

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

**Forest Certification Work Instruction**

DRAFT  FINAL

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**Work Instruction Title:** 1.3 Regional State Forest Management Plan Development

**Work Area Group:** 1 – Plan, Monitor, and Review

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**Purpose:** Define roles, responsibilities, content and the timeline for the development of Regional State Forest Management Plans. Provide a document outline to follow when developing the plans.

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**Work Instruction:**

Two separate types of plans for each ecoregion will be developed. The first type of plan will provide specific operational direction for the management of State Forest lands, and will be known as **Regional State Forest Management Plans (RSFMPs)**. These plans are the focus of this document. Completion of these plans will be the immediate focus for work by the Northern Lower and Upper Peninsula (NLP, EUP and WUP) ecoteams. The NLP ecoteam will assist the Southern Lower Peninsula (SLP) ecoteam in drafting a management plan for the few State Forest lands located in the SLP ecoregion. The goal for completion of draft plans for the NLP, WUP, and EUP ecoregions is December 2011. Draft RSFMPs will not incorporate results from the Biodiversity Conservation Planning Process (Biodiversity Stewardship Areas), which will be incorporated in future revisions to the plans.

The second type of plan, **Ecoregional Resource Plans (ERPs)**, will be strategic in nature and address all land ownerships in a region (including all Department lands – forests, parks and wildlife areas). Completion of this type of plan will be the immediate focus of the Southern Lower Peninsula (SLP) ecoteam, with the northern ecoteams to follow. All ecoteams will use a collaborative public process for development of their ERPs in the form of Regional Advisory Teams, to be comprised of interested regional stakeholders, other agencies, and governmental representatives. More detailed Statewide Council (SWC) direction regarding the development of ERPs will be provided in a separate document.

The SWC has approved a proposal to use a concept of distinct management areas (MAs) in the Regional State Forest Management Plans. MAs are groupings of State Forest compartments that have similar attributes, such as vegetation types, landform, or proximity to key user groups. MAs will be used as a framework for describing the history, current conditions and management direction for vegetative management in the Regional State Forest Management Plans. The section on special resource areas (SCAs, HCVAs, and ERAs) in each Regional State Forest Management Plan and in the Michigan State Forest Management Plan (April 10, 2008) will address management direction for other uses and values (recreation, etc.) of the State Forest.

The purpose of using the MA framework in Regional State Forest Management Plans is to enable landscape-level analyses and specific direction that, when combined with other existing standards and guidelines will help to guide tactical decisions made at each Forest Management Unit which will still be made using the existing compartment review process.

## Regional State Forest Management Plan Development

1. Regional State Forest Management Plan development will be carried out within the context of, and with consideration for statewide, division, local, species-specific, and other DNR planning efforts, and will implement strategic goals as provided by the Michigan State Forest Management Plan and Ecoregional Resource Plans (when completed). While the focus will be on DNR state forest lands within each ecoregion, conditions and trends within the broader ecoregion will be considered. Plan development will occur with the input of the public throughout the process. The planning documents will provide long-term, landscape-level direction to field managers to guide decision making at the Forest Management Unit level.
2. The process will be guided by each ecoregional planning team. Consultation with external parties (e.g. The Nature Conservancy, Michigan Natural Features Inventory, U.S. Forest Service, Indian Tribes, and various industry and environmental organizations.) will be expected. As part of this process and in preparation for plan development, resource assessments will be identified and completed by ecoteam staffs.

Subsequent planning steps will entail preparing the plan with public involvement. A recommended sequence tied to plan development is as follows:

- Engage the public in the planning process prior to formulating the plan
- Complete Sec. 1 - Understanding the Regional Forest Plan
- Complete Sec. 2 - Forest History
- Complete Sec. 3 - Current Forest Conditions and Trends
- Complete Sec. 4 - Management Area Direction
- Complete Sec. 5 - Special Resource Area Management Direction
- Complete Section 6 - Monitoring, Review & Revision
- Complete Sec. 7 – Appendices, Sec. 8 – Glossary, and an Executive Summary
- Engage the public in reviewing the complete draft plan; hold a combined (all ecoregions) public comment period and revised based on public input.
- Submit final draft of completed plan to Division Management Teams for review and recommendations and then to the Statewide Council and DNR Director for approval.

