



Forest Management Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Location: Virtual meeting

Date: July 14, 2021

Roll call

- I. Present for the Forest Management Advisory Committee (FMAC or Committee):
 - Gary Melow (Chair), Michigan Biomass
 - Makhayla LaButte, Michigan United Conservation Clubs of Michigan (MUCC)
 - Richard Kobe, Michigan State University (MSU)
 - Paul Jernberg, Trailriders Snowmobile Club
 - Kenny Wawsczyk, North Country Trail Association
 - Bill Botti, Michigan Forest Association
 - Andrew Storer, Michigan Technological University (via phone)
 - Warren Suchovsky, Suchovsky Logging (via phone)

- II. Present for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR or department) Staff
 - Jeff Stampfly, Chief, Forest Resources Division
 - Kim Korbecki, executive assistant to Forest Resources Division
 - David Price, Manager, Forest Planning and Operations Section
 - Scott Whitcomb, Executive Division, MDNR

- III. Others Present
 - Robert & Marie Gale

Meeting minutes

I. Opening Comments:

Chair Gary Melow called the July 14, 2021 Forest Management Advisory Committee (FMAC) meeting to order at 1:08 p.m. He thanked all for attending.

II. Consent Agenda –

Adoption of the July 14, 2021 Forest Management Advisory Committee (FMAC) Meeting Agenda. Motion was made and seconded to adopt the July 14, 2021 FMAC meeting agenda. The agenda was adopted unanimously

III. Adoption of April 14, 2021 FMAC Meeting Minutes –

The following revisions were requested to be made to the April 14 meeting minutes:

- a. Makhayla LaButte – revision to the “on the ground program”
- b. Top of Page 3, strike duplicate paragraph
- c. Page 4, Item F – remove “working on sub-group”
- d. Page 3 under “Action Items/Follow-up, it should read MAEAP (not MAEP)
- e. Page 4 – what is a strategy sprint team? Please define it somewhere. This item was removed from the April 14 FMAC meeting minutes.
- f. Page 4, Item D, second bullet point, “OHV” should be “ORV”.

Ms. Kim Korbecki reported she had received some additional edits to the minutes via email. Those edits had been made to the minutes and would be included in the final version of the minutes. A motion was made to support adoption of the April 14, 2021 meeting minutes, as amended. The motion was seconded, and the April 14, 2021 FMAC meeting minutes, as amended, were adopted unanimously.

IV. Public Comments –

Chair Melow opened the floor for public comment from Robert and Marie Gale. Mrs. Gale submitted a letter which was included with the agenda. Their main concern is that they feel there has been a lot more clearcutting of state forests than there has been in the past. They feel it is disturbing not only visually, but also to those pursuing recreational activities. They do not object to forest management; however, they feel that other methods of timber harvesting that leaves trees should be utilized. Mr. Bill Botti asked if the operation inventory tells what type of trees are to be cut, and if clearcutting is increasing. Mrs. Gale responded they have seen a lot of local clearcuts in

recent years. A huge acreage was clearcut recently and up to this point there was little to no retention of trees. They feel slopes should have some trees left because of erosion.

The Gales referenced a letter from Chief Jeff Stampfly, Forest Resources Division, Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) in response to earlier concerns they expressed regarding the clearcutting, loss of mature trees and tree diversity, and the difficulty in using online maps to determine planned harvest activity. Mr. Warren Suchovsky, Suchovsky Logging, commented he has noticed there are larger harvest areas in the Upper Peninsula in his community than he has seen in the past. Mr. David Price, MDNR, remarked that large jack pine harvests necessary for Kirtland's Warbler habitat and certification requirements constrain harvest size. Additional discussion on balancing age class along with oak and aspen management ensued.

Mr. Botti commented that when he worked for the MDNR, they hired a student from the University of Michigan to do a study on oak regeneration. The conclusion was that regeneration was related to stump diameter. The larger the stump, the less chance it would sprout. They can't speak to individual situations where a tree may have been cut where it wasn't supposed to be cut.

V. Recommendation of Support of Michigan Agricultural Environmental Assurance Program

Mr. Ben Schram requested that the Michigan Agricultural Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) be considered acceptable as sustainable for grants and programs. This item was previously tabled to allow committee members time to review it. The Intent is to raise awareness of MAEAP and make a recommendation to the MDNR. Mr. Botti asked whether there is follow-up to putting a sign on someone's property and if anyone checks to see if the person is still following the recommendations. He had a personal experience after administering a timber sale and saw that someone was logging after the sign went up.

Mr. Suchovsky commented that the problem is wood from a MAEAP would have to be endorsed by the Forest Stewardship Council or the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, and the international agency that recognizes the program. Discussion ensued with the recommendation this topic be postponed until the October meeting so members can review the actual language in the letter. Members didn't believe legislative action was required while others weren't sure MAEAP needed certification. The letter is asking MDNR to consider MAEAP to conform with its practices.

