

Planners' Pages

Fall/Winter 2003

Results of Survey of State Forest Resource Planning

By Michael Kilgore and Raintry Salk, Department of Forest Resources, University of Minnesota

Earlier this year, in consultation with the executive committee of the Northeastern Forest Resource Planners Association and USDA Forest Service, Northeastern Area, the University of Minnesota developed a mail questionnaire to obtain information on State forest resource planning activities. A total of 45 of the 50 States completed and returned the questionnaire, resulting in a 90 percent response rate. Information on State forest resource planning activities was provided by 18 of the 20 Northeast and Midwest States, resulting in a regional response rate of 90 percent.

The study evaluated the current status of statewide forest resource planning in the United States, with a specific focus on the planning programs that exist in the 20 Northeastern and Midwestern States. Specific study objectives were to understand the status of State forest resource planning with respect to the processes undertaken, organizational capacity for planning, perceptions of planning effectiveness, planner training needs, adequacy of Federal support for State planning efforts, and important barriers to more effective planning programs.

This review provides considerable insight on the current status and important trends occurring in the planning activities undertaken by State forestry agencies. It suggests that State forest resource planning continues to evolve in response to important organizational and economic changes, as well as important changes that are occurring to the resource base. It also points to the uniqueness of forest resource planning programs in each State, due to a number of factors such as varying statutory authority and direction, available resources, and political support for planning. The report also identifies several opportunities for improving the effectiveness of State forest resource planning efforts.

For more information about the report, contact Mike Kilgore (612-624-6298, mkilgore@umn.edu). An electronic copy of the report can be accessed at: <http://www.cnr.umn.edu/FR/publications/staffpapers/Staffpaper170.pdf>

Sustainability Assessment Highlights

The newly released *Sustainability Assessment Highlights for the Northern United States* provides a snapshot of today's forests and a baseline for tracking future trends. This summary report is based on a comprehensive assessment of forest sustainability organized according to the Montreal Process criteria and indicators. Presented in bullet format to focus on the most critical issues and findings in the assessment, the highlights are intended to increase the awareness of forest stakeholders and Federal, State, and local government personnel about current forest conditions in order to sustain forests in the future.

If you would like a copy of the publication, please contact Jane McComb at 603-868-7693 or jamccomb@fs.fed.us or obtain it online at <http://www.na.fs.fed.us/sustainability>.

Save the dates...

Northeastern Forest
Resource Planners Association

2004 Conference

Burlington, Vermont

September 12-16

In beautiful downtown Burlington,
on the shores of historic
Lake Champlain

A Message from the President

Forest planners, and the public alike, are inundated these days with a plethora of new terms that they must digest and deploy when planning for sustainable forestry. Phrases like sustainability, forest certification, criteria and indicators, land legacy, forest legacy, regional landscape planning, smart growth, green infrastructure, and green development promise innovative approaches and value added to the traditional forest planning arena. Forest planners are likely to find all of these concepts familiar (I suggest at the risk of offending just about everybody). Our colleagues, partners, and publics are often at best confused.

The Northeastern Forest Resource Planners Association (NFRPA), a consortium of State forest planners, has identified a number of initiatives in 2003–2004 to reaffirm its commitment to identify, prioritize, and assist States with the myriad of forest planning trends and challenges. As Dave Zumeta, of the Minnesota Forest Resource Council and a former NFRPA *Crystal Ball Award* winner, shared with us at the 2003 Forest Planners conference in Duluth, Minnesota: “NFRPA has a wealth of experienced planners, a long history of identifying emerging trends and issues affecting forest planning, and an established network to share experiences and opportunities.” The forest planners association, populated with a diverse group of individuals and expertise, certainly has one thing in common—they can not help but look into the future. Larry Pedersen, a long-established forest planner for Michigan and current holder of the prestigious Crystal Ball award, let the 2003 conference participants look into the crystal ball to help identify challenges and opportunities facing forest planning.



The crystal ball revealed a few key trends facing forest planning and planners:

- Collaborative planning across ownerships and interests is becoming more common.
- Innovative systems to track progress and reporting are increasing (e.g., forest certification and criteria and indicators).
- Maintaining professional expertise in planning is difficult.
- Stakeholders are more involved in forest planning and decision-making.

To further the understanding of forest planning needs, Mike Kilgore of the University of Minnesota conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the current status of State forest planning (see page 1). The result of this study will be available soon; your participation in completing the survey was greatly appreciated.

