

The Next Two Million Acres:

Review of the Wisconsin Healthy Forest Program and Recommendations for Increasing Private Forest Management in Wisconsin

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February 5, 2008

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Acknowledgements

- **The Turner Foundation, Weyerhaeuser Family Foundation, Wisconsin-USDA Forest Service Forest Stewardship Grant Program, and USDA-NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant Program** who provided financial support.
- **Wisconsin Family Forests (WFF)** co-sponsored the project and administered related grants. **Gerry Mich**, WFF Executive Director, served as the project coordinator.
- **Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR)** co-sponsored the project. DNR participants included Division of Forestry staff, DNR Northeast and South Central Region forestry supervisors, and DNR Service Foresters in Door, Sauk and Columbia County. **Paul Pingrey**, DNR Forest Certification Coordinator, managed DNR involvement in the program.
- **Cooperative Development Services (CDS) Coordinator E.G. Nadeau** provided expertise in organizational planning, landowner outreach, and evaluation.
- **University of Wisconsin Stevens Point - Forestry Outreach Specialist John DuPlissis** assisted with project design and services.
- **University of Wisconsin – Department of Forest Ecology and Management - Professor Mark Rickenbach** provided guidance on cross-boundary cooperation between landowners and landowner surveys.
- **Stora Enso**, an international wood products manufacturer, participated on the WHFP oversight committee through **Tim Tollefson**, Stora Enso Family Forest Coordinator.
- **Clark Forestry**, a forestry consulting company, developed templates for Comprehensive Forestry Plans and Forest Management Schedules. **Fred Clark** also wrote the Comprehensive Forestry Plan for the Baraboo Hills pilot with **Lisa Thomas**, Nature Conservancy forest ecologist.
- The following organizations also participated on the WHFP advisory committee and provided additional input:
 - **Dovetail Partners**
 - **The Nature Conservancy**
 - **Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association**
 - **Taylor Conservation, LLC**
 - **Integrated Forest Management, LLC**
 - **Genesis Forestry Consulting, LLC**
 - **And other individuals**

Executive Summary

This report has two primary purposes: To review and evaluate activities carried out under the Wisconsin Healthy Forest Program (WHFP) from September 2005 through September 2007; and to make recommendations for increasing management of private forest land in Wisconsin. The recommendations are derived from the WHFP pilot program and from other recent developments related to private forest management in the state.

Wisconsin already has one of the highest rates of private forest management in the United States, thanks in large part to the effectiveness of the Wisconsin Managed Forest Law. But there is plenty of room to improve the environmental, social and economic benefits of sustainable forest management on family forest land. This report proposes several public and private initiatives that together could add two million acres of sustainably managed private forest land in Wisconsin by 2020.

Review of the Wisconsin Healthy Forest Program

The first section of the report describes the Wisconsin Healthy Forest Program (WHFP); reviews its performance from September 2005 through September 2007; and draws lessons from this pilot program for the future of family forest management in Wisconsin.

The Wisconsin Healthy Forest Program (WHFP) is a community-based, pilot project intended to increase the number of private landowners with forest management plans and the number of privately owned forest acres under responsible management. It was initiated in September 2005 and is scheduled to end in September 2008. WHFP has two pilot sites: 1) Liberty Grove Township in Door County, and 2) two adjacent townships, Greenfield and Caledonia, in Sauk and Columbia Counties (also referred to as the Baraboo Hills site).

The Wisconsin Healthy Forest Program is administered jointly by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Wisconsin Family Forests (WFF) with support from other organizations.

The primary focus of WHFP is on landowners with between 10 and 100 wooded acres, although some assistance is being provided to landowners with acreage above and below this range. WHFP:

1. Is community-based;
2. Has a project coordinator employed by WFF;
3. Makes use of landscape-level forestry plans;
4. Emphasizes landowner goals;
5. Provides easy access to a forester; and
6. Promotes coordinated local practices.

Four Evaluation Components

1. Key findings of the interviews conducted in the pre-project **market research** were that landowners:
 - Had widely varying goals for their woodlands;
 - Were generally positive about participating in the pilot program; but, at the same time,
 - Were wary about “being told what to do with their land.”
2. The impacts of WHFP on family forest owners and acreage during the first 18 months of fieldwork were reviewed by means of a **performance evaluation** conducted in November and December 2007. Key findings were:
 - 87 landowners with almost 2,600 acres had a “walk-through” with a forester as a result of the program.
 - 46 family forest owners with almost 1,300 acres developed new basic and stewardship management plans as a result of these visits.
 - The annualized increase in acres with plans in the two pilot areas was 4%. This is about 75% higher than the statewide annual rate of increase since 1990.
 - An additional 21 landowners with about 1,400 acres expressed an interest in the program, but had not yet had a forester visit.
3. A **coordinated harvest** was conducted as part of WHFP in the Baraboo Hills area. As of the end of September 2007, 214 acres on 8 different parcels had been harvested or were under contract as part of the coordinated harvest. Assuming that all 8 parcels remain in the program, the total harvested area will be about 214 acres. WHFP was also responsible for an additional 120 harvested acres on four parcels that were not a formal part of the coordinated harvest project.
4. In October and November 2007, all of the forest owners who expressed an interest or participated in WHFP were sent a **Forest Owner Survey**. The survey was mailed to 131 addresses; 71 surveys were completed and returned.