Suggested means of public involvement include:

- Consultative techniques such as public comment periods, focus groups, surveys and public meetings.
  - Establish/maintain a regional internet web page on the DNR website that lists the history, timeline, supporting documentation and current status of planning. Provide an on-line means of submitting public comments on the plan process and draft plan sections. Publish a summary of all comments and DNR response, using DIT software programs such as Communications manager 5.1.
  - Maintain a dedicated email account and the DNR Facebook webpage to provide opportunities for on-line comments, announcements and discussions.
  - Update regional lists of organizations and agencies who are potentially interested in the regional planning process. Provide draft documents and other information to these groups.
  - Develop a presentation describing the regional planning processes that can be offered at stakeholder and DNR functions.
3. Draft Regional State Forest Management Plans will be completed by December 2011 with final approval expected in March 2013, in accordance with the October 4, 2011 SWC approved timeline. Consistent with the Forest Stewardship Council certification standard, Regional State Forest Management Plans will be reviewed every 10 years and revised as necessary to incorporate the results of monitoring or changing ecological, social or economic circumstances.
  4. Subject to future revisions by the Statewide Council, the general outline of the Regional State Forest Management Plans should be as follows:

### Executive Summary

1. Components of the Regional State Forest Plan

2. Regional Forest History
3. Current Regional Forest Conditions and Trends
4. Management Area Direction
  - a. Management Area 1
    - i. Forest Cover Type Management
    - ii. Common and Rare Fish, Wildlife and Plant Habitat Management
    - iii. Forest Health Management
    - iv. Fire Management
    - v. Access
    - vi. Other Considerations
  - b. Management Area 2, etc.
5. Special Resource Area Management Direction
  - a. Special Conservation Areas
  - b. High Conservation Value Areas
  - c. Ecological Reference Areas
6. Monitoring, Review & Revision
  - a. Management Review System
  - b. Plan Monitoring
  - c. Plan Revision
7. Appendices
8. Glossary

5. The following attributes shall be applied to the State Forest within each ecoregion and selectively used in the delineation of management areas possessing similarity in attributes. All attributes may not apply to all management areas.

#### OWNERSHIP ATTRIBUTES

- a. Adjacency to other public (including DNR parks and wildlife areas) or private ownerships, and also considering their varying intensity of stewardship and protection.
- b. Percentage of the landscape in different public and private ownerships.
- c. Consideration of ownership size and connectivity.
- d. Areas with existing DNR management plans.

#### SOCIAL/ECONOMIC ATTRIBUTES

- a. Proximity to wood product markets.
- b. Proximity to population areas and major transportation arteries.
- c. Trends in population growth and recreation demands.
- d. Proximity to known historical/cultural sites.
- e. Degree of access.

#### ECOLOGICAL ATTRIBUTES

- a. Similar site potential as expressed by habitat type.
- b. Historic vegetative composition.
- c. Current vegetative composition and structural characteristics.
- d. Wildlife species distribution patterns for select species (including threatened and endangered species and those defined by the DNR Wildlife Action Plan (WAP)).
- e. Proximity to known ecologically sensitive sites.
- f. Existing forest connectivity or fragmentation.
- g. Analyses of watersheds and the climate, bedrock geology, glacial landform and soils in Ecological Classification Systems.

6. Using Management Areas as a framework, Regional State Forest Management Plans will contain specific, quantitative landscape-level direction that will inform tactical decision-making processes during compartment review at the Forest Management Unit (FMU) level of operations. This management direction will be embodied in Sections 4 and 5 of the

plans. Management direction should be founded on Section 3 and other analyses of landscape-level conditions and trends, as provided by:

- a. Approved statewide, regional or local plans and guidelines identified in the document “A Comprehensive Summary of the Department of Natural Resources Planning Process for Natural Resource Management in Michigan”, specifically including:
  - i. The Michigan State Forest Management Plan (2008),
  - ii. Ecoregional Resource Plans,
  - iii. Michigan’s Wildlife Action Plan,
  - iv. The Kirtland’s Warbler Management Plan,
  - v. DNR River Assessments.
  - vi. DNR Guidelines for Red Pine Management (2006),
  - vii. Within-Stand Retention Guidance (2006),
  - viii. A Process for Implementing Mesic Conifer Restoration on State Land, Western Upper Peninsula, Michigan (2004),
  - ix. Green-up Guidelines (2006),
  - x. Michigan DNR Approach to the Protection of Rare Species and Rare Species Assessment Guidelines for DNR Staff on State Forest Lands (2006),
  - xi. Interim Guidelines for Evaluating Riparian Management Zones on State Lands (2004),
  - xii. Conservation Area Management Guidelines (2005).
  - xiii. Sustainable Soil and Water Quality Practices on Forest Land (2009)
- b. Analyses of the cover types in each Management Area, specifically including:
  - i. Age-class distributions,
  - ii. Cover type structural and compositional trends,
  - iii. Basal area, size classes and stocking,
  - iv. Primary understory vegetation types.
- c. Analysis of successional trends and site suitability analysis using the Kotar Guide to Forest Communities and Habitat Types for each Management Area.
- d. Forest health conditions and trends analysis.
- e. Recreational use assessments.
- f. Economic demand assessments.