Combined, these two evaluations will help NFRPA meet the needs of the forest planning community in the Northeast. I encourage you to engage in the discussion if you have not already.

NFRPA has a couple of standing and future initiatives relating to criteria and indicators (C&I) that deserve mention:

- An indicator-based assessment, *Sustainability Assessment Highlights for the Northern United States*, was published.
- Three C&I task groups are being established: reporting, data gaps, and outreach (see page 6).

These are exciting times for forest planners! Each of us brings to our conversations and interactions a point of view shaped by our personal backgrounds and experiences. It is these experiences that make the forest planners association so enjoyable and valuable. We must remind ourselves that planning sometimes takes decades to bear fruit, and the long-term quality and benefits of forests should not be left to chance. Talking with my forest planning colleagues I have come to realize that successful planning is dependent on a sustained and integrated planning effort—not just one plan, but continuity of the planning effort, leadership and political support for planning, a culture of planning, and commitment to implementation. Finally, you have got to just believe.

NRRPA and its partners are well positioned to have a fruitful year, and I look forward to working with you throughout the year. I hope to see you in Vermont for the 2004 Annual Forest Planners conference.

Teague Prichard, NFRPA 2003 President

Forest Planner, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

2003 NFRPA Conference Highlights

In case you missed it, this year's conference was held in Duluth, Minnesota, August 18–20. We had over 40 registered attendees, which was “pretty darn good” given all of the budget shortfalls and travel restrictions in place. Eleven of the 20 NA States were represented at the meeting! It was good to see folks from several States that have been unable to attend in recent years. Thanks go out to USDA Forest Service Northeastern Area, Washington Office, and Region 9 for sending representatives to speak to the group and learn about forest planning efforts at the State level. National forests from the local region were also well represented.

A brief (and partial) run-down on the highlights includes:

- Dave Zumeta's recounting of NFRPA history
- Mike Kilgore's presentation on the State forest resource planning survey
- The first-ever NFRPA conference poster session, which was lively and well attended (we will continue this in future years)
- The field tour along Minnesota's scenic north shore of Lake Superior and discussion of the Manitou landscape forest planning collaborative
- The dinner boat cruise in Duluth's harbor (beautiful and calm evening on Lake Superior) and the awarding of this year's Crystal Ball recipient (see sidebar) featuring Connie Carpenter's captivating haiku
- The wrap-up session on the final day that is helping lay the groundwork for future NFRPA and NA efforts (look for additional updates on recommendations/actions for NFRPA)

While it would be nice to summarize all of the wonderful presentations and discussions from the conference, there just isn't the space to do them justice here. I encourage you to review the agenda and browse the presentations and documents that will be posted on the NFRPA Web site:

<http://www.na.fs.fed.us/sustainability>.

I was particularly encouraged by the energy evident at the conference and the willingness of new and old faces alike to get involved. There are a lot of important efforts going on across the NA States. Individual States and the region as a whole clearly have a lot to gain by working together to share information, tools, and experiences in the world of forest resource planning. Let's keep the ball rolling—put the 2004 conference on your calendar and make it a point to be there!

By Jon Nelson



2003 Crystal Ball Award Winner

Larry Pedersen

Michigan DNR

Forest, Mineral, & Fire Management Division



The Crystal Ball is on display at or slightly above eye level in his family room.

Viewing times are whenever you show up with a suitable beverage and time on your hands (call ahead)!

Why/how he became a forest planner—

“I was assigned to a supporting analyst role with two regional State forest pilot plans that were started before I began my employment with the Michigan DNR Forest Management Division in 1990. Before that I had been doing dissertation work at Michigan State University on Lake States forest recreation impacts, using the Forest Service's IMPLAN model and a variety of recreation data from Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.”

What he thinks makes a great forest planner—“Communication, communication, communication!”

Challenges he feels forest planners face now and in the future—“It may sound like whining, but we have to take so much more into account than what we used to. Rather than simply boiling things down to an optimization problem and focusing on outputs, we have to address a wider variety of ecological and social concerns. The difficulty is not so much just taking more into account, but doing so in a way that satisfies most people.”

Planning Assistance Program—Stray Thoughts and Points to Ponder

By Constance Carpenter, NA Liaison to NFRPA, USDA Forest Service, Durham, NH

The **USDA Forest Service Northeastern Area (NA)** is highly supportive of aims of the **Northeastern Forest Resource Planning Association (NFRPA)** and has worked hand in hand with the organization since its inception. NFRPA goals align with those of the **USDA Forest Service Planning Assistance Program** that authorizes the transfer of technology to improve forest planning and management and the provision of technical, financial, and other assistance to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of cooperative forestry programs.