Key findings from the survey include:

- Eighty-eight percent of the 58 respondents who had forester visits reported being very pleased with the visits.
- Ninety percent of these respondents reported receiving a written follow-up from the forester.
- 57% of those who had forester visits reported that they had begun to implement recommended practices in their woods.

- Seventy-six percent of respondents who answered this question reported that they were very pleased with their contacts with the project coordinator.
- Ninety percent of those responding to the question about follow-up activities indicated that they were interested in receiving mailings on forestry issues.

The major conclusions of the WHFP review can be summarized as follows:

1. The program was successful.

WHFP gets high marks as a pilot, community-based, forest management program, because it increased family forest acreage with management plans by 6% in the pilot areas and because it had a much broader impact in getting landowners interested in taking better care of their woods.

2. There appear to be several reasons for its success.

- a. The program focused on local communities.
- b. It had a woodland advocate who worked closely with local landowners.
- c. It focused on the individual needs and concerns of each landowner.
- d. It provided multiple messages about the value of forest management to local landowners.
- e. It provided easy access to an initial visit by a forester.
- f. It provided free basic and forest stewardship plans to landowners with 10 to 100 wooded acres.
- g. Neighbors communicated with neighbors about the project.

3. Areas for improvement

- a. Select a coordinator or woodland advocate who resides in or near the community
- b. Provide a property tax incentive for having and implementing a plan.
- c. Have an accountability system for carrying out plan elements.
- d. Develop a certification program for participating landowners.

Part Two of the report is divided into four chapters.

1. Forest Management Planning Services

This chapter defines four levels of forester planning assistance: simple responses; basic plans; forest stewardship plans; and Managed Forest Law Plans. It also describes Comprehensive Forest Plans as a landscape-level tool that can be used to complement and simplify Individual Forest Management Schedules.

DNR Service Foresters provide critical initial guidance to landowners who rely on them for objective advice at no cost. The State needs to assure adequate access to public foresters. To extend private forestry assistance

beyond the bounds of permitted DNR staffing, however, additional innovations in planning efficiency and forestry planning services coordinated by local conservation groups are recommended.

The chapter makes recommendations to:

- a. Maintain or increase the number of DNR foresters who provide assistance to family forest owners;
- b. Provide cost-share funding for simple guidance and basic plans coordinated by conservation partner groups;
- c. Adopt the combined use of Comprehensive Forest Plans (CFP) and Individual Forest Management Schedules as an option within MFL and future private forest management planning programs; and
- d. Create a cost sharing practice for the preparation of Comprehensive Forest Plans within the Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program (WFLGP).

2. Coordinated Practice Implementation Services

Just as local conservation partners can extend planning services to more family forest owners, they can also effectively promote and facilitate the implementation of practices that are recommended in plans if given appropriate support. To help DNR and partners identify and contact private landowners who would benefit from responsible forestry services, improved access to real-property parcel and land cover data is also needed.

This chapter recommends several means to promote and assist coordinated forestry practices by family forest owners:

- a. Revise WFLGP statutes to allow cost sharing for sponsor-coordinated management practices in addition to group invasive species control.
- b. Develop and support state programs to train and fund landowner co-ops, woodland owner associations, and other landowner advocate organizations to provide coordinated forestry plan implementation services.
- c. Encourage the Wisconsin Legislature to require counties to make real property GIS parcel data freely available to governmental agencies and the University of Wisconsin for the purposes of research and educational outreach.
- d. Seek funding for an update of remote sensing land cover data and make the GIS information freely available.

3. Expansion of Family Forest Certification and Other New Initiatives

While MFL appeals to a significant segment of private landowners, emerging issues related to market assurance, climate change and energy needs advise developing new approaches that are relevant to more sectors of the forest owner population. There are opportunities to expand

forest certification, carbon sequestration and bio-fuels production to address these issues through new property tax or income tax incentives to more family forest owners.

- a. A Wisconsin Legislative Council Committee or other public participation forum should be convened to develop and evaluate these opportunities.

