

Strategic Policy Framework

West Central Landscape Plan



The policy framework in the West Central Landscape Plan was structured into a hierarchical order and has been summarized on the following overheads:

- Desired Future Conditions
- Goals
- Strategies

Desired Future Conditions

West Central Landscape Plan

DFC 1. Forest and Prairie Ecosystems. Forest and prairie ecosystems are healthy, resilient, and functioning providing sustainable economic and/or recreational opportunities.

DFC 2. Water Resources. Water resources are managed to sustain their health for people and provide critical habitat for many species of plants and animals.

DFC 3. Business. Viable and geographically diverse natural resource businesses that advocate the long term stewardship of community resources exist and grow in the landscape.

DFC 4. Education and Awareness. Public is well educated relative to environmental concerns and how to obtain technical assistance.

DFC 5. Coordination. Cooperation and coordination between agencies, interest groups, and private landowners has resulted in effective communication, planning, and natural resource management.

DFC 6. Land Use Policy. Land use policies, regulations, and voluntary opportunities are in place to preserve the rural land base, recognizing wise development is necessary.

Goals

West Central Landscape Plan

DFC 1. Forest and Prairie Ecosystems

Goal A: Increase Forests. Historically this landscape was 36% (1,985,400 acres) forested in the following cover types: Pine, Tamarack, Oak, Lowland Hardwoods, Upland Hardwoods and Aspen/Birch. Restore these native forested types from the current 11% (579,300 acres) to 15% (825,000 acres) in the landscape. Refer to Appendix C for historical and current breakdown.

Goal B: Assistance for NIPFs. Assure that 50% of the private forest land parcels greater than 40 acres have landowners who use professional advice in caring for their land currently, stewardship plans cover 26% of the non-industrial private land statewide.

Goal C: 500 Acre + Forests. Maintain size of tracts of 500 contiguous acres or greater of forest land.

Goal D: Increase Grasslands. Enhance the opportunities for restoring native species by increasing existing grassland habitat (primarily non-native) from the current 27% (1,500,200 acres) to 33 % (1,800,600 acres) of the landscape by using native species in grassland restorations and protecting all remaining native prairies.

DFC 2. Water Resources

Goal A: Riparian Buffers. Maintain and increase riparian buffers along and around all public waters.

Goal B: Water Quality BMPs. Best Management Practices (BMPs) are used on at least 80% of the management activities in forests and forest riparian zones to protect water quality.

Goal C: Non-Point Pollution/Flooding. Reduce non-point source pollution and urban flooding.

DFC 3. Natural Resource Based Business

Goal A: NR Business Dev't. Encourage natural resource based businesses, both service and product driven, of all sizes.

Goal B: NR Material Supply. Maintain a stable supply of raw natural resources products.

DFC 4. Education and Awareness

Goal A: Public Officials Awareness. Public officials and their staff are aware of the benefits of healthy ecosystems and the value of viable natural resource based businesses.

Goal B: Youth Awareness. Promote natural resource educational programs for grades K-12 that result in students understanding ecological functions and values.

Goal C: Landowner Awareness. Land owners and potential land owners understand their role as land stewards and are aware of sources of professional natural resources assistance.

Goal D: General Public. The general public is informed of natural resource issues through the mass media to the extent that the public understands basic ecological concepts and that forest resources are renewable.

DFC 5. Coordination

Goal A: Inventory & Analysis. Encourage the cooperative inventory and analysis of forest resources.

DFC 6. Land Use Policy

Goal A: Rural Land Policy. Protect rural land and forest base from unrestricted/unplanned development to enhance or preserve the natural resources and reduce infrastructure costs.

Goal B: Incentives. Provide cost share incentives for sustainable natural resource practices.

Goal C: Tax Policy. A tax structure that provides incentives for sustainable natural resource management.

Strategies

West Central Landscape Plan

DFC 1. Forest and Prairie Ecosystems. Forest and prairie ecosystems are healthy, resilient, and functioning providing sustainable economic and/or recreational opportunities.

Goal A: Historically this landscape was 36% (1,985,400 acres) forested in the following cover types: Pine, Tamarack, Oak, Lowland Hardwoods, Upland Hardwoods and Aspen/Birch. Restore these native forested types from the current 11% (579,300 acres) to 15% (825,000 acres) in the landscape. Refer to Appendix C for historical and current breakdown.

Strategy 1: Identify 245,000 acres on appropriate sites where forest resources should be restored and distribute these maps to local land use authorities/units.

