

Council on Forestry Meeting
Fitchburg Library
5530 Lacy Road, Fitchburg, Wisconsin
March 25, 2014

Council Members Present: Henry Schienebeck (Council Chair), Jane Severt (Council Vice-Chair), Troy Brown, Paul DeLong, Tom Hittle, Jim Kerkman, Jim Hoppe, Kim Quast, Richard Wedepohl, Rep. Jeff Mursau, Sen. Tom Tiffany, Rep. Fred Clark, Virgil Waugh, Paul Strong, and Mark Rickenbach

Council Members Absent: Bruce Allison and Matt Dallman

Guests Present: Marla Eddy for Bruce Allison, Eileen Schoenfeld, Randy Williams, Greg Rebman, Tim Gary, Jim Warren, Fred Souba, Hillary Market, Earl Gustafson, Bob Mather, Tia Nelson, Karl Martin, and Tyler Wenzlaff

Chair Schienebeck called the meeting to order at 9:15 am with introductions of Council members and guests present.

Meeting Minutes

Identification of HFRA (Healthy Forest Restoration Act) in CNNF

Paul Strong

Paul Strong gave an update on the changes in the Farm Bill. The Bill allows Governors to petition the Secretary to designate forest treatment areas based on forest health issues. The treatment areas can be similar in size to 6th level hydrologic units (HUC-6), and must be identified on current forest insect and disease risk maps, or present an “imminent risk to public infrastructure health, or safety.” The Governor’s request must be submitted to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture by April 8th. Once designated, eligible projects may be conducted under the provisions of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA).

In addition, the Farm Bill provides that certain collaborative projects may be conducted under a categorical exclusion IF they meet a very long list of requirements including:

- maximizing the retention of old-growth and large trees, as appropriate for the forest type;
- maintaining or restoring the ecological integrity, including maintaining or restoring structure, function, composition, and connectivity;
- developed through a collaborative;
- in a watershed in Condition Class II or III or is in the WUI; and doesn’t include any permanent new roads

Paul Strong is working on obtaining information from Washington regarding limitations. This is an authorization piece of legislature which has no money attached at this point.

A map of 6th level watershed of the CNNF was reviewed. Paul Strong suggested the addition of Taylor County (Kidrick Swamp - Yellow River) watershed due to high concentration of ash. Paul also suggested adding the Iron River watershed due to spruce budworm outbreaks and some concentrations of ash resources. Jane Severt asked that the Armstrong Creek, Headwaters South Branch Pike River, and Swede John Creek – Peshtigo River watersheds also be included as they were identified on the National Risk Map due to increased Maple decline.

MOTION: Jane makes a motion to submit all 16 6th level hydrologic unit CNNF watershed originally suggested in addition to the three she recommended and the two Paul recommended for a total of 21. Seconded by Tom Tiffany. Motion approved.

Senator Tiffany asked that additional areas be included based on the potential for oak wilt impact. Paul Strong reported that the areas at risk of oak wilt are already covered under an approved EIS that allows newly infested areas to be harvested without any further NEPA review. As a result, designation under the HFRA would not streamline management in these areas. As a result, the sub-watersheds in Oconto County, all of which are covered by the approved EIS, were not added to the list.

Action Item(s):

- ***Paul and Paul will work together to prepare the submission by the end of this week/early next week. The Council will be copied on the Governor's submission.***

Economic Summit

Allison Hellman

Allison reviewed the proposed process and goal statements. The purpose of the review subcommittee meeting was to minimize review time by the full Council and edit the goal statements as needed ultimately defining a more manageable number of goals. The Council agrees with the proposed timeline and roles outlined for the process.

Goal Statements will be modified as follows:

- Goal 1: Increase the workforce/proficiency of technical and skilled workers (i.e. manufacturing and timber producers) which support the forest industry as demand deems appropriate.
- Goal 2: Improve management of and increase timber production within Wisconsin's Federal Forests consistent with sustainable forestry practices
- Goal 3: Improve management of and increase timber production within Wisconsin's State Forests consistent with sustainable forestry practices
- Goal 4: Improve management of and increase timber production within County owned forest lands consistent with sustainable forestry practices
- Goal 5: Improve management of and increase timber production within private forests consistent with sustainable forestry practices
- Goal 6: Grow Wisconsin's forest products markets
- Goal 7: Continuously improve the collaborative working relationship between wood users and resource managers.
- Goal 8: Increase public understanding of the benefits of sustainable forest management
- Goal 9: Assess constraints and improve the economics of transporting materials

Council members removed original Goals 5 and 9. Goal 8 was combined with 6. Allison would like the survey complete and ready to be released by April 14th.

Action Item(s):

- *Allison will send the updated list out to Council members for final review.*
- *Subcommittee will review Goal seven and potentially re-word*

Legislative updates

Rep. Fred Clark – Expressed disappointment in failed MFL bill but hopes the Council will see MFL as a priority and figure out how to move on it. Rep. Clark also informed the Council that he will not be running for office in 2014.