4. Encouragement of Forest Management at the Community Level

The willingness of good private forest stewards to voluntarily mentor their neighbors could be tapped to overcome barriers to responsible forestry. A program to recruit, train and support volunteer woodland advocates would help them succeed.

- a. A legislative forum should be formed to work out the organizational details of a statewide woodland advocate program, including appropriate funding and methods of coordination with UWEX and DNR.

Introduction

This report has two primary purposes: to review and evaluate activities carried out under the Wisconsin Healthy Forest Program (WHFP) from September 2005 through September 2007; and to make recommendations for increasing management of private forest land in Wisconsin. The recommendations are derived from the WHFP pilot program and from other recent developments related to private forest management in the state. They include proposed changes in public policy and practices as well as private sector initiatives.

Wisconsin's Family Forests

Wisconsin has a total land area of about 35 million acres. Forests cover 16 million acres (over 45% of the state's land area). About 9.7 million acres (60% of the state's forest land) consist of family forest¹ parcels of ten acres or more, owned by about 178,000 landowners. Of this family forest land, over 3.7 million acres have forest management plans, categorized as follows²:

- About 2.4 million acres are owned by 40,000 landowners who are in the Wisconsin Managed Forest Law Program (MFL) and are enrolled in the Tree Farm Certification program.
- Approximately 575,000 acres are owned by 9,100 landowners who have Forest Stewardship Plans, but are not in the MFL program.
- About another 750,000 acres are owned by 19,700 landowners who have "basic" plans that provide partial guides to good forestry practices.

This leaves about 110,000 family forest owners and 6 million acres that do not have forest management plans.

Importance of Family Forest Management

Family forest management benefits forest health, the broader environment, recreation, landowner income and assets, and the economy. The consequences of forest management – or the lack of it – don't just affect individual woodland owners, but their neighbors, their communities, the state and, even, the world. For example, the containment of invasive plants and insects, the nurturing of plant and wildlife habitats, the use of wood as a renewable resource, and the sequestration of carbon resulting from good silvicultural practices have both local and global consequences.

Wisconsin's forests have an enormous impact on the state's economy. The value of the forest products industry in the state is \$50.3 billion annually, almost as

¹ "Family forest" in this report is defined as non-industrial private forestland, not part of large (1,000 acre or more) forest industry, Real-Estate Investment Trust (REIT) or Timber Investment Management Organization (TIMO) ownerships.

² 2007 data compiled by DNR from MFL and Private Forestry Accomplishment Reports.

much as the value of agriculture (\$51.5 billion).³ The forest products industry employs 73,000 people. Pulp and paper processing, the leading forest industry in Wisconsin, has average weekly wages that are about 20% higher than the average for manufacturing jobs in the state. Sixty-eight percent of wood harvested in Wisconsin comes from family forests.

Wisconsin's private forests are far more than an economic asset. There are two ways in which the lack of forest management creates a wide range of problems for landowners and society:

- **Inattention by leaving woodlands untouched and “letting nature take its course.”** Although there are forested habitats and designated natural areas where passive management makes sense, for the vast majority of private and public forests, it doesn't. As in an untended garden, an untended forest may become overcrowded or degraded with unwanted plants. A key consequence of overcrowding is an increase in the potential for catastrophic fires. A “do-not-touch” approach may lead to the introduction of invasive species and the loss of wildlife habitat. All of these factors reduce the economic, ecological, aesthetic and recreational value of forests for landowners and others. This passivity also has negative impacts at the societal level by limiting opportunities for carbon sequestration, water quality improvements, increased biodiversity, and production of renewable resources.
- **Exploiting forest land without a clear plan of action or an understanding of the consequences.** This kind of “non-management” takes two main forms: Destructive harvesting practices that seek short-term financial gain at the expense of the long term health of the forest; and irresponsible parceling up of forestland that ignores the negative impacts of segmenting or destroying the forest landscape on plants, animals, air, soil, water and humans.

Forest management plans can help landowners and communities avoid these problems by assessing the land capabilities and current conditions of timber stands and by developing a set of practices to maintain or improve the timber stands in a manner consistent with landowner goals and the maintenance or improvement of local ecosystems.⁴

³ The economic impact numbers for both forest products and agriculture are based on comparable measurement techniques that include direct, induced and indirect impacts.

⁴ See **A. Forest Management Planning Services** in **Part Two** of this report for more information on forest management.

Taking Forest Management to the Next Level

Wisconsin already has one of the highest rates of private forest management in the United States, thanks in large part to the effectiveness of the Wisconsin Managed Forest Law. But there is plenty of room to improve the environmental, social and economic benefits of sustainable forest management and to avoid the negative consequences of inattention and exploitation cited above.