VI. The Climate Plan and Fire Update – Chair Gary Melow

Climate Plan - Mr. Scott Whitcomb, MDNR, provided an overview on MDNR's involvement with carbon. Governor Whitmer has committed the State of Michigan to be carbon neutral by 2050. The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy is tasked to develop and implement the "MI Healthy Climate Plan". There are five council workgroups covering building housing, energy intensive industries, energy production, transmission, distribution and storage,

natural working lands and forest products, and transportation and mobility. The MDNR has a tremendous opportunity to help with this.

Since this effort was initiated in March, workgroups have been meeting every other week. Many interested groups did not have a lot of knowledge about forestry management. There was a lot of professional expertise in the room.

- The committee discussed conversion of forest land and local government input with Mr. Whitcomb, stating they do have some folks representing local areas covering land use issues at a county or regional scale. The weakness is that there is not much participation in the northern part of the state. Mr. Whitcomb is hopeful lands will be used for what they are most productive for.
- The council workgroups involved with solar are looking at other agricultural uses as well as wildlife. One of the biggest focuses is livestock methane. The carbon balance looks good. It is more land-based programs looking towards current policies and practices. The agricultural sector is responsible for about 10% of Michigan's emissions in fertilizer. There is still technical knowledge that farmers don't use or know. They are encouraging people to use technology. This has been an enormous undertaking and is moving very quickly. Everything is connected. Ultimately the council will come up with a plan of how to act moving forward by the end of the year.
- There is an opportunity to talk about biomass, but there haven't been any discussions yet. With biomass it's a matter of how it competes with other energy sources. There are about two million vehicles on Michigan roads. To electrify all of that would require two (2) of the major coal plants that are gone. It is a huge undertaking to get this to work with biomass. They can help with all of this, but the concern is erosion. If they are not viable, they go away. They provided 2019 with 16 percent of energy. There is a huge knowledge gap and there is a poor understanding of forest management.
- Topic discussion concluded with a comment about converting electricity to hydrogen, and how to store energy to convert the energy to hydrogen. Previously, there was a program in Ontario where it became very clean, but it never took hold because no one wanted to invest in it. For many energy sources, there is a lot of conversation of the benefits of carbon offsets. There is a lot of debate and discussion, as well as research that needs to go on. There is a lot of interesting technology, but ultimately sharing with the population is a problem. There are still many people out there scared about climate change and educating the population is important.

Fire Update - The MDNR has responded to more wildfires (253 statewide as of July 12th) and conducted more prescribed burning this year than last year. To date, they've conducted fifty-one (51) prescribed burns for 4,600 acres. Fire activity has slowed a lot because of the rain and green up. Currently they have three engines deployed to Minnesota and seven additional staff are further west in California and Montana. The national level is at Level 4 which is very high for this

early in the year. A question was asked about MDNR staff going to Ontario for fires and at this point no one has gone to Ontario. Most of the prescribed burns are being conducted for wildlife habitat.

VII. State Forester Report - David Price provided the State Forester's report.

- a. The projected timber sale acres by the end of the year are at 50,000, with Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) acres at 6,000.
- b. Remote Work Agreements (RWA) for state employees continue. The MDNR staff are expected to either return to the office or have an RWA in place by the day after Labor Day.
- c. Work continues on computer programs with the release of a customer utility application which provides more functionality, including electronic signatures and sale tracking. The new timber cruise protocol is in place, utilizing a new Michigan based taper model and a customized version of Mobile Map software. Sale volumes under the new system will be more accurate. The transition with the utility and protocol is going well and they have received positive feedback
- d. They have hired a GNA Specialist for the administration of the United States Forest Service GNA agreements. Mr. Derek Cross is now working with GNA for all three national forests.
- e. Mr. Price reported on the State Forest Management Plan. They are still working on the structure of the plan and the models. Mr. Dan Heckman is working on the forest modeling for forest management. The wildlife habitat will be modeled like never before, which is exciting for public engagement as well. They will be talking with Michigan tribes as well as stakeholders. They won't have final approval until 2023 because of the review process.
- f. Mr. Price also reported on forest health. The gypsy moth infestation has been very bad this year. The worst has passed, but aerial survey has been ongoing to see the damage that has occurred.
- g. The Forest Action Plan has been submitted to the Forest Service with no approval from them yet.
- h. Legislative reports – the reports discussed off-road vehicles getting access to all forest roads. They are doing a lot of damage.
- i. Mr. Paul Bloese from Michigan State University (MSU) is retiring and they're exploring a partnership with MSU to replace him with a permanent faculty position. This person will run MICHCOTIP and investigate assisted migration and forest genetics as it relates to forest health, as well as other research and extension. Dr. Rich Kobe reported they are very happy about the collaboration between MSU and the MDNR, with funding for the position being split 50/50.
 - Mr. Suchovsky commented about a forest health issue involving the long-horned beetle that is in southern Ohio. Dr. Kobe responded that his people are keeping tabs on it. There are plenty of forest health issues in Michigan to keep them busy.

