

Missouri Forest Resources Advisory Council
MoFRAC
Thursday, June 24, 2010
Conservation Employees' Credit Union Meeting Room
Jefferson City, MO
10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

MINUTES

Welcome and Introductions - The meeting was called to order by Chair Scott Brundage. The following were in attendance:

Mike Hoffmann, Peter Becker, Anastasia Becker, Mike Brown, Scott Brundage, Martha Clark, John Dwyer, Doug Enyart, Nate Goodrich, Roy Hengerson, Steve Jarvis, Shelby Jones, Clayton Lee, Wayne Lovelace, Dave Murphy, Sam Orr, Gus Raeker, Hank Stelzer, Richard Stricklin, Steven Thurman, David Whittekiend, Tom Draper, Fred Crouse, Hank Dorst, John Fleming, Brad McCord, Bill McGuire, Stuart Miller, Ken McCarty, Ed Keyser, Justine Gartner, John Tuttle, Gene Garrett, and Donna Baldwin.

Minutes Approved - Scott asked if anyone had corrections to the minutes from the March 10, 2010 meeting. With no corrections noted, the minutes were approved as written.

Forest Management Review, Mark Twain National Forest – Rick Hokans, USFS Economist from Milwaukee WI presented information on the Eastern Region Forest Management Reviews. He noted the new planning rule will govern the development of land management plans – it is not the plan itself. Includes things such as a minimum content of plans, when and how plans can be amended or revised, how the public is involved, analysis, assessment or evaluation requirements, how planning decisions are subject to appeals and objections and the relationship of plans to projects. Objections are submitted before the plan is finalized, and appeals are after the plan is signed. Part of a plan can be appealed while the rest of the plan can move forward. Plans address multiple uses (goals and objectives). Standards and guidelines are included and can be adjusted without a plan amendment.

There are new resource management challenges that the current planning rule does not address such as climate change, adaptive management, and landscape level planning and management. The current planning process is taking too long, with over 70 plans nationwide that are out of date. They take enormous time and resources to complete, and there are a growing number of legal challenges.

The challenge is whether the USFS can improve the planning process for the future, while also making sure stakeholders feel included and also keeping the process clear to all involved. Process must be transparent and inclusive. A list of substantive principles has been developed, which includes contribution to vibrant rural communities, effective proactive collaboration to reduce plan development time frame, must incorporate an “all lands” approach considering local, state, and private lands along with USFS lands.

In late July, USFS will distribute position papers for public comment. Target is December 2010-January 2011 for draft rule and draft environment impact statement (DEIS) to be published and review process will then begin for a 60-90 day period. Planning rule should be final November 11, 2011.

Scott then opened the floor to questions/comments. Dave Murphy noted that productive sustainable forests must be a priority in the MTNF plan.

Productivity & Economics of Conventional Logging with BMPs in Co-Harvests of Saw Logs and Smallwood – Dr. Peter Becker gave a presentation of a study that evaluated profitability of crop tree management as an alternative to clear cutting and high grading. The study used conventional equipment (chainsaws and skidders) on four sites harvested by individual tree and group selection. Dr. Becker showed some calculations that took into consideration production rates, machine costs, delivery cost, etc.

In summary, it appears that crop tree management is a profitable alternative to high grading and clearcutting. Also, costs of installing erosion control structures (water bars and weeps) were slight. Smallwood harvest by conventional equipment was profitable without subsidy, even with payment of modest fees for this smallwood to the landowner, due to high utilization of top wood and efficient co-harvest with saw logs. This system appears to be economically and environmentally superior and more readily attainable than whole-tree, in-the-woods chipping for production of bio-fuel feedstocks.

The research was funded by grants from NCR-SARE and Pioneer Forest, LLC to the Eastern Ozarks Forestry Council, which is grateful for the generous cooperation of numerous landowners, foresters, and loggers.