Part One of this report reviews the first two years of performance of the Wisconsin Healthy Forest Program (WHFP). **Part Two** draws implications and makes recommendations based on the results to date of WHFP and on other recent developments related to private forest management in the state.

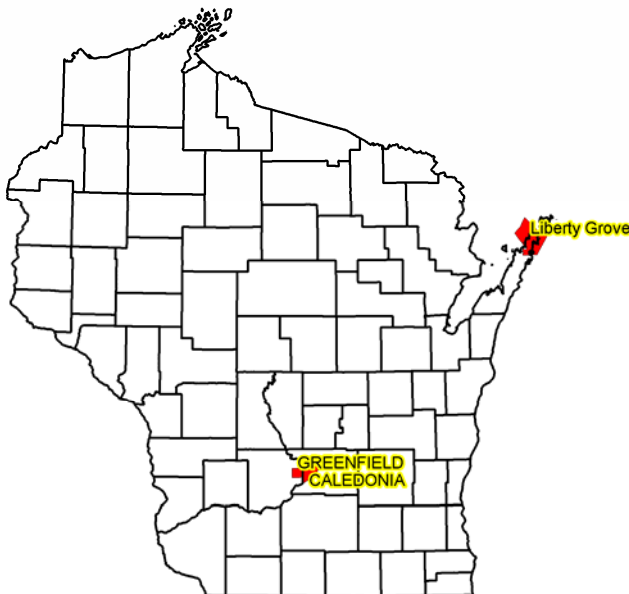
This report proposes several public and private initiatives that together could add two million acres to the amount of private forest land in Wisconsin with management plans by 2020. This would mean *increasing the amount of family forest land with plans from 3.7 million to 5.7 million acres*, resulting in almost 60% of family forest land in the state being responsibly managed.

Part One: Description and Analysis of the Wisconsin Healthy Forest Program

This section of the report describes the Wisconsin Healthy Forest Program (WHFP); reviews its performance from September 2005 through September 2007; and draws lessons from this pilot program for the future of family forest management in Wisconsin.

A. DESCRIPTION OF THE PILOT PROGRAM

The Wisconsin Healthy Forest Program (WHFP) is a community-based, pilot project intended to increase the number of private landowners with forest management plans and the number of privately owned forest acres under responsible management.



WHFP was initiated in September 2005 and is scheduled to end in September 2008. WHFP has two pilot sites: 1) Liberty Grove Township in Door County, and 2) two adjacent townships, Greenfield and Caledonia, in Sauk and Columbia Counties (also referred to as the Baraboo Hills site).

The Wisconsin Healthy Forest Program is administered jointly by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Wisconsin Family Forests (WFF). Clark Forestry, Cooperative

Development Services, the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Department of Forest Ecology and Management, Stora Enso, Dovetail Partners, The Nature Conservancy, and the Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association are providing assistance and advice to the program.

WHFP is being paid for by a combination of public and private funding and in-kind contributions from the Turner Foundation, the Weyerhaeuser Family Foundation, the Wisconsin Forest Stewardship Grant Program, a USDA-NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant, DNR, the University of Wisconsin and other partners. The total program budget for the three-year period is estimated at \$340,000 -- \$160,000 in grants and \$180,000 in kind.

WHFP is intended to provide benefits for everyone affected by Wisconsin's forests:

- **Landowners**, by providing a relatively simple entry point into certifiable sustainable forestry;
- **Professional foresters and loggers**, by providing low-cost access to landowners who are interested in forestry services;
- **The forest industry**, by providing a supply of potentially certifiable raw materials;
- **Local communities**, through a community-based strategy to improve forest quality; and
- **The public**, through the social, ecological and economic benefits of sound forestry.

The primary focus of WHFP is on landowners with between 10 and 100 wooded acres, although some assistance is being provided to landowners with acreage above and below this range. There are several key features of WHFP:

- 1. Community-Based.** As mentioned above, the project is being carried out at two local pilot sites. This approach is intended to determine whether or not concentrated promotion, education and service provision in local areas is an effective way to increase landowner involvement in forest management.
- 2. Woodland Advocate Project Coordinator.** In WHFP, a consultant working for Wisconsin Family Forests is serving as the project coordinator and landowner advocate in the two pilot sites. The primary role of this coordinator, who is not a government employee, is to communicate with local landowners and to encourage and assist them to develop management plans for their forest land.
- 3. Landscape-Level Forestry Plan.** A unique feature of the program is a comprehensive plan encompassing the entire area in which each of the pilot projects takes place. There are several reasons for this approach:
 - a. The forest-related issues that affect a local geographical area are broader than those affecting individual parcels within it; for example, the spread of invasive species, wildlife habitats, and the impact of forest land on soil and water. In the project, individual landowner plans are developed in the context of the local ecosystem.
 - b. A second factor in the use of comprehensive plans is the potential for increased efficiency in plan preparation. The program is testing whether or not it is more cost-effective to prepare individual management "schedules" that link to a comprehensive plan than to prepare completely separate plans for each landowner.
 - c. A third factor is the potential to encourage coordinated action among woodland owners and other residents in the comprehensive plan areas to address issues affecting the local ecosystem.