Strategy 2: Use Federal Farm Programs to reforest 75,000 acres (3%) of previously forested agricultural lands. Reforest historically forested sites, such as riparian areas with appropriate native species.

Strategy 3: Initiate resource conservation programs that promote forest resource management and protect the land base.

Strategy 4: Coordinate ecological goals for Wadena County with the North Central Landscape goals (refer to *Recommended Desired Outcomes, Goals and Strategies North Central Landscape Region – A Report to the MN Forest Resources Council*, March 25, 2003).

Goal B: Assure that 50% of the private forest land parcels greater than 40 acres have landowners who use professional advice in caring for their land currently, stewardship plans cover 26% of the non-industrial private land statewide.

Strategy 1: Publicize the importance of resource management through PSA's (Public Service Announcements) and other outreach efforts.

Strategy 2: Encourage programs that allow non-industrial private forest and prairie landowners to use well-qualified natural resource advisors at a reasonable cost.

Goal C: Maintain size of tracts of 500 contiguous acres or greater of forest land.

Strategy 1: Identify and map 500 acres or greater forest tracts and distribute the map and data to local land use authorities.

Strategy 2: Encourage organizations (State of Minnesota, National Sportsmen Groups, etc) to adopt conservation easements or pay stewardship costs for conservation easements on large forested properties. (Similar to current Legislative Commission on Minnesota's Resources - LCMR wildlife corridors project costing approximately \$10-12,000 per easement).

Strategy 3: MFRC should explore ways to encourage counties and townships to adopt land use planning and zoning regulations, which preserves an appropriate and significant portion of the non-developed private land base in 40 acre or greater parcels of forest, wetland, prairie, and agriculture.

Strategy 4: Encourage cluster developments that group development to certain parts of a parcel and leave the remaining naturally vegetated.

Goal D: Enhance the opportunities for restoring native species by increasing existing grassland habitat (primarily non-native) from the current 27% (1,500,200 acres) to 33 % (1,800,600 acres) of the landscape by using native species in grassland restorations and protecting all remaining native prairies.

Strategy 1: Encourage the establishment of an additional 300,000 acres of native grassland with at least 10% in Type I "Bird Conservation Areas" (appendix D for description).

Strategy 2: In the area east of the prairie regions, consolidate existing grass acreage into larger patches to create better habitat for nesting ducks and other grassland nesting birds.

Strategy 3: Restore a range of woodland/grassland mixes, including sparsely timbered oak savannah and other areas with a nearly closed canopy with varying amounts of shrub/grass understory.

Strategy 4: Discourage planting trees on inappropriate sites in the prairie region, such as areas in close proximity to existing native grasslands or areas being managed by mutual agreement of the affected parties as treeless habitat.

DFC 2. Water Resources. Water resources are managed to sustain their health for people and provide critical habitat for many species of plants and animals.

Goal A: Maintain and increase riparian buffers along and around all public waters.

Strategy 1: Encourage Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) to continue their riparian buffer work.

Strategy 2: Identify and map existing riparian buffers in the landscape.

Strategy 3: Develop small grant (matching funds) program to encourage proper planning, design and installation of riparian buffers.

Goal B: Best Management Practices (BMPs) are used on at least 80% of the management activities in forests and forest riparian zones to protect water quality.

Strategy 1: Support Minnesota Logger Education Program (MLEP) efforts to encourage loggers to practice BMPs.

Strategy 2: Expand surface water monitoring program.

Strategy 3: Encourage septic system updates whenever property changes ownership.

Strategy 4: Expand BMP monitoring activities.

Strategy 5: Encourage written BMP implementation plans for development projects near shorelands, riparian, etc.

Strategy 6: Use BMPs to protect well-head areas.

Goal C: Reduce non-point source pollution and urban flooding.

Strategy 1: Encourage use of educational programs on the benefits of preventing wind erosion.

Strategy 2: Encourage Extension Service to develop and promote BMPs for controlling wind erosion through farm associations, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, and SWCDs.

Strategy 3: Reduce the extent of land that is cultivated and developed within areas subject to wind erosion or snow pack.

DFC 3. Business. Viable and geographically diverse natural resource businesses that advocate the long term stewardship of community resources exist and grow in the landscape.

Goal A: Encourage natural resource based businesses, both service and product driven, of all sizes.

Strategy 1: Encourage partnering of for-profit and non-profit organizations to promote favorable business opportunities/climates.

