

Forest Management Advisory Committee Meeting Notes

January 17, 2024

Members Present for the Forest Management Advisory Committee

Sarah Scheitz, Michigan United Conservation Clubs of Michigan
Mike Elenz, Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association/Michigan Association of Timbermen
Rich Kobe, **Vice Chair**, Michigan State University
Paul Jernberg, Trailriders Snowmobile Club
Kenny Wawsczyk, North Country Trails Association
Gary Melow, **Chair**, Michigan Biomass

Members present for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Jeff Stampfly, Chief & State Forester, Forest Resources Division (FRD)
Kim Korbecki, Executive Assistant, FRD
Kathleen Lavey, Communications, FRD
Rachel Coale, Communications, FRD

Welcome

Chair Gary Melow called the January 17, 2024 Forest Management Advisory Committee (FMAC or Committee) meeting to order at 1:09 p.m.

FMAC Business

- Adoption of January 17, 2024 FMAC meeting agenda
- Adoption of October 11, 2023 FMAC meeting minutes

Chair Melow asked for discussion regarding the January 17, 2024 meeting agenda and the October 11, 2023 meeting minutes. Mike Elenz, Michigan Association of Timbermen, pointed out an error in the October minutes of the agencies he represents on the FMAC. Chair Melow asked for other comments; there were none.

Motion: Paul Jernberg moved to adopt the January 17, 2024 meeting agenda as presented and the October 11, 2023 meeting minutes with the corrections submitted by Mike Elenz completed; supported by Mike Elenz. The January 17, 2024 meeting agenda and the October 11, 2023 meeting minutes, with finalized edits, were adopted unanimously.

Public Comment

None

State Forester's Report – Jeff Stampfly, Chief & State Forester, Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), Forest Resources Division (FRD)

1. Things were quiet over the holidays.
2. The National Association of State Foresters has its eye on the federal budget.
 - a. Jeff was asked to sit on a National Fire Committee. They will be reviewing *ON FIRE: The Report of the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission*, which contains 148 recommendations. The intent is to see what recommendations State Foresters could implement.
 - b. A second committee is looking at the data that goes into the State Fire Assistance and Volunteer Fire Assistance programs. They are looking at the integrity of the data that goes into the allocation formula. These programs provide money that goes to volunteer fire departments in rural areas and provides money for states to implement training and other parts of their fire program.
3. Summer is the mid-cycle check point in the Forest Action Plan. The FRD is going to hold stakeholder meetings to review the progress that has been made.

4. There has been a big uptick in the Urban Forestry Program. They have added staff. Kevin Sayers was promoted to the manager of the Urban Forestry Unit, and they recently hired Lawrence Sobson. They are hiring another person for a total of three to four staff. This program has federal funding that lasts for 10 years.
5. The FRD has received monies and have increased staff in the Forest Health Program. Some positions are limited term. There will be people in the field looking for forest health issues.
6. One of the Northeast-Midwest member states had their largest corporate landowner sell its ownership. The new owner has reduced harvesting in favor of sequestering additional carbon, and this is impacting several local programs as timber revenue funds various programs both locally and within the state.

Review of FRD Programs & How They are Funded

1. The Good Neighbor Authority was discussed with an explanation of the program for Sarah Schietz, newest FMAC member, who is unfamiliar with the program.
2. Funding – There were six appropriation lines that Jeff reviewed. The total amount was \$69 million this year. Fire was increased \$3.7 million. The FRD hired 13 Forest Officers, 2 Mechanics, 1 Specialist in fire behavior and modeling, and 1 Pilot.
 - a. Roughly, forestry is 65% of FRD funding and the Fire Program is 35%.
 - b. Approximately, FRD received \$14 million in federal funding (grants), \$11 million in general funds, and \$1 million in the private tree planting program. They also received Finkle Funding (restricted funds).
 - c. Forest Development Fund (FDF - timber sale revenue).

Jeff reviewed each program and discussed the revenue that each program brings in. He shared a spreadsheet that included more detail.