- 4. Emphasis on Landowner Goals.** A premise of the program is the importance of having management plans address landowners' goals for their forest land. Thus, the program does not stress timber production or other externally imposed goals, but rather structures the management planning process around clarifying landowners' goals and designing plans that address them. There are limits to this approach, however. Foresters in the program steer individual landowners away from actions that run counter to the comprehensive plan – for example, retaining or establishing a level of forest density that creates a fire hazard for neighboring properties or harvests that would disrupt critical wildlife habitat. Nor do foresters prescribe plan elements that are inconsistent with sound silvicultural practices.
- 5. Easy Access to a Forester.** The program encourages landowners to have a forester visit their land at no charge and with no obligation to commit to having a plan. Even though it is already a priority in DNR to provide free forester walk-throughs, most landowners don't know this nor do they make use of this service. The project coordinator plays the role of facilitating these forester visits.
- 6. Potential for Joint Local Activities.** As the program develops in a local area, the number of landowners with management plans is expected to increase and the likelihood that several landowners will need the same forestry services is also expected to increase. The project coordinator (or landowners themselves) can coordinate activities to take advantage of these common needs. Examples include eradicating invasives, tree planting, thinning, harvests, etc.

WHFP began implementing a **coordinated harvest** as one joint forestry activity during the first two years of the pilot project in the Baraboo Hills area. This project review present results thus far on the coordinated harvest.

The basic timetable for WHFP is as follows:

1. Program Development: September 2005 – February 2006

Key activities during this initial phase included developing a detailed plan for working with landowners in the two pilot sites; developing a plan for the coordinated harvest in the Baraboo Hills; preparatory research on communicating effectively with landowners about forest management; and development work on the comprehensive forestry plans for each pilot area.

**3. First Phase of Landowner Contacts in the Two Pilot Areas:
March 2006 – February 2007**

During this phase, the primary activities centered on introducing forest owners in the two pilot areas to WHFP; encouraging and assisting them to have a forester visit their property; and, if they were interested, having a forester prepare a simple response to a forestry issue, a basic plan or forest stewardship plan, or

refer them to the Managed Forest Law (MFL) Program.⁵

4. Second Phase of Landowner Contacts in the Two Pilot Areas: March 2007 – September 2007

During the second phase, service activities and contacts continued with landowners who had begun participating in the first phase. In addition, written notices about the program were sent to family forest owners in the two pilot areas who had not responded during the first phase. Landowners who responded in the second phase were encouraged and assisted to participate in WHFP via forester visits, simple responses to forestry questions, and management plans.

5. Review of WHFP Performance During the First Two Years: October 2007 – January 2008

The WHFP performance review and recommendations related to it are presented in this report.

6. Expansion of WHFP into Three New Pilot Areas: January 2008 – September 2008

During this phase, the project is testing whether a trained local volunteer woodland owner can successfully serve as a trusted, independent advocate and begin to build a local network to assist in implementing family forest management plans. The advocate is assisting landowners to find foresters and other resources so that the landowners can become better woodland stewards. The new pilot areas are Baraboo Township in Sauk County, Leon Township in Waushara County and Port Edwards Township in Wood County.

B. RESEARCH METHODS

Four kinds of research data related to WHFP are analyzed in this report:

1. Market Research

Prior to the beginning of participant recruitment, the program hired a market research consultant⁶ to conduct focus group research and telephone interviews in order to assess the potential interest of family forest owners in the two pilot areas in WHFP and to identify the best ways to communicate with forest owners about the program.

2. Performance Evaluation

WHFP developed and maintains a detailed database on forest owners in the two pilot areas. The database contains contact information for family forest owners, data on their forested acreage, and information on their participation in WHFP. This information was derived from township tax records, MFL records,

⁵ Simple written follow-ups, basic plans, stewardship plans and MFL plans are defined on pages 26-28 of this report.

⁶ Chris Kann of CSK Marketing, Inc.

WISCLAND⁷ (a mapping system based on satellite imagery that was used to identify forested acres in the pilot areas), and miscellaneous other sources, such as records of the program coordinator and on-the-ground observations of foresters.

An analysis was conducted of all family forest owners who participated in WHFP from March 2005 through September 2007. The primary information reviewed in the analysis was: participants who responded to written or telephone communications about the project; forested acreage of these landowners; landowners interested in having a forester visit; forester visits; and management plans or other follow-up from these visits.