Strategy 2: Use government purchasing power to encourage business development, for example purchase locally.

Strategy 3: Identify raw material base for potential business.

Goal B: Maintain a stable supply of raw natural resources products.

Strategy 1: Promote short rotation woody crops on up to 35,000 acres on appropriate sites.

Strategy 2: MFRC should explore the pros and cons of right to practice forestry legislation as a tool to promoting sustainable forestry.

DFC 4. Education and Awareness. Public is well educated relative to environmental concerns and how to obtain technical assistance.

Goal A: Public officials and their staff are aware of the benefits of healthy ecosystems and the value of viable natural resource based businesses.

Strategy 1: Identify economic cost of poor environmental policy and advertise those numbers against other economic costs.

Strategy 2: Provide environmental educational opportunities for county staff in appropriate areas of concern.

Strategy 3: Offer MFRC sponsored talks at annual statewide township and county association meetings.

Strategy 4: Facilitate a workshop and develop appropriate fact sheets on Forestry + Economic Development + Opportunities + Benefits, and invite local officials and landowners.

Goal B: Promote natural resource educational programs for grades K-12 that result in students understanding ecological functions and values.

Strategy 1: Fund and promote existing programs (Project Learning Tree, Project Wild, etc).

Strategy 2: Encourage an ecosystem based approach to teaching natural resource management.

Goal C: Land owners and potential land owners understand their role as land stewards and are aware of sources of professional natural resources assistance.

Strategy 1: Encourage information sharing between organizations such as Forestry co-ops, Extension-private landowners, etc.

Strategy 2: Encourage Extension and others to promote forestry assistance sources (Forest Stewardship Planning, etc) in their quarterly news releases to local media.

Goal D: The general public is informed of natural resource issues through the mass media to the extent that the public understands basic ecological concepts and that forest resources are renewable.

Strategy 1: Develop Public Service Announcements referring to natural resource management issues.

DFC 5. Coordination. Cooperation and coordination between agencies, interest groups, and private landowners has resulted in effective communication, planning, and natural resource management.

Goal A: Encourage the cooperative inventory and analysis of forest resources.

Strategy 1: MFRC should continue to serve a primary roll of creating and maintaining forestry data “clearing house”.

Strategy 2: Supplement Forest Inventory Analysis (FIA) efforts with continuing analysis of forest resources (such as the Gap Analysis Program - GAP).

DFC 6. Land Use Policy. Land use policies, regulations, and voluntary opportunities are in place to preserve the rural land base, recognizing wise development is necessary.

Goal A: Protect rural land and forest base from unrestricted/unplanned development to enhance or preserve the natural resources and reduce infrastructure costs.

Strategy 1: MFRC should explore ways to encourage counties and townships to adopt land use planning and zoning regulations, which preserves an appropriate and significant portion of the non-developed private land base in 40 acre or greater parcels of forest, wetland, prairie, and agriculture.

Strategy 2: MFRC should support the development and distribution of model land use plans and ordinances that promote sustainable forest resource management.

Goal B: Provide cost share incentives for sustainable natural resource practices.

Strategy 1: Utilize federal, state, and local agencies, sportsmen, service, farm organizations, conservation and environmental groups to develop and/or expand cost share programs in the following areas:

- reforestation projects
- prairie restoration
- wetland restoration
- riparian area restoration
- erosion control systems

Strategy 2: Target small, private natural resource based business development with government cost share monies.

Goal C: A tax structure that provides incentives for sustainable natural resource management.

Strategy 1: The MFRC should recommend to the legislature revisions in current tax law and/or propose new tax laws (property and/or income) that:

- assure property taxes are in proportion to the minimal demands and low social costs required by large tracts of undeveloped land (almost all demands-schools, roads, emergency services – are associated with home sites, not undeveloped land).
- discourage property taxes with highest and best valuation basis and emphasize taxes that promote current use valuation with long term commitment to land stewardship.
- promote an income and/or property tax credit for clean water produced on well managed riparian forests.
- provide favorable capital gains taxes as they pertain to the sale of forest products.
- keep the land forested.
- reward landowners that practice sustainable management of forest and prairie ecosystems.
- Encourage families to keep land holdings together.
- Allow tax credits for the value of a conservation easement.

Strategy 2: Promote Sustained Forestry Incentives Act (SFIA) with eligible landowners (provides incentives to landowners to using stewardship plans to provide a basis for sound management).

Strategy 3: MFRC should explore a sales tax exemption for certified wood products.