Management direction in Sections 4 and 5 of Regional State Forest Management Plans should provide specific language to achieve landscape-level goals (as expressed by the plans listed in subsection (a) above) through compartment-level prescriptions, including the following examples:

- a. Current major cover type acres within each MA,
- b. Section 5 Special Resource Area acreages within each MA.
- c. Projected sums of major cover type acreages within each MA at the end of the 10-year planning period.
- d. Treatments to achieve the projected sums of major cover type acreages within each MA at the end of the 10-year planning period.
- e. Detailed descriptions of cover type maintenance, expansion, conversion or natural succession, and management for achieving specific habitat improvement objectives

Acreages must be estimated where possible, recognizing that treatments often serve multiple objectives (e.g. age class balancing and provision of wildlife habitat such as in the case of aspen management) and some general objectives may not be easily quantified at the acreage level (e.g. within-stand retention of biodiversity and landscape level diversity).

Management direction will be consistent with divisional program goals and objectives for resource uses. Where there are conflicts regarding disparate regional goals and objectives, attempts at resolution should first occur at the ecoteam level. Where resolution at the ecoteam level is not successful, conflict resolution shall be elevated to the level of regional divisional field coordinators. The SWC has the final decision-making authority for program-level conflicts that cannot be resolved by field staff.

**Scope:** (All State Forest Land and Affected Divisions):  State Forest Land  Other: Michigan lands other than State-owned

DNR – FMD  DNR – Wildlife  DNR – Fish  DNR – Law  DNR – Parks

**Responsibility and Role:** (Staff who will implement or supervise this instruction)

Job Title/Division	Role
All DNR personnel within an Ecoregion	Select staff will participate in development of the plan. All staff will have opportunity for input and need an awareness of regional planning processes. All staff will participate in implementing the plan through on-the-ground operations.
FMD Inventory and Planning Specialists & Wildlife Ecologists	Document and summarize the revisions to regional planning processes and assist with the development and review of the regional plans through the Ecoregional Planning Teams.
Other specialists	Assist with the development of particular plan sections pertaining to specialty.
Ecoteam	Oversees regional planning processes. Coordinates DNR regional input and public input into plan development. Review and draft regional plan and present to Statewide Council. Responsible for plan monitoring and recommending revisions to the plan and implications for DNR operations. Responsible for communicating and coordinating with DNR staff within the ecoregion and Ecoregional Planning Team.
Ecoregional Planning Team: Wildlife Mgt Unit Ecologist/Planner (WE) FMD Inv. & Planning Specialist (IPS) Lansing FMD Cert. planner (FCP) FD representative	Create Regional State Forest Management Plans: WE and IPS – Liaison between FCP and Ecoteams, Draw on field-based Division resources to write and compile local sections of plan and integrate with statewide components. FCP – Draw on Lansing and other Division resources to write statewide components of plans and compile with regional sections. Assures compliance with legislation and compatibility with certification requirements.
Statewide Resource Planning Team (SRPT)	Review draft regional plans for consistency and their content/direction compatibility with other plans. Responsible for monitoring and analyzing the 4 regional plans to ensure they are meeting statewide objectives and direction from the Michigan State Forest Management Plan (2008).
Statewide Council (SWC)	Appoints Ecoteams and the SRPT, and approves the planning process, the final draft regional plans, and future revisions.
DNR Director	Approves regional plans.

**Training/Skills:** (Those required to accomplish work instruction)

Item:	Brief Description of Skill or Course	Exists/ New
Familiarity with OI, FIA, & T-Sale Data;	Good computer skills with databases	<input type="checkbox"/> E <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N
GIS/Analysis Skills	ArcView/ArcInfo	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> N
Models/Modeling	Skills or knowledge of resource models and modeling	<input type="checkbox"/> E <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N
Facilitation Training	Facilitate meetings with stakeholders-internal and external	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> N
Plan process	Review planning process with Department staff	<input type="checkbox"/> E <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N

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**References:**

- Michigan State Forest Management Plan
  - Part 525, Statewide Forest Resources Plan, of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451
  - A Comprehensive Summary of the DNR Planning Process for Natural Resources Management in Michigan.
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**Monitoring:**

- Reporting, monitoring, analyzing, and adapting management would take place at all 3 levels-FMU, Ecoregion, and Statewide. Monitoring of the regional plans will be the primary responsibility of the Forest Management Division. Specifics of this will be outlined in Section 6 of the plans.
  - Subsequent review and revision of the process will be the responsibility of the ecoteams, Statewide Resource Planning Team and the Statewide Council.
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**Records:**

- Public comments
  - Public meeting notes and comments
  - SWC documented approvals
  - Maps and background documents
  - Analysis results
  - Draft and final plan documents
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