3. Coordinated Harvest Analysis

Family forest owners in the two Baraboo Hills pilot townships and in seven adjacent townships were contacted regarding their interest in participating in a coordinated harvest.⁸ The pilot coordinated harvest is still underway. This report provides preliminary information on the number of participants, acres involved, and qualitative information on this project component.

4. Participant Survey

All landowners who expressed an interest or participated in WHFP between March 2005 and September 2007 were sent a written survey in October and November 2007. The survey asked questions about their forest land, their participation in WHFP, their evaluation of the services they received, and their current and planned forest management activities.

C. RESEARCH RESULTS

1. Market Research

The market research was conducted in two phases: group interviews (sometimes referred to as focus groups) with resident landowners in one pilot area; and telephone interviews with non-resident landowners who had property in each of the pilot areas.

a. Group interviews

Group interviews were conducted in March 2006 in Sister Bay. Respondents (24 in total) were a mix of men and women, aged 51 to 82. All were landowners in Liberty Grove Township, Door County, and all had at least 5 acres of forest land.

⁷ WISCLAND is the Wisconsin Initiative for Statewide Cooperation on Landscape Analysis and Data, a partnership of public and private organizations seeking to facilitate landscape GIS data development and analysis.

⁸ A “coordinated harvest” is defined in WHFP as “the removal and sale of trees from more than one parcel in the same geographical area in a manner that is intended to benefit the parcel owners.”

Major findings from these interviews were:

- Landowners had widely varying goals for their woodlands.
- Their motivations for land management tended to be driven by forest health and ecology over economics.
- Most respondents expressed an interest in the pilot program and thought that it would meet a need in the township.
- Participants tended to fall roughly into two different groups: One comprised of more recent owners who were more interested in learning about forest management; and the other whose families had owned forest land for longer periods of time and felt that they themselves were best qualified to manage their own land, or that the land was best left for nature to manage.
- In both groups there was an underlying cynicism and skepticism about having anyone related to the government involved in managing their land.
- Trust was a big theme for these participants. They indicated that the best way to get a positive response to the program was to tie it closely to the local community, for example by getting early support from local “opinion leaders.”
- Participants indicated that foresters working with these landowners must be particularly sensitive to respecting the individuality of the owners and working with them to achieve their goals rather than just telling them what to do.

b. Telephone interviews

Telephone interviews with non-resident woodland owners in Columbia and Door County were conducted in May 2006. Interviewees (14 in total) were a mix of men and women, though mostly men, and were split evenly between the two pilot areas. All had at least 5 acres of woodland property, but did not live on the land.

Key results of these interviews were:

- These non-resident landowners had a strong interest in wanting to learn more about the Wisconsin Healthy Forest Program⁹ – stronger than that expressed by resident landowners in Liberty Grove.
- As with resident landowners, these non-residents had a wide variety of goals for their land.
- Also, as with resident landowners, the telephone interviewees were suspicious about “being told what to do with their land”, although they seemed to be more receptive than resident landowners to receiving advice from a forester.

⁹ Primarily as a result of the emphasis on “individuality” in the group interviews, the name was changed from the “Multi-Owner Forest Stewardship Program” to the “Wisconsin Healthy Forest Program.”

- Overall, the non-resident phone interviews supported the findings of the in-person, resident interviews in Liberty Grove. The majority of landowners wanted to learn more about the program and was open to participating in it.

2. Performance Evaluation

The primary purpose of the performance evaluation is to determine the number of family forest owners who participated in WHFP and the number of forested acres they own.

a. WHFP participants and acreage

Table One presents the number of participants and acres involved in the five main services provided by WHFP: Forester visits; simple written advice; basic forestry plans; forest stewardship plans; and referral to the Managed Forest Law Program.¹⁰ Almost all 87 landowners in the table had a “walk-through” with a forester. Thirty-four of these initial contacts resulted in a simple written follow-up; 19 in a basic plan; 27 in a stewardship plan; and 7 in a referral to MFL. All together, these landowners have almost 2,600 acres.

Table One. Wisconsin Healthy Forest Program Participants

Product	Number of Landowners	Number of Acres
Simple Written Advice	34	1,065
Basic Plan	19	477
Stewardship Plan	27	796
Referral to MFL	7	251
Total in WHFP	87	2,589

Forty-six family forest owners with 1,273 acres developed new basic and stewardship management plans in consultation with a forester. The initial WHFP goal to develop 40 new management plans during the project was exceeded by 15% during the first two years of the project (18 months of landowner contact). These 46 new plans were designed to complement the comprehensive forestry plans developed for each pilot area.¹¹

Note that the MFL referrals are also expected to result in new management plans. Some of the landowners receiving “simple” responses may also go on to develop management plans in the future.

