

Lake Superior State  
Forest Sustainable  
Forest Management  
Pilot Project

REPORT

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# Roles and Responsibilities for Forest Management Planning in the Lake Superior State Forest

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## 1. Introduction

Forest management systems intended to be certified according to Canadian Standards Association (CSA) standards for sustainable forest management (SFM) need to be able to demonstrate that the roles and responsibilities for management have been well defined. Auditors are instructed to assess evidence that all of the persons or agencies necessary to ensure that the essentials of the SFM system are carried out are actively participating and that their respective roles and responsibilities have been well defined (Johnson *et al.* 1998).

The CSA SFM System protocol requires substantial efforts be made to ensure that the “chain of process” is clear. An auditor or other public reviewer should be able to follow the management system of the forest in question from the corporate commitment to SFM (i.e., policy), through the strategic management plan, down to the practices level, and then from the practices level back up to the policy level.

## 2. Defining Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities for each component of the management system need to be well characterized. For example, if a corporate policy commits the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) to “...provide for the protection, integrated management and responsible use of a healthy, productive and undiminished forest resource<sup>1</sup> ...” the management system should clearly identify who has the responsibility and authority to commit the MDNR to the policy. The responsible party should show that it has committed the MDNR to that particular policy by formally endorsing the policy.

Likewise, the MDNR has to take steps, in terms of procedures, that demonstrate that it is implementing the policy and identifying who is responsible for managing those procedures. Each procedure should specify who is responsible for the actual implementation of it. In the case of the procedure for the SFM planning system, this should detail who will be the planning lead, who will be on the planning team, how often the plan will be revisited, and how the plan will be approved and by whom.

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpt from the Forest Management Division mission statement.

The planning system will detail what needs to be done within a fixed time period, but it may not necessarily identify who needs to do it. The operational planning frequently falls to an area-level work planning exercise. It is critical that this link between plan and operations be clear and interactive. In addition to the need to see this link for certification purposes, there are two main reasons for having this link well defined. The first is that the “operational staff” need to understand what they are expected to do to complete their part of MDNR’s commitment to SFM.

The second is that the “planning staff” need to understand clearly the practical constraints, in terms of knowledge, staff or financial resources, that restrict the abilities of operational staff to implement planned activities. This feedback needs to go from the operational staff to the planning team and then to the public that participates in developing values and indicators of SFM. As part of MDNR’s commitment to continually review and improve the SFM system, this feedback needs to be considered.

The commitments established in an SFM plan will very likely impact operational staff from all divisions of the MDNR. Given the current management structure of the MDNR, where each division is managed in a largely autonomous manner at the regional level, this could be problematic. The MDNR will need to build on its “Joint Venture” activities to address this challenge.

### **3. Addressing Roles and Responsibilities**

This section comments on the likely requirements for addressing the roles and responsibilities aspect of the SFM system. Figure 1 outlines conceptually the roles and responsibilities for committing to and implementing an SFM system.

#### **Activity 1: Sustainable Forest Management Policy**

Report #2: An assessment of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources’ Commitment to Sustainable Forest Management (Hayes *et al.* 1999a) offers a more detailed comment on MDNR’s position with respect to an SFM policy. To summarize, the MDNR does have a policy (Natural Resources Commission Policy 2207) requiring forest management planning be done. It does not appear as though this policy is enforced with rigor.

Activity	Role	Suggested Responsibility
1. Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) Policy	Create a policy that commits MDNR to SFM	- Written by Policy Staff - Approved by Natural Resources Commission (NRC)
2. SFM Planning Procedure	Create a procedure for writing an SFM plan	Senior MDNR Staff
3. Create an SFM Plan	Compile an SFM plan for a specified forest area	Planning Team: District Planning Specialist (Lead) Area Foresters Area Wildlife Biologists Area Fisheries Biologists Area Parks Staff Others (as specified in procedure)
4. Review and Approve SFM Plan	Review and approve implementation of SFM plan	District Supervisors, District Chiefs or NRC
5. Implement SFM Plan	Conduct forest operations in accordance with approved SFM plan	Area Staff - Foresters Wildlife Biologists Other
6. Review and Improve	Step 1: Review and improve operations	-----> Area Staff
	Step 2: Review and improve plan	-----> Planning Team
	Step 3: Review and improve procedures	-----> Senior MDNR Staff
	Step 4: Review and improve policy	-----> NRC

**Figure 1. Roles and responsibilities for committing to and implementing an SFM system.**

The CSA SFM System shares a requirement with other environmental management systems that policy statements should be specifically adopted and approved by boards of directors or other senior governing bodies. The current policy needs to be updated, adopted and approved by the MDNR’s senior governing body.