One of the items I inherited from previous NA liaisons is *A Guide for Statewide Forest Resources Planning*, published by NA in 1980. I was reading through it recently for three reasons: (1) I wanted to include some background information on the Planning Assistance Program in a presentation to a Washington Office Review team that was evaluating the Northeastern Area implementation of Cooperative Forestry programs, (2) I wanted to see what it said about how to align program and State forest resource plans—a need identified in the NFRPA planners survey (see page 1), and (3) in 1996, NFRPA had developed an action plan and outline to revise the guide (then the sustainability work came along and bumped it to the bottom of the to-do list).

Well, the guide was a good source of background information on the authorities that underlie the Forest Service Planning Assistance Program and its purpose. And it included some still pertinent ideas about State forest resource plans paraphrased as follows. State forest resource plans should consider all forest resources and their interrelations on all forest land regardless of ownership and be prepared with involvement from the public. They should establish a budget framework for Federal and State planning and increase the effectiveness and cost efficiency of cooperative programs. They should complement other State plans and programs. Program plans should be derived from State forest resource plans.

In response to the States' desire for guidance that integrates statewide and program planning efforts, I found that the guide supports a linkage between program and State forest resource plans but does not provide information on the features or aspects of planning that can and cannot logically be linked. The WO review team, referenced above, wondered if a comprehensive planning process could address some or all of the components required of mandated program plans for the Stewardship, Forest Legacy, and Urban and Community Forestry Programs as well as for programs that do not mandate plans. Those present at the 2003 NFRPA conference, remember that Robin

Morgan, NA, expressed NA's interest in streamlining and integrating program planning.

The adaptive management framework, under which we are striving to operate, creates an independent case for linking comprehensive and program planning through accountability measures. State planners are often tasked to integrate information and knowledge systems and other accountability measures such as the sustainability criteria and indicators and green certification systems into agency operations. Would work on the planning guide help us systematically step through these issues or would some be missed?

The draft outline to revise this guide is in my files (dated 1996). It is quite comprehensive, so filling in the content would be a substantial undertaking. Is that why it hasn't been completed? Does it have to be one comprehensive guidebook or could it be a series of shorter topical guides. We have the collective knowledge of NFRPA members. If we do this, would it be counted as a knowledge management?

Hmmm, I think I should raise this as old business at the next NFRPA meeting. Hope to see you in Vermont in September.

Upper Mississippi River Basin Regional Roundtable on Forest Sustainability

A roundtable on forest sustainability, co-sponsored by the USDA Forest Service, the National Sustainable Forests Roundtable, and the Upper Mississippi River Forest Partnership, will be held in Lacrosse Wisconsin, March 23–24, 2004. The meeting will provide opportunities for stakeholders in the basin to meet and share information about their goals and objectives. The Northeastern Area and the Washington Office will provide information on recent sustainability assessment reports. The 18 base indicators developed through the NFRPA Criteria and Indicators Working Group will be among the information highlighted at the meeting.

Pennsylvania's State Forest Resource Management Plan Public Comment Summary

By Roy Brubaker and Dan Devlin, Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry

The 2.1 million acre Pennsylvania State forest system comprises a wealth of resources, uses, and values contained within a finite, complexly inter-dynamic ecological system. Management of such off-times competing issues requires an open-minded approach and depends, in no small part, upon the Bureau of Forestry's ability to maintain the public's trust and incorporate its varied perspectives and concerns into a cohesive management plan.

Since June, the Bureau of Forestry conducted 28 public meetings across the State designed to provide the public with an opportunity to review and comment upon the recently revised *State Forest Resource Management Plan*. Also, during this period, the public was able to submit comment through the mail or by way of the bureau's Web site. Input received during this period helped the agency gauge acceptance of the plan among those who participated, and helped identify additional management issues we need to address or refine.

The recently ended comment period, the culmination of more than five years of effort to incorporate public input into the bureau's planning and decision-making processes, has been instrumental in helping us achieve that management goal. Additionally, the comment period provided a "point in time" opportunity to summarize and outline the fundamental issues and challenges confronting the bureau both in the near- and long-term.

Within the context of public input into the bureau's decision-making process, two general axioms have emerged over time. First, there are substantial areas of consensus within the public that outline generally defined roles and expectations the bureau must fulfill in order to maintain broad-based public credibility. Second, there are areas of fundamental divergence of perspective within the public that define critical challenges for the bureau in its effort to ensure public trust. The recent public input period reinforced both axioms.