Not included in **Table One** are 21 landowners with 1,427 acres who had expressed an interest in participating in WHFP, but had not yet had a forester visit.

¹⁰ Simple written follow-ups, basic plans, stewardship plans and MFL plans are defined on pages 26-28 of this report.

¹¹ See the description of comprehensive forestry plans on page 27.

b. Impact of WHFP on family forest acreage in the pilot areas

Another way to look at WHFP’s impact on forest management is to compare the acreage of WHFP participants and potential participants to pre-project MFL acreage, non-MFL forest stewardship acreage and basic plan acreage, and to the remaining family forest acres in the two pilot areas.

Table Two shows family forest land in the pilot areas divided into six categories. Prior to the project, 27% of family forest acreage in the pilot sites was already enrolled in MFL, and an estimated 16% had forest stewardship or basic plans¹². During 18 months of working with landowners from March 2006 through September 2007, WHFP impacted 16% of the family forest acres in the pilot sites – 6% through new plans, 4% through simple written advice to landowners, and 6% through interest expressed by landowners in participating in the program. That leaves 41% of family forest acres in the pilot sites that did not have management plans prior to WHFP and had not yet been involved in, or expressed an interest in, WHFP

Table Two. WHFP Impact on Family Forest Land

Family Forest Acreage in Pilot Sites	Percent of Acres	Number of Acres
Pre-Project MFL Acreage	27%	6,844
Pre-Project Forest Stewardship and Basic Plan Acreage	16%	4,081
New Plan Acreage Resulting from the Project	6%	1,524
Acreage of Landowners Receiving Simple Written Advice during the Project	4%	1,065
Acreage of Landowners Interested in Project, but no Forester Visit as of 9/30/07	6%	1,427
Other Family Forest Acres	41%	10,458
Total	100%	25,508

What is particularly noteworthy about these results is the rate of increase in family forest acres with management plans during the 18-month WHFP project phase. Since 1990 the average annual increase in acres with management plans in Wisconsin has been 2.3%. During the 18 months reviewed in this report, the annualized increase in acres with plans in the two pilot areas was 4%. This is close to 75% higher than the annual rate for the state over the past 17 years.

It should also be noted that the new plan acreage reported above does not include the landowners who own 10% of the forest land in the pilot areas who received written advice during the project or expressed an interest in participating in the project.

¹² The acreage estimates for forest stewardship and basic plans were interpolated from statewide data.

3. Coordinated Harvest Analysis

Wisconsin Family Forests oversaw the coordinated harvest project for WHFP¹³. Participation in the harvest was open to family forest owners in the two townships in the Baraboo Hills pilot area plus landowners in the seven adjacent townships. The project was targeted to landowners with 10 or more wooded acres.

WFF contracted with Bill Buckley from Genesis Forestry to provide the forestry technical services to manage the coordinated harvest. A number of different loggers and buyers purchased the timber from participating landowners.

Fourteen landowners had initially agreed to participate in the coordinated harvest by the end of September 2007. One harvest had been completed by that time; five landowners had entered into sales agreements and were awaiting a harvest; six landowners were not able to find buyers or declined participation after their timber stands were inspected; and two were in the process of being set up for bid offerings. Assuming that all 8 parcels remain in the program, the total harvested area will be about 214 acres.

Four parcels, not included in the coordinated harvest project, are being harvested as a direct result of WHFP. The program paid Integrated Forestry to write management plans for their owners. The parcel owners then hired Integrated Forestry to manage their harvests, which totaled 120 acres. Thus, all together WHFP was responsible for 12 harvests totaling 334 acres.

A benefit of this coordinated harvest project was that some family forest owners, who had not made any previous effort to conduct a harvest on their own, were receptive to participating in a harvest organized by a “woodland advocate.”¹⁴

A weakness of the coordinated harvest component of WHFP was that it was an “add-on” to the pilot program and not an integral part of it. The problems with this coordinated harvest illustrate the importance of first developing local forest management plans and then looking at opportunities for joint management activities.

Other problems encountered in the harvest included:

- The selection of too broad an area, the two Baraboo Hills pilot townships and seven adjoining townships, for potential participants. One or two townships would have been easier to manage.
- Starting with an unfiltered database of almost 6,000 township woodland owners with five or more rural acres. Subsequently, GIS techniques were

¹³ Detailed procedures associated with the coordinated harvest are explained in Appendix 2.

¹⁴ This willingness to participate in a harvest coordinated by a trusted adviser is also born out in: Nadeau, E.G. (2007), “Coordinated Timber Harvests in Wisconsin: Examples and Lessons Learned,” Cooperative Development Services, May.

developed to narrow mailing lists down to prime prospects of woodland owners.