Rep. Jeff Mursau – Very disappointed in the outcome of Council related legislation. However, he hopes to see the issues on a near Council agenda to keep momentum moving forward. Rep. Mursau stated there is a lot of work that still needs to be completed and hopes the Council will hit the ground running.

Sen. Tom Tiffany – Assembly is done for this session. April 1st is the last day for Senate. A number of bills did not move forward. The two bills affecting the Council most are the MFL bill and the Forestry account bill which would allow the return of money to local governments. Sen. Tiffany expressed concerns in MFL bill regarding increased parcelization. He would like to sit down with Rep. Mursau and Henry to discuss this in detail. He also recognized the Council and specifically Tom Hittle for all of the work put in to the bill.

Cooperating Forester Proposal

Jeff Groeschl

Jeff presented a Cooperating Forester Program Advancement Proposal but specified the intent is not to provide specific details but rather create further discussion and deliberation regarding the current program and standards. Currently, 230 member businesses are enrolled as Cooperating Foresters with the number continually increasing annually. The accountability and capability of the Foresters in the program is often challenged.

The goal of the proposal is to foster progression of the Cooperating Forester program in ways to better serve all participants in and partners of the program through increased professionalism and accountability.

The following actions are included in the proposal:

- Creation of an independent entity
- Increased application standards
- Elevated performance accountability
- Clarified categories of consultants and industrial foresters
- Streamlined timber sale process
- Shifting cost burden of program from DNR
- Separation of MFL Certified Plan Writers from the Cooperating Forester Program

Based on the proposal, the DNR would no longer be responsible for direct administration and monitoring of Cooperating Foresters. The increased assurance and consistency in forestry services is suggested to be a benefit to the DNR, woodland owners, general public, industrial foresters, and consulting foresters.

The Council asked a number of questions about the proposal and several concerns were expressed. As the purpose was to introduce the concept, more dialogue is needed.

CoF Research Priorities

Karl Martin

Karl gave a presentation to the Council on the history of the Council's research priorities stemming back to the development of the Task Force on Research in 2005.

In 2013 the DNR Research Review Team was created with the goal of developing an interdisciplinary list of agency priorities to guide agency research. The team membership consists of DNR Deputy Division Administrators for Forestry, Land, Water, and Air and Waste. Input was solicited from each program and developed into a draft document of priority themes and projects. The draft document was then presented to and approved by the Secretary's office. This process will be repeated biannually.

2013-2015 Research projects:

- Driftless Forest Network Research Project (2010)
- Turkey Stamp Funded Research (2013)
- LANDFIRE in the Great Lakes Region (GLFFC grant funded)
- Forest Biomass Research
- Silviculture

Paul DeLong would like to see the Council update its priorities and thereby inform the DNR's priorities. A proposed process for doing so will be brought back to the Council.

MFL Task Efficiencies

DNR Staff

Jim Warren, DNR updated the Council regarding the MFL Task Efficiencies process and the progress since the September Council meeting. Public comments have been received, considered, and used to identify potential concepts. The DNR Forestry Leadership Team (FLT) discussed the comments and concepts and decided to pursue eight of the original concepts and one additional concept suggested during the comment period.

Nina Carranco, DNR Forest Tax Operations Specialist will serve as the lead project manager for developing the concepts for implementation and the timeline identified for this will result in the majority of concepts being completed by December 2014.

Concepts being pursued are as follows:

- Criteria to determine when to invest in a field review to approve a cutting notice.
- Stand evaluation - providing a consistent method to evaluate a proposed selection harvest on MFL Lands.
- Cutting notice guidance - A new simple, webpage.
- Expedite the development of electronic submission and review of cutting notices with in Wisconsin Forest Inventory & Reporting System (WisFIRS).
- Consolidate current standard operating procedures (SOPs) for cutting notices.
- New cutting notice SOPs.
- Dynamic, timely, transparent, and institutional process for updating SOPs.
- A clearly defined policy that defines sound forestry for MFL using the DNR Silvicultural Handbook and the Wisconsin Forest Managed Guidelines (FMGs) as Generally Acceptable Practices (GAPs).
- Review MFL Transfer Process for possible efficiencies.

NEXT STEPS

Council will be updated as needed and/or requested on implementation of these concepts. Active involvement of Council members is encouraged. Next steps include the following:

- Identify team leads and members for concepts.
- Project Manager will meet with each team leads to identify steps and resources needed to implement concept. This information will be documented in “cover sheets,” which will provide a high level summary of the plan to implement each concept.
- Communicate with internal and external partners about implementation of concepts.
- Teams will work on implementing concepts, including engaging external partners such as the Council on Forestry.

Future Agenda Items

- MFL – Moving Forward
- Research Priorities

Next Meeting

Please note, due to space availability at the Trees for Tomorrow facility in Eagle River the date for our next meeting has been changed from May 22nd to **May 21st**. Please plan accordingly.

Adjourned @ 3:50 PM

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Terrisa Mulder, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources