



**2012**

**Report to the  
Governor  
and Legislature  
on the  
Implementation  
of the Sustainable  
Forest Resources  
Act**



# Minnesota Forest Resources Council

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*Cover photo: former Big Tree State Champion sugar maple on privately-owned land in Mantorville, MN. The landowner formerly used five buckets on this tree to collect sap for maple syrup production.*

# **Minnesota Forest Resources Council 2012 Report**

to the Governor and Legislature on the Implementation  
of the Sustainable Forest Resources Act

*Respectfully submitted by the Minnesota Forest Resources Council*

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## MFRC Membership

The Governor appoints a chair and 15 members to the Minnesota Forest Resources Council (MFRC) and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council appoints one member. The 17-member Council includes representatives from the following interests:

- Commercial logging contractors
- Conservation organizations
- County land departments
- Environmental organizations (2)
- Forest products industry
- Game species management organizations
- Labor organizations
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Minnesota Indian Affairs Council
- Nonindustrial private forest landowners (2)
- Research and higher education
- Resort and tourism industry
- Secondary wood products manufacturers
- USDA Forest Service



**This report fulfills requirements of Minnesota Statute 89A.03 Subd. 6., in which:**

*The council must report to the governor and to the legislative committees and divisions with jurisdiction over environment and natural resource policy and finance by February 1 of each year. The report must describe the progress and accomplishments made by the council during the preceding year.*

### **The Sustainable Forest Resources Act (M.S. § 89A)**

In 1995, the Sustainable Forest Resource Act (SFRA) created a policy framework for sustainable forestry to:

- Sustainably manage, use, and protect the state's forest resources to achieve the state's economic, environmental, and social goals.
- Encourage cooperation and collaboration between public and private sectors in managing the state's forest resources.
- Recognize and consider forest resource issues, concerns, and impacts at appropriate geographic scales.
- Recognize all perspectives regarding the management, use, and protection of the state's forest resources; establish processes and mechanisms that seek these perspectives; and incorporate them into planning and management.

**Estimated cost to prepare this report (M.S. § 3.197):** \$1,588 (staff time and printing). This report was printed in limited quantities. The electronic version is available on the Minnesota Forest Resources Council website at [www.frc.mn.gov/documents/council/MFRC\\_2012\\_Report.pdf](http://www.frc.mn.gov/documents/council/MFRC_2012_Report.pdf).

This report can be made available in other formats upon request.

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# An Overview of MFRC Accomplishments in 2012



*Robert A. Stine, Chair, Minnesota Forest Resources Council*

## **The MFRC:**

Developed a study on private forestland management and financial incentives to encourage sustainability, as directed by the 2012 legislature. The report, which includes recommendations related to private forestland policy, will be delivered to the legislature in January 2013.

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At the DNR Commissioner's request, developed recommendations regarding actions the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) could take to maintain and grow Minnesota's forest products economy. The MFRC recommendations influenced the Governor's recommended budget to the 2013 legislature.

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Urged the Governor to charge relevant Cabinet members to direct the Minnesota Invasive Species Advisory Council to analyze current forest-related terrestrial invasive species management efforts and to encourage stepped up professional education and public awareness efforts.

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Completed a three year process of voluntary forest management guideline revision, adopting the use of more efficient and effective guidelines for sustainable forest management. These guidelines are critical for maintaining Minnesota's forest industry as well as for protecting water quality, wetlands, soils, wildlife habitat, aesthetics and cultural resources.

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Via its Landscape Program, raised more than \$2 million over the past three years to support innovative approaches to serving private woodland owners, thereby helping offset a 75 percent reduction in the DNR's Private Management Program budget over the last biennium.

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Coordinated implementation of the Northern Minnesota Climate Change Response Framework, a collaborative effort to identify cost effective strategies for forest managers to adapt to climate change and to promote resilient, sustainable forests and forest-based communities.

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Continued collaborative research projects on ecological impacts of woody biomass harvesting and evaluation of the potential ecological and hydrologic impacts of emerald ash borer in black ash wetlands.