**Responsibility for Activity 1** - The Natural Resources Commission appears to be the body that should approve this policy.

## **Activity 2: Sustainable Forest Management Planning Procedure**

A procedure for creating SFM plans needs to be drafted and adopted by senior MDNR staff. The procedure should specify a planning cycle, the scope of the plan and the forest areas involved. The procedure should also identify the position that will lead the planning effort and other MDNR staff expected to be members of the planning team. The procedure should speak to the responsibilities and authority for the plan, the role of the public, and the development of criteria and indicators of SFM. The procedure should also outline the requirements to:

- gather the background information required to support the plan,
- specify the strategic direction for the plan,
- evaluate management alternatives,
- conduct annual and 10-year term operational planning, and
- monitor, report and improve on planning and operational activities.

Finally, the procedure should clearly identify the consequences of failing to produce an acceptable plan on time.

Report #13: A Forest Management Planning Guide for the Lake Superior State Forest (Callaghan *et al.* 1999) provides a template for much of the information that should be included in this procedure.

**Responsibility for Activity 2** - After confirming the presence and NRC approval of an SFM policy, certification auditors will look for the procedure designed to implement the policy. The procedure will need to be approved and adopted by senior MDNR staff.

## **Activity 3: Create a Sustainable Forest Management Plan**

The procedure for creating an SFM plan will identify who the plan leader and planning team members are in terms of regional or headquarters staff positions. The planning team should include foresters, wildlife and fisheries biologists, and parks, recreation and economic development staff with detailed knowledge of each of the forest areas being included in the plan.

The team serves two purposes. First, it provides enough human resources to complete this relatively complex task within the time allotted. Second, it provides an effective two-way communication link between the planning effort and operational staff.

The actual planning team will need to conduct or manage all activities associated with completing the SFM plan. Report #13 (Callaghan *et al.* 1999) offers a template for this. The plan will clearly identify who is responsible for overall completion of the plan, who is required to sit on the planning team, and the timelines for the effort. It is likely that the planning team will have the opportunity to add additional members, particularly extra-agency members, who bring particularly relevant expertise or perspectives to the planning effort.

**Responsibility for Activity 3** - The responsibility for creating the SFM plan will reside with the designated plan leader and the planning team.

#### **Activity 4: Review and Approve a Sustainable Forest Management Plan**

The SFM plan will be the public document that specifies the manner in which the State Forest will be managed for a 10-year period. It is imperative that the plan is carefully reviewed by senior staff who understand the implications of the planning activity for other Departmental and State activities. The plan should be reviewed by the Chiefs of each MDNR division. The Chiefs would then recommend the plan for approval by the Director of the MDNR.

**Responsibility for Activity 4** - The SFM plan should be reviewed by the MDNR Division Chiefs and approved by the Director of the MDNR.

#### **Activity 5: Implement a Sustainable Forest Management Plan**

Although the planning effort is relatively complex, it remains what most would regard as the guide for the real work. The plan will provide specific direction on which forest operations have been approved. The task is to get them all done, in an agreed upon manner, within the time period covered by the SFM plan.

**Responsibility for Activity 5** - The District Supervisor is responsible for operational programs. MDNR has a systemic management challenge in that district level responsibility is split among the Forest Management, Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks Divisions. This will be problematic as the SFM plan continues to develop from a largely timber-based effort to a more holistic ecosystem-based approach, and responsibility for implementing programs that jointly impact different ecosystem sectors needs to be coordinated. It is

very likely that MDNR will need to aggressively develop joint management at the regional or sub-regional level to address this.

The responsibility for implementation will be made even more challenging as the MDNR tries to accommodate the evaluation of indicators of SFM produced through the public consultation process. An effort to involve stakeholders in defining this responsibility was made during Workshop II with Lake Superior State Forest stakeholders. A review of Appendix 4 from Report #9: Workshop II Summary: Establishing Targets, Practices and Responsibilities for the Indicators of the Lake Superior State Forest (Hayes *et al.* 1999b) reveals some of the challenges that are likely to be encountered in assigning responsibility for SFM indicators. Only one indicator was thought to be the exclusive responsibility of the Forest Management Division. All others require input from other divisions within MDNR, or other agencies entirely. If the state is to embark on an SFM planning system that is to include the public's input into the development of indicators of sustainable management, the management effort will have to be substantially more integrated than the organizational structure suggests is currently the case.