VIII. Standing Items

- a. Trails – Mr. Paul Jernberg commented they talked about stumps last time. He is hoping to get a list to the MDNR and see if maybe they can cut the stumps higher. An operator recently caught the front of his tractor. Mr. Jernberg has also been told there may be a portion in the contract that all stumps must be cut flush. That would be better than anything above the ground. Several drags could pass over.
 - In the Baldwin area within the Manistee National Forest they did about ten acres of gated trails and planted warm season grasses to make it more nature friendly and less likely to erode. The grasses were supplied by the Forest Service. Hopefully, they will take hold and then next year they will have more gated traffic.
- b. North Country Trail – Mr. Ken Wawczyk reported that the North Country Trail goes through six forests. The map is much appreciated. They have received some good feedback. The Gaylord MDNR Management Unit has been working with them. The communication has been increasing. Most of them have a vast majority of his trails on the map. An 80-foot bridge went in over Petoskey with some grant money. It opened a 3.5-mile trail to get the ORVs off the road.
- c. Registered Forester report – Mr. Bill Botti reported people are registering and a couple of registrations have come in.
- d. Timber harvest numbers – Mr. Price reported that from last year in October the numbers have not changed, but he did not have the actual numbers available. Mr. Suchovsky asked if the MDNR has seen an unusual number of sales not selling since the Covid outbreak. Mr. Price replied the markets are very strong and when they have a ‘no bid’, it is usually a small sale. Timber was selling very well this past year, both red pine and aspen. Mr. Suchovsky added that hardwood seems to be going well. The big concern is with softwood, partly because of the paper industry.

IX. FMAC Member Updates

- a. Rich Kobe reported that MSU is mostly back to normal operations. They will be holding in-person classes this fall.
 - They have a new staff member joining them. Her name is Sandra Lupien. She is transitioning from the California Governor’s office. She is a native Michigander and will be relocating back by October.
 - Mr. Price mentioned the Forest Geneticist position. Jim Rivard has been teaching introductory courses and is now taking on some higher-level teaching. The basic idea is that students would be spending two periods in Michigan to give them the introductory skills in the beginning and then again at the end. It will guide them to do field work wherever they are located. Many organizations require various course work for people to move into jobs such as banking. This reaches that audience. Students can start enrolling in 2022. Mr. Rivard will be teaching a lot of those courses.

- The new building at MSU is now open and they will start teaching classes there this summer.
 - Mr. Suchovsky asked if the mass timber program is going into large timber now. Dr. Kobe replied it's where consumer interest takes it, but it's been mostly CLT and more of the engineered products.
 - Mr. Suchovsky commented that Dr. Kobe mentioned the education course of Forestry Education and he asked if those courses are attractive to those students, i.e. science majors. He feels some of the teachers really don't have good information they are sharing with the students. Dr. Kobe replied their hybrid online course will be geared for people wanting to do forestry work.
 - Mr. Kenny Wawsczyk commented he spends a lot of time in the Upper Peninsula with line timber. They had about 24 miles of trails and are hoping to bring that number up to 40. They are working with the National Park Service, and with Land and Water Conservation grants.
- b. Ms. Makhayla LaButte, MUCC, reported that most staff are back in the office at MUCC, some with hybrid work.
 - They shifted the annual convention to the end of September instead of June.
 - Regarding habitat work on the ground, they are partnering with Caterpillar, Inc. to plant trees. They received a \$4,000 grant which is 116 trees, and are working with the Wildlife Division, MDNR. Caterpillar, Inc. sponsored that work.
 - MUCC is also one of the recipients to educate the public on oak trees. They will be planting oak trees; this is the White Oak Initiative. Both Mike Smalligan and Jesse Bramer, both with the MDNR, are working with them on that. All are partnering with the MDNR.
- c. Bill Botti reported that Michigan Forest Association is having its annual meeting in September at the new building at MSU, and the new faculty member is on the agenda.
- d. Gary Melow reported on Biomass and energy/climate change.
 - He talked about the Michigan Power Grid Initiative. They are focusing on generation distribution and storage. It was asked how the energy works. In the staff report that came out in May, they came up with a way to help gauge the energy. It was kind of like kicking the can down the road. It will now move into phase two. They are kind of looking at this in relation to climate change.
 - Mr. Melow has been working in biomass for 20 years, and for the past year they have been trying to set up in the Carolinas and Georgia. They are going to look at forestry energy and policy, and how they work in government and industry.

- e. Andrew Storer reported that MTU is back to normal operations. They have a lot of students and staff and are playing catch up with all of that.
- Summer camp is ongoing right now.
 - They have been doing upgrades; their meeting space had central air added to the main room.
 - Enrollment for fall is over 50 students.
 - The new Director is Mark Rudnicki, replacing Robert Froese. Mr. Rudnicki is very excited to be in his new position.
 - They have hired three new faculty that will start in August. All have been in faculty positions previously.
 - Overall, new students coming in is at about 60%, which is 50% up from prior years.

NOTE: Rich wanted to follow up with the Gales and their objection to the clearcuts. To clarify, though the modeling process is for four million acres of state forest, the MDNR currently manages about 2.6 million acres. The entirety of the state forest is not managed for timber.

The July 14, 2021 FMAC meeting adjourned at 3:25 p.m.