Scott opened the floor to questions. John Tuttle thanked Peter for his presentation, and suggested he take a closer look at repair costs (which can be significant), and to consider self-employment and road taxes, as well as liability insurance. Steve Jarvis noted that Pioneer Forests is bringing in researchers to do a study and they can provide that data.

Private Land Initiative Final Report & Recommendations – Stuart Miller gave a presentation and noted that compared to much of the rest of the world, Missouri is fortunate to still have vast and diverse wild forests. How do we build consensus among Missourians to keep it? In 2001, the US had 40 million acres of lawns, which is the size of Illinois. Land conversion and forest fragmentation from development pressures are greatly reducing the amount and quality of forests nation-wide and reducing the ecosystem services provided by forests. Landowner incentives and forest management are important, but land conversion and the lack of public interest and awareness should be raised as very high priorities for state agencies. We must build advocacy for forests.

The project has resulted in a “mini strategic plan” for MDC forestry division activities, with eight recommendations:

1. Connect water quality and quantity to healthy forests.
2. Link forests and conservation with the working agricultural land preservation movement. Promote the working family forest as a cultural heritage issue.
3. Develop an outreach, marketing, and communications strategy to build public awareness and to market healthy forests and ecosystem services.
4. Build consensus with forest stakeholders and move forward with initiatives to increase forest management and public awareness through outreach and marketing.
5. Develop incentive plans into working pilot projects to model success for federal agencies and ultimately to request additional funding.
6. Work with partners and staff to draw deeply on USDA Farm Bill forestry opportunities.
7. Evaluate using MDC forest land timber sale revenues to create a revolving fund for private forestry incentives.
8. Connect “a right to practice sustainable forestry” with private property, and incorporate this in any new forest legislation that might be proposed in the coming years.

We must find new ways to keep conservation relevant. The general public attitude about nature, trees and a clean environment is very high. But our conservation message is being lost in all the clutter of present day media and busy people’s lives. The goal is to make a conservation ethic second nature to people, just like fastening seatbelts. Because we can’t afford to pay everyone for conservation, we must convince them conservation is in their long-term best interest. Private land conservation is a key component to focus agency priorities to build a conservation ethic. Build a conservation consensus around private land – nine out of ten acres of Missouri are privately owned.

Conservation has faced drastically changing times before. The 1936 Missouri constitutional amendment that created MDC and the independent authority of the Commission was born in the Great Depression. The 1976 Design for Conservation arose in times of great social and cultural upheaval combined with inflation and unemployment that came from restructuring the national and world economies.

We can never compete dollar-for-dollar with investment capital, so we must raise people’s awareness about the values of nature – ecosystem services that may offset the pressure to convert land. We have the public trust and their confidence that we do good work, but we must translate that into public advocacy for nature and conservation.

Six initial action items:

1. Develop a pilot Forest Conservation Reserve Program for one or two priority forest resource areas in FY11 and implement in FY12.
2. Develop a Forest Landowner Stewardship Training Program based on existing curriculum in FY11 and implement in FY12
3. Develop a Forest Stewardship Training Program for Master Loggers based on revised existing curriculum in FY11 and implement in FY12.

4. Develop a Forestry Cooperative Training Program for Consulting Foresters in FY11 and implement in FY12.
5. Develop a forestry marketing and communications strategy, including a dedicated staff position as a marketing and communication coordinator in FY11 and implement pilot projects in FY12.
6. Develop a Woodland Outreach Program in concert with the existing Missouri Forestkeepers Network in FY12 and implement in FY13, coordinating closely with the Stream Teams Program staff and volunteers as partners. Initial training and involvement of forestry field staff can begin immediately with existing Stream Teams.

Stuart noted the report will be posted online and a link will be posted on the MoFRAC web page.