Forest Resources Division initially requested \$2.5 million in Capital Outlay for fiscal year 2025 for facilities and bridge & road repair but dropped the request because of the downturn in timber sale receipts. Work with previously received funding continues. An FMAC member asked about the benefit received from the IRA or the one-time federal funds influx. The BIL and IRA was used for forest health and urban forestry.

Master Woodlands Steward Program – Rich Kobe, Michigan State University

There was a presentation from Communications staff in FRD about its campaign in southern Michigan regarding forest resources and forestry, and Rich asked if they could have more concrete follow up actions. At that time, Rich was asked to look into the Master Woodlands Steward Program.

There is a program through Mike Smalligan's (MDNR-FRD) program, with a grant to create a small online program for education of forestry. Rich thinks they need a landing page (webpage) for those who are reached by this campaign, i.e. "If you want to learn more, go to this site". He's not sure how many people would actually be reached. One segment of the page could be to connect people with resources.

Rich shared information regarding the Iowa State's Woodland Steward program. It requires 30 hours of forestry training and a 3 hour in-person field session. It is offered twice a year in different areas in the state in Iowa. The course covers planning and goals, how trees grow, how trees change, etc. He commented that could be one approach used in Michigan.

It was suggested there could be a general introductory portion, the ability to view information by different types, and videos. If someone is interested in a specific topic, they can just click the link. They could also have a landing page for landowners, or a page for if they are just interested in learning more about forestry. The MDNR continually talks about reaching the public. In this way, they could link and direct people to exactly where they need to go.

Gary commented he thinks that it is a great idea. The next step would be a marketing campaign to provide the information to the public. It was asked if the Master Woodlands Steward Program is a certificate program.

Rich responded they could probably provide something to indicate they have completed the course. Paul Jernberg commented he would take that sort of program to learn how to care for his own property, especially with all the pests and other things currently happening.

Gary commented with this type of program, Kathy Lavey and Rachel Coale, Communications staff, MDNR-FRD could get the word out and get something accomplished that way. Rich added they would need just one landing page that would direct people to another website to get the information they are looking for. Paul suggested running it as a high school course and students could have a certificate by the time they graduate.

Jeff responded that FRD could make Rachel and Kathleen available for this. They would have to go through half the year and if they have surplus, they could place it there. Gary suggested setting up a collaborative with whoever has contributed to the resource, and everyone could kick in a bit to have their own webpage connected to this website. Gary asked for guidance from Jeff on how the FMAC can move this idea forward. The response was they could go as formal as writing a recommendation to FRD's Chief Stampfly who would then discuss the recommendation with Deputy Director Shannon Lott but could also just set up a workgroup to discuss the subject. Rich believes Michigan State University (MSU) Extension could do it and put the links to all the programs on it. The FMAC agreed there should be a general landing page for folks that are reached by Kathleen and Rachel's campaign and are interested in getting additional information. Mike asked if this is something MSU Extension could fund (putting together the website), and Rich seemed to think so. Gary suggested sitting with Kathleen and Rachel one on one to discuss the webpage.

Gary volunteered to write a resolution to Chief Stampfly to present to Deputy Director Lott. The FMAC could vote on the resolution online or vote in person at the April FMAC meeting. Gary also volunteered to create the Scope of Work Statement.

A verbal resolution was suggested to take advantage of the MDNR-FRD's marketing campaign and that the FMAC is advising that the FRD's marketing campaign link to additional resources, and Rich and Gary were delegated to collaborate to further develop the concept.

MOTION: Paul Jernberg motioned to support the above verbal resolution; supported by Gary Melow. The resolution passed unanimously.

ACTION ITEMS

Jeff will talk with Kathleen and have her contact Rich and Gary. They can set up a first meeting and then reach out to everyone else to participate.

Standing Discussion Items

Communication from the Field

1. Deputy Lott established a Fire Visioning Group to make recommendations on program improvements. One of the outcomes is we'll be running a Fire Academy for new employees in the Division involved with firefighting. A review of the academy will be held afterwards to assess efficacy.
2. Forester and Forest Technician training will be held in the fall. It will include new hires that have not been through it before. Forestry training covers cruise protocol, inventory, etc.
3. We have been doing outreach and recruitment to colleges in and outside of Michigan to try and increase our applicant pools.

