people) on survey
  - “good heart seal”, climate smart action stickers in guidelines
  - NIACS – there is already an entire guidebook on climate adaptation for managers
  - Could table it until the ad hoc committee on climate change/carbon comes out with specific recommendations
  - Climate smart forestry is still a bit unclear, very new topic
  - Could be an easy addendum
  - Emphasize practices that already exist that are most climate friendly, or might need added attention as the climate changes
  - Leave tree suitability may change based on climate outcomes
  - Planning when and where to harvest is beyond guidelines
  - **Consensus: Table it – Committee won't make a recommendation before the ad hoc CC committee makes specific recommendations, then a working group could be formed to create “climate BMPs”**

#### Creating an update report for September Council meeting:

- Do not include DNR FW feedback in report to Council, but reference that we received this feedback and are considering it.
- Update report for September Council meeting
  - We are at first stage of providing first recommendation
    - Focus on summary of results and provide recommendations
- Or add recommendations to summary document? Amended to include summary document
  - Only list the action that we decided and justification
  - Need document trail
  - Clip out DNR recommendations
- **Main point for update report: communicate that we have completed 3 step process, we're now pivoting to recommendations**
- Next step: fill in areas that need more research/further investigation
  - Role for forest scientist

#### **PCRP review – Dick Rossman**

- PCRP is working well
- Dick presented 2022 PCRP report.
- Dick summarized 2 concerns that were submitted for the same timber harvest.
- Main concerns were aesthetics, visual quality
- Some RMZ/water quality impacts, slash
- Staff should work to improve education process in PCRP to help explain to people who submit complaints
  - May be better suited for Landscape Committees or local lake owner associations, SFI implementation committee, MFI – who could be our new partners to improve this education?
  - Very much a local effort, the MFRC is too large to handle concerns on a local scale