The most notable areas of broad consensus among those members of the public who commented on the draft plan include:

- People want to be informed of the reasons for decisions made in public land management, and they expect the bureau to provide them with this information.
- People want opportunities to be involved in the decision-making process concerning the management of their State forests.
- People want the opportunity, on a variety of bureau projects; to volunteer or otherwise actively participate in providing for the goods and services they expect.
- People realize that the bureau must be responsive to contrary perspectives on nearly every issue it encounters, and that the agency will always be guided by a "multi-use" approach to forest management.
- Though articulated in many ways, there is general recognition that a holistic approach to managing natural systems is necessary, and that long-term sustainability of the forest is central to all management decisions.
- There is a concern that large-scale forest issues, impacting both the State forests and other forest resources in the State (i.e., deer, sprawl, invasive species, acid deposition, etc.) are addressed, and the public looks to the bureau and the Dept. of Conservation & Natural Resources to play a lead role in doing so.
- People expect the bureau to carefully weigh the impacts of its management decisions, both on a statewide and local level, and to be able to justify its decisions based on an awareness of these impacts.

As would be expected, there are also areas of extreme divergence of public opinion and perspective with respect to many issues concerning the management of the State forest land. While it is important to hear all sides of issues, particularly when the public seems highly polarized in their viewpoints, the challenge for the bureau, if it is to maintain the public's trust, is to extract the most valuable information from what may be a contentious debate and incorporate this into an effective management policy. The following are general areas where differing public viewpoints perhaps would create such challenges:

- There are different viewpoints on the importance of emphasizing the forest ecosystem and/or its various components (e.g., biodiversity, landscape scale variables, ecosystem processes) as the fundamental basis for forest management, which leads to different public expectations as to the role of the State forest manager.
- There is a wide range in basic understanding of biology and ecology within the public sector, making it difficult for public land managers to effectively communicate management concerns and approaches.

- There are critical differences on many issues that seemingly pit the bureau, with its need to coherently administer a statewide program, against local communities, who, perhaps see the program mainly in terms of perceived local impacts. The management challenge for the bureau in these types of cases is obvious, but not easy to overcome.
- There is a divergence of understanding within the public as to the fundamental purpose and value of the State forest system. As is often the case with human nature, personal interest is usually the primary motivation for expressing viewpoints within a public forum. However, acceding to public pressure in the form of “special interests” does not make for sound public policy.

More information on Pennsylvania’s State Forest Resource Management Plan or public input process and a more detailed summary can be found at <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/>, or by contacting Dan Devlin (ddevlin@state.pa.us).

Update on the Sustainability Initiative

We are happy to report that NAASF approved the recommended metrics and data sources for the base indicators of forest sustainability and also approved our action plan.

NFRPA/NA C&I Steering Committee: Dan Devlin (PA), Susan Francher (NH), Jon Nelson (MN), Larry Pedersen (MI), Connie Carpenter (NA), Margaret Miller-Weeks (NA), Sherri Wormstead (NA), Austin Short (NAASF liaison, DE)

C&I Task Groups

Reporting—develop proposal and oversee contract for Web-based information system. Develop format and strategy for the C&I regional assessment reports

Data Gaps—develop a strategy to deal with data gaps and begin addressing the gaps.

Outreach—work on strategies to raise awareness about the C&I initiative and to integrate NA/NAASF indicators into State forest resource planning.

State Participants

Teague Prichard (WI), Dan Devlin (PA), & Jon Klischies (NJ)

Larry Pedersen (MI), Clarence Turner (MN)

Jeff Horan (MD), Susan Francher (NH), Bill Moulton (VT)

If you would like to participate on one of the task groups, we certainly welcome additional help and perspectives and this is a small commitment in time for the benefit it will yield to the sustainability initiative, your State, and the whole region. Please contact Sherri Wormstead (swormstead@fs.fed.us or 603-868-7737).

National Focus on Threats

Dale Bosworth, chief of the USDA Forest Service, has identified the following four threats to the health of the Nation’s forests and grasslands:

- Fire and Fuels
- Invasive Species
- Loss of Open Space
- Unmanaged Recreation



Larry Pedersen, Jon Nelson, and Teague Prichard ham it up at the end of the successful 2003 NFRPA conference.

NFRPA 2004 Executive Committee

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