Timber Harvest Numbers

Because of the mild winter, nothing is frozen which has caused some problems. At this time of year, forestry staff largely switch over to inventory. Last year's number were: 50,300 prescribed acres, 49,600 acres prepped, 49,300 acres advertised, and 41,000 acres sold. It was just short of the goal of 50,000. They plan on doing about the same amount this year.

Kenny asked about Public Act (PA) 288 which directed the MDNR to find all the forest roads and then determine if they could be open or closed to off road vehicles (ORV). The MDNR has been working on data

cleanup every year since PA 288 was passed. There is no dedicated funding to accomplish the direction of PA 288. Most of the funding is through the Forest Development Fund. They do get some input from snowmobile clubs as well when the trails are coincidental with the road. There are approximately 12,000 miles of forest roads.

Public Outreach & Education

Covered earlier in the meeting.

Kenny Wawszyk, North Country Trail Association, is working with a national service partner for about 40 miles of trail on Lyme Timber Company property. They wondered if the MDNR had easily accessed signage that could be shared with them. Jeff thinks each management unit has come up with something at the district level. Most of the issue with signage is maintenance. Jeff asked Kenny to send that question specifically to him and he'll address it. Gary asked if there is any information digitally and Jeff responded there are very few instances. Gary suggested figuring out a way to get that information available digitally.

Gary wondered if it is possible to put every timber sale as a post on the highways, for instance signage that says, "You can go to this website to find out all the things you can learn about forestry." Kenny sees the online, interactive site as very helpful.

FMAC Member Program Updates

1. Kenny Wawszyk – North Country Trails Association

The NCTA is planning and prioritizing seasonal projects. They are looking at bridge projects, proposals, etc.

2. Mike Elenz, GLTPA/MAT

- a. There will be several regional meetings this year.
- b. Optimism is low in the forestry industry although it is better in the Lower Peninsula than the Upper Peninsula.
- c. People are concerned Billerud isn't going to happen.
- d. There is a Producers' meeting coming up. They are trying to work out how to get things moving.

3. Paul Jernberg, Trailriders Snowmobile Club

The trails are not improving. They are getting so rough that they took a truck specialist on a tour this fall. The ORVs are leaving the trails and are going through the forest. The Forest Service went out with a dozer and tried to do some levelling. They are considering closing 30 or 40 miles of Trail 3 (a cross state trail) because it is no longer controllable. It is the same in Cadillac. He feels that Forest Resources Division, Parks and Recreation Division and the United States Forest Service need to sit down and figure this issue out. If money isn't put into the trails soon the MDNR will no longer have a trails system. They need to categorize the trails by the condition they are in and determine how to work on them. If whoever opened the roads to ORVs did a proper analysis, they are usable. They also need to increase law enforcement. The USFS agreed to gate where they conducted some reroutes and now three years later there is a mess outside.

4. Rich Kobe

- a. MSU is advertising for a Silviculture Professor. Interviews will be on February 12 and 13, 15 and 16, and 17-18. He will touch base with David Price, MDNR.
- b. Educational programs – MSU has been pushing their programs online. They have met the first stage of accreditation. There are currently 24 students enrolled. He mentioned to the FMAC members that if they see folks that don't have a degree in forestry and are interested in the program to send them in Rich's direction. There is a two-year Forest Technician program at Bay College. If they want to continue on for a four-year degree, they can transfer those credits.

5. Sarah Scheitz reported MUCC is working on small scale habitat projects.

Michigan Timber & Forest Products Advisory Council Update – Gary Melow

The Council is having a lot of conversation about the status of forestry and forest products in Michigan. They talked about a strong likelihood that Cadillac will cease operations in May. Gary is waiting to see if Cadillac will be on the Natural Resources Commission agenda for its meeting tomorrow.

Chair Melow adjourned the January 17, 2024 FMAC meeting at 3:17 p.m.

Next Meeting Date

April 17, 2024