Scott noted that he'd like to have the recommendation on using MDC timber sale revenue to fund private land incentives discussed further at a future meeting. Gene Garrett asked if this report and recommendations has been shared with MDC leadership. Tom Draper noted that the report is being finalized and review is in process. However, there is more than revenue to consider such as other user interests, wildlife management, etc. We cannot forget that it is not Department land, but is the land is owned by the citizens of Missouri. Ed Keyser also noted that there are problems with dedicated funding, especially revenue for timber sales is a double-edged sword with multiple factors to consider and he hopes MDC leadership and the Conservation Commission investigates this thoroughly.

Sam asked about the Woodland Outreach Program. Stuart noted that it will be voluntary, and we'd start with projects on public land.

Scott noted that he would like to discuss MDC hiring contractors who do not have pesticide/herbicide license and insurance, and it needs looked into. Bill McGuire noted that we cannot police private industry or landowners. Anastasia Becker stated a listing of licensed commercial applicators is available on-line at the Department of Agriculture website. Sam suggested that certification status be included on lists MDC provides to landowners so they can make an educated decision.

Biofuels in Missouri – Steve Jarvis distribute a couple of handouts and turned the presentation over to Hank Dorst. Hank also had a map with circles that projected potential sourcing areas for biomass using facilities. He noted that we have 4 projects that are “most likely to succeed”: Perryville’s Liberty Green Plant, Salem’s ProEnergy Plant, Fort Leonard Wood’s plant, and University of Missouri Columbia’s plant.

He noted that ProEnergy has been talking to Ava, Winona, Houston, Salem and other Ozark communities for projects. If we add another 80 megawatt plant to the above four, we could be looking at approximately 900,000 more green tons or 2 MMT/year. We can grow that much sustainably.

Hank recommended that Missouri have a designated Biomass Coordinator to track the multiple requests for woody biomass resources. The group agreed we need to have a subcommittee, and the following were appointed: Nate Goodrich, Shelby Jones, David Whittekiend, Peter Becker, Steve Jarvis, Hank Stelzer, Gene Garrett, John Tuttle, and Hank Dorst. Scott will develop an agenda for a committee meeting to be held prior to the next MoFRAC meeting (September 16, 2010).

Forestry Association of Missouri – John Fleming noted the Association met May 10th and went over goals. He distributed a handout with a draft mission statement and goals for the Association, as well as copies of the membership application. Gene Garrett noted he had some reservations on the name. Martha added that small forest landowners may think it's not for them. John noted the group will meet again on Monday and will discuss the name further. He encouraged everyone to review the handout and provide the committee with feedback.

Where Are The Trees? – Scott Brundage noted he had sent a discussion paper on this topic via email to members prior to the meeting. In the handout, he noted a few weeks ago several very experienced foresters and Tree Farmers were talking and the subject of tree planting came up. In the discussion it was mentioned how many million seedlings the MDC nursery at Licking produces each year and that over the years several hundred million seedlings were produced and hopefully properly planted. It is logical today to ask, "Where are the trees?" If it's not the seedlings then what is the problem? Scott suggested MDC, MU-SNR and/or USFS have a study to help pinpoint the reasons for the lack of success and try to determine an effective plan to help correct the problem. He would like to see more user-friendly information provided to all individuals who order large quantities of trees (500+). Bob Ball noted that NRCS would welcome input to improve their tree planting job sheet.

Ed Keyser noted that weed control is huge. More often than not, foresters do give herbicide instruction to landowners. If a landowner does not use that information, it is not the forester's fault. He felt MoFRAC has more important issues to address.

EQIP Contract Report – Nate Goodrich distributed a couple handouts with charts summarizing EQIP forestry allocations. Approximately 7% of all EQIP contracts are for forestry (\$1,127,054). They have 51 contracts totaling \$66,000 to develop management plans on 7,463 acres. Forestry funding under EQIP has risen from \$219,000 in 2005 to \$1.12 million in 2010.

Wrap-up – Scott noted that since we are short on time, the agenda item on forest management recommendations will be tabled for a later meeting. A motion was made to adjourn by Fred Crouse, seconded by Gus Raeker, and the meeting was adjourned.