*Photo: site of a future jack pine biomass harvest.*

# Forest Policy

*The MFRC is a forum where forest stakeholders discuss and resolve issues regarding the management of Minnesota's forests. We have helped depoliticize forestry issues in Minnesota by facilitating collaboration and fostering the use of scientific information. We advise the Governor, legislature and public agencies on sustainable forest policies.*

## **Accomplishments**

### Management of Private Forestlands

As directed by the 2012 legislature, the MFRC conducted a study regarding private forestland management and financial incentives to encourage sustainability. The resulting report described the private forest resource and respective owners. It also identified and quantified some of the most important ecological, economic and social benefits that flow from private forestland. The report reviewed past and current federal and state programs that influence private forestland management. It also laid out the organizational landscape of agencies involved at the federal, state and local levels and examined funding and effectiveness over time. Much of the study focused on forestland property taxation and the state's incentive programs to encourage good management. In addition, the MFRC conducted a survey of private consulting forester capacity as part of the study (see p. 7). The MFRC will identify recommendations related to private forestland policy, as called for in statute, in a number of areas.

### Forest Health and Invasives

The State of Minnesota spends substantial resources on aquatic invasive species but little on terrestrial invasive species, despite potentially devastating economic and ecological impacts. Noting this fact, the MFRC spent more than a year analyzing the significance and economic, social and ecological impacts of forest-related terrestrial invasive species, the existing management frameworks in Minnesota and examples from across the country. As a result of the analysis, the MFRC urged the Governor to charge the Commissioners of Natural Resources, Agriculture, Transportation and Commerce to invigorate and charge the Minnesota Invasive Species Advisory Council to oversee the implementation of the following recommendations: (1) commission and fund a study to include a synthesis of current knowledge and agency responses, an analysis of information needs and adequacy of current responses and recommendations to ensure that our public and private resources are used in a strategic, coordinated and effective manner; and (2) encourage stepped up professional education and public awareness efforts related to forest-based invasive species.

### Forest Parcelization, Fragmentation and Land Use Change

The MFRC continued to promote the recommended policy options and tools in combating forestland parcelization on the forested landscape. Implementing these recommendations is paramount to maintaining the benefits gained from large blocks of contiguous forestland, such as timber production, wildlife habitat and recreational values. The MFRC also spent considerable time promoting the forest-related research priorities developed by the MFRC's Research Advisory Committee and a panel of experts. The MFRC encourages others to use this information to support research funding in these priority areas.

### Health of the Forest Products industry

At the DNR's Commissioners request, the MFRC spent a considerable amount of time developing recommended actions the DNR could take to maintain and grow Minnesota's forest products economy. The MFRC developed a set of shorter-term recommendations as well as a set of longer-term recommendations including: (1) recommendations specific to DNR-administered lands or DNR policies that would increase revenues or reduce costs consistent with sound natural resources practices; (2) recommendations that may require interagency coordination to support existing industries and facilitate new ventures; and (3) longer-term statutory recommendations. The MFRC recommendations influenced the Governor's recommended budget to the 2013 legislature.



# Voluntary Site-level Forest Management Guidelines

*The MFRC maintains science-based, voluntary forest management guidelines to help loggers, foresters and landowners sustain and conserve forest resources and protect wildlife habitat, soils, water quality, wetlands, aesthetics and cultural resources. These guidelines are critical to the maintenance of forest industry in Minnesota. In 2012, the MFRC completed a three-year process of guideline revision, adopting the use of more efficient and effective guidelines for sustainable forest management.*

## **Accomplishments**

### Guideline Development and Revision

Forest management guidelines are periodically reviewed and revised in response to changing technology, values, threats and new research. Following a multi-year process of stakeholder engagement and comprehensive assessment, the MFRC adopted new recommendations in 2012 for forest management practices to maintain sustainable forestry. Completion of this process included the following activities:

1. MFRC members conducted a comprehensive assessment of proposed changes to the guidelines based on monitoring data, existing research and practitioner input that was compiled by staff.
2. Staff conducted a peer and practitioner review of proposed changes to the guidelines involving over 30 individuals comprising broad technical expertise in forest-related disciplines, along with a concurrent public comment period to solicit additional input on proposed changes.
3. Staff analyzed the economic costs and benefits of recommended changes to the forest management guidelines for MFRC members to use during evaluation.
4. Staff analyzed options and made recommendations for publication of the revised guidelines, and also submitted a proposal to the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR), requesting funds in support of publication efforts.

The MFRC is committed to presenting the revised guidelines in a user-friendly format and will develop several formats for publication in 2013. The revised guidelines will be used by loggers, forest landowners and forest managers across Minnesota.