MDNR will be required to ensure that for each indicator and practice, a person, position or agency is identified as responsible for its maintenance. By doing this, new areas of responsibility will likely be identified. MDNR will then need to decide if they have the resources (i.e., commitment) to manage those areas credibly. This becomes a very real feedback loop on the basic qualification of an indicator. If resources cannot be made available, one can assume that the indicator presented is not sufficiently relevant or practical to be put in place operationally.

#### **Activity 6: Review and Improve**

An SFM system requires a process for continually reviewing and improving all aspects of the system. Operational monitoring will address most of the operational issues. Was the target level for each indicator met at the end of the planning cycle? The yes/no response will be an early primer for a need for improved performance.

The system should confirm that the review and continual improvement process takes place beyond the operational level. The planning system, as well as the policy and procedures supporting the planning, should have processes in place for gathering information on past performance, monitoring, supporting and incorporating relevant research, and

developing all levels of the system to be more cost and ecologically effective.

**Responsibility for Activity 6** - As indicated in Figure 1, the responsibility for continual improvement is attached to the responsibility for each activity. Review and improvement of operational activities is probably best led by area staff. Those who review planning activities will include planners, operational staff (who are critically influenced by the planning process ) and senior staff responsible for ensuring that the SFM procedure remains current and incorporates suggested improvements for the planning process. Similarly, the procedure and policy should be reviewed by staff experienced in operations and staff who have an understanding of the broader policy initiatives that strategically direct both MDNR and the State government.

Finally, there is a responsibility for the people of Michigan to remain active participants in the planning process. The proposed system is, in a comparative sense, very open to public comment at all levels of planning and management. To a large extent, the system will be improved in response to the contributions of a public that remains actively involved in the management of their natural resources.

## References Cited

Callaghan, B., T. Clark, C. Howard, and A. Hayes. 1999. A Forest Management Planning Guide for the Lake Superior State Forest. Report #13 from the Lake Superior State Forest Sustainable Forest Management Pilot Project. 89 p.

Hayes, A., C. Howard and T. Clark. 1999a. An Assessment of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources' Commitment to Sustainable Forest Management. Report #2 from the Lake Superior State Forest Sustainable Forest Management Pilot Project. 44 p.

Hayes, A., C. Howard and T. Clark. 1999b. Workshop II Summary: Establishing Targets, Practices and Responsibilities for the Indicators of the Lake Superior State Forest. Report #9 from the Lake Superior State Forest Sustainable Forest Management Pilot Project. 56 p.

Johnson, P., M. Buszynski, and E. Pekilis [Eds.]. 1998. Plus 1136 The SFM Essentials - An Introduction to the Sustainable Forest Management Standards. Canadian Standards Association. 154 p.

This report was completed as part of the requirements for a project funded by the Great Lakes Environmental Protection Fund. The objective of the project was to develop a new forest management planning system for the Lake Superior State Forest that meets sustainable forest management standards, specifically those of the Canadian Standards Association and the Forest Stewardship Council.

### **Project Partners:**

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### **Reports generated by this project include:**

Project Summary: The Lake Superior State Forest Sustainable Forest Management Pilot Project

An Assessment of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources' Commitment to Sustainable Forest Management

The Lake Superior State Forest: A Description

Michigan Department of Natural Resources Operations Inventory: Survey Results

Roles and Responsibilities for Forest Management Planning in the Lake Superior State Forest

Public Participation in Forest Management Planning in the Lake Superior State Forest: Finding the Right Pathway

Establishing Criteria and Indicators for the Lake Superior State Forest

Workshop I Summary: Values and Indicators of the Lake Superior State Forest

Workshop II Summary: Establishing Targets, Practices and Responsibilities for the Indicators of the Lake Superior State Forest

Modeling Forest Management on the Lake Superior State Forest

Wildlife Habitat Projections for 15 Species in the Lake Superior State Forest

Risk Assessment of Forest Management for the Lake Superior State Forest

A Forest Management Planning Guide for the Lake Superior State Forest

Further information on this report or any of the reports listed may be obtained from:



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