### Monitoring Guideline Implementation

The DNR conducts field monitoring of guideline implementation during logging operations to identify areas in need of improved implementation efforts through training and outreach. Staff worked collaboratively with the DNR to accomplish the following activities related to the monitoring program in 2012:

1. Analysis and evaluation of field data collected during the 2011 monitoring effort. A final report of the 2011 monitoring results is available on the MFRC website.
2. Evaluation of aerial photography use in assessing guideline implementation during harvesting operations, and the likelihood of sample bias in site selection of private landowners.
3. Development of a new approach for implementation monitoring that focuses on forested watersheds that will greatly enhance the utility of information generated by the program.
4. Presentation of the Minnesota model used in application of voluntary guidelines to maintain water quality at the national annual conference of the Society of American Foresters.

# Landscape-level Forest Resource Management

*The MFRC Landscape Program supports regional and local level forums where partners collaborate to bring about desired future conditions in each of six major forested regions. Over the past five years, the Council has helped landscape committee partners obtain over \$15 million in federal, private and non-General Fund state grants to support their work.*

## Accomplishments

### On-the-Ground Collaboration

Continued the development of landscape stewardship strategies and tools to support community based forestry projects. The six MFRC Landscape Committees now have more than 24 multi-owner collaborative projects in progress.

### Funding Development

- Secured a \$396,000 grant from the USDA Forest Service to support the implementation of the MFRC landscape plans in conjunction with the state's Forest Action Plan.
- Raised more than \$ 2 million over the past three years to support innovative approaches to serving private woodland owners. In the last biennium, the DNR's Private Forest Management Program budget was cut by 75 percent.
- Developed regional priorities to support funding and forest policy recommendations made by the Council to the Governor and Legislature.

### Northeast Landscape Plan Update

Coordinated continuing revision of the Northeast Landscape Plan, which was completed in 2003. The revised plan will incorporate economic, ecological and social research by the University of Minnesota and the USDA Forest Service to support the development of the next generation of landscape plans.

### Promoting Resilient Forests

With federal and state partners, the MFRC is facilitating discussions about climate change impacts on forests and information needs to promote resilient, sustainable forests and forest-based communities. The Northern Minnesota Climate Change Response Framework (CCRF) is a collaborative effort to identify cost-effective strategies to address climate change adaptation. In response to direction from the forestry community in Minnesota, the Landscape Program is coordinating implementation of the CCRF.



**The MFRC Landscape Program organizes and facilitates collaboration among landowners, managers and citizens in the six major forested “landscapes” or regions in the state.**

*With MFRC assistance, local partners are shaping future forests by coordinating their efforts at sustaining forested landscapes and the benefits they provide, recognizing both the importance of forest biodiversity and the forest-based economy and communities.*

# Research

*The MFRC conducts and supports key research to improve forest management and the sustainable use of forest resources. In 2012, the MFRC continued to collaborate on research projects and proposals assessing guideline effectiveness and other topics related to sustainable forestry.*

## **Accomplishments**

### Ecological Impacts of Woody Biomass Harvesting

Research continues on a collaborative study involving University of Minnesota and USDA Forest Service researchers assessing the impacts of different levels of biomass removal on forest ecological functions that was initiated with funding from the MFRC. Initial MFRC funding was used to obtain a \$2.7 million grant from the federal government to expand this research to other sites in Minnesota, as well as to other Lake States.

The biomass harvesting study was expanded to nutrient-poor jack pine sites following awarding of funding from the LCCMR. Research on this part of the project is collaboratively conducted by the University of Minnesota, USDA Forest Service and MFRC investigators. MFRC staff lead a nutrient flux assessment to determine effects on soil productivity, and also assist with other components of the project.

### Emerald Ash Borer

Research continues on a 5-year project funded by the LCCMR to assess the potential ecological and hydrologic impacts of emerald ash borer in black ash wetlands and develop recommendations for management. The project is being conducted by researchers from the University of Minnesota Department of Forest Resources, Council staff and the USDA Forest Service. Experimental harvest and girdling treatments were applied in the winter of 2012. Council staff and other researchers are currently focused on assessing the hydrologic response and planting success of alternative tree species. Work on the project will continue until 2015.



### Private Forestry Consultant Capacity

As part of the MFRC study on private forestland management mandated by the 2012 legislature (see p. 4), the MFRC commissioned a study of private forestry consultants and their ability to provide services to private landowners. Comparing the results to a similar survey in 2006, the number of consultants has increased 20 percent, despite the economic downturn from 2008–2012, and consultants administer timber sales that account for about ten percent of the current statewide timber harvest. Private forestry consultants will play an important role in expanding services to Minnesota’s private land owners in coming years.

# Participating in Sustainable Forestry

*MFRC programs rely on individuals interested in forest resources in Minnesota. Their participation assures that a “broad array of perspectives regarding the management, use and protection of the state’s forest resources” (M.S. § 89A.02) guide forest resource planning and management.*

## MFRC Activities

There are many ways for interested individuals to become involved:

- Attend MFRC meetings. A schedule of meetings is posted on the MFRC website: [www.frc.mn.gov](http://www.frc.mn.gov)  
In 2013, MFRC meetings will be held on January 23, March 20, May 14, July 24, September 17-18 and November 13.
- Participate in regional landscape committees and projects. Contact Lindberg Ekola, our Landscape Program Manager, at [ekola.mfrc@charter.net](mailto:ekola.mfrc@charter.net) or 320-256-8300.
- Use the timber harvesting/forest management guidelines. Guidelines are available on our website.
- Use the Public Concerns Registration Process to notify the MFRC of specific timber harvests or other forest management practices that concern you.
- Attend forest resources educational programs provided by the Sustainable Forests Education Cooperative<sup>6</sup> or the Minnesota Logger Education Program<sup>7</sup>.

## The Public Concerns Registration Process

The Public Concerns Registration Process (PCRP) allows citizens to inform landowners, foresters and loggers of specific concerns regarding timber harvesting and forest management practices they see in Minnesota, and learn more about forest management.

PCRP encourages sustainable management of Minnesota’s forests through education. It is not a regulatory or dispute resolution program. Instead, landowners, loggers and foresters become more aware of public concerns regarding forest management and citizens learn about guidelines for sustainable forest management.

Concerns registered with the Public Concerns Registration Process are confidential. To register a concern, call 1-888-234-3702 or submit one online at [www.frc.mn.gov](http://www.frc.mn.gov)

<sup>6</sup> <http://sfec.cfans.umn.edu/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.mlep.org/>

# MFRC 2012 Publications

Reports are available online: [www.frc.mn.gov](http://www.frc.mn.gov)

Hibbard, C., Slesak, R. 2012. Economic Analysis of Proposed Changes to Minnesota's Forest Management Guidelines. Report to the Minnesota Forest Resources Council. St. Paul, MN.

MFRC. 2012. Public Concerns Registration Process: 2012 Annual Report. St. Paul, MN.

State of Minnesota. Department of Natural Resources. 2012. Report to the Minnesota Forest Resources Council (Received August 2012). St. Paul, MN.

D'Amato et. al. 2012. Impacts of woody biomass harvesting on saproxylic communities, nutrient availability and productivity in aspen ecosystems. Report to the Minnesota Forest Resources Council (Received May 2012). St. Paul, MN.

## Thank You

*MFRC programs are voluntary. Thank you to all the organizations and individuals who continue to help, support, and participate in the programs of the Sustainable Forest Resources Act and the Minnesota Forest Resources Council:*

Associated Contract Loggers; Audubon Minnesota; Blandin Foundation; Citizens of Minnesota who participate in SFRA and MFRC programs; Cloquet Forestry Center; Dovetail Partners Inc.; Freshwater Society; Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness; Great River Greening; Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy — Community Forestry Resource Center; Interagency Information Cooperative; Minnesota Association of County Land Commissioners; Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources; Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy; Minnesota Deer Hunters Association; Minnesota Department of Natural Resources; Minnesota Forest Industries; Minnesota Forest Resources Partnership; Minnesota Forestry Association; Minnesota Indian Affairs Council; Minnesota Land Trust; Minnesota Logger Education Program; Minnesota Pollution Control Agency; Minnesota Power; Minnesota Resort and Campground Association; Minnesota Ruffed Grouse Society; Minnesota Timber Producers Association; National Council for Air and Stream Improvement; North Shore Forest Collaborative; Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science; Sierra Club — North Star Chapter; The Conservation Fund; The Nature Conservancy; The Trust for Public Land; USDA Forest Service — Chippewa National Forest, Superior National Forest, Northern Research Station and State and Private Forestry; USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service; USDI Fish and Wildlife Service; University of Minnesota CFANS Department of Forest Resources and Sustainable Forests Education Cooperative; University of Minnesota Duluth — Natural Resources Research Institute; University of Minnesota Extension and Institute on the Environment; Wood Fiber Employees Joint Legislative Council



The Minnesota Forest Resources Council was established by the Sustainable Forest Resources Act (SFRA) of 1995 to promote sustainable management of Minnesota's forests.

To find out more about the council, visit our web site:

[www.frc.mn.gov](http://www.frc.mn.gov) or call

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