- The fact that the coordinator did not reside in the pilot area, making interaction with landowners and contractors difficult.
- A downturn in the timber market related to a slump in housing.
- The low quality of much of the wood and, thus, low projected returns. Landowners with higher value timber were not as inclined to participate in the coordinated harvest.
- Competition for timber sales by other forestry professionals and buyers.
- The long time over which timber sales develop resulted in some landowners losing interest and backing out after work was initiated. (Harvests may take six months or more to plan, set-up, advertise and sell. Timber sale contracts may span two years before harvests are complete.)
- The high cost of insurance to cover harvest coordination (\$3,000). Some landowners chose not to participate because of liability concerns.
- Not charging for all services in organizing the coordinated harvest.

In the future, the organization sponsoring a harvest should identify and aggregate landowners with plan-scheduled work prior to lining up a consulting forester. By doing this, the sponsor should be able to negotiate a reduced fee from the forester. The sponsor should also charge overhead on top of the consulting forester's fee in order to cover the sponsor's costs. These same lessons apply to other coordinated practices such as thinning, control of invasive species, etc.

If this cost is too high it may cause participants to lose interest in being part of the process.

4. Forest Owner Survey

The survey was mailed to 131 individuals and couples, including 106 who responded to the three Healthy Forest invitations sent to landowners in the two pilot sites in 2006 and 2007, and the 25 respondents from the single Coordinated Harvest mailing in 2006. The original survey with a stamped return envelope was mailed on October 15, 2007; a postcard reminder was sent on October 26; and a second copy of the survey and another stamped envelope was sent on November 9. As of November 28, 71 surveys had been completed and returned, a response rate of 54%.

Key findings from the survey include the following.

Ownership

The 71 respondents reported owning a total of 2,700 wooded acres, an average of 38 acres per landowner. The average period of ownership is 19 years.

Forester visits

Fifty-eight respondents reported having a forester visit their property as part of WHFP; 34 visits were by DNR foresters; 20 by private foresters; and 4 by both.

For 86% of these landowners, this was the first time a forester had visited their land.

Eighty-eight percent were very pleased with the visit; 12% were somewhat pleased. No respondent reported being disappointed with the visit.

Ninety percent of respondents reported receiving a written follow-up from the forester; 88% were pleased with the information and advice in the follow-up; 12% were somewhat pleased; no one reported being disappointed in the follow-up.

Practice implementation

Thirty-three respondents (57% of those receiving forester visits) reported that they had begun to implement recommended practices in their woods. Practices included invasive species control, thinning, harvesting, and planning of future activities.

Project coordination

Seventy-six percent of respondents (41 people) reported that they were very pleased with their contacts with the project coordinator; 22% were somewhat pleased; only one person was disappointed.¹⁵

Comprehensive forest plan

Only 23% of respondents (14 people) indicated that they had received a copy of the comprehensive plan for their pilot area.

Eighty-four percent of respondents (16 people) who reviewed a copy of the plan were very pleased with it; 11% were somewhat pleased; and one person was disappointed (because of a delay in getting the plan)¹⁶.

Eighty-two percent (41 respondents) of those who didn't receive a copy indicated that they would like to receive one.

Interest in future local forestry activities

Ninety percent of those responding to this question (54 people) indicated that they were interested in receiving mailings on forestry issues; 77% would like

¹⁵ It is not clear that all the respondents knew who the coordinator was. Ten of them indicated that the coordinator had visited their land, when in reality he only visited five sites.

¹⁶ Fourteen people reported receiving a copy of the comprehensive plan. An additional five people reported having had an opportunity to review the plan.

continued one-on-one forestry advice; 53% said they would like to participate in educational events, including woods walks; 47% expressed an interest in coordinated forestry projects; 32% said they wanted to participate in meetings with other woodland owners to discuss forestry issues.

D. CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

This section of the report summarizes the major conclusions and lessons learned from the Wisconsin Healthy Forest Program.¹⁷

1. A successful pilot program

WHFP gets high marks as a pilot, community-based, forest management program. This conclusion is supported both by the performance data presented above on the number of family forest owners who had forester visits and who developed forest management plans as a result of WHFP; and by the survey data that indicate a very high level of satisfaction by participants in the program.

WHFP increased family forest acreage under forest management plans in the two pilot areas by 6% or almost 1,300 acres in 18 months.

It is important to note that development of new management plans represents only one accomplishment of the program. In addition to the 6% increase in acreage with management plans, 10% of family forest acreage in the pilot areas (almost 2,500 acres) was also impacted during this brief pilot phase through forester visits, written follow-up advice, and through interest expressed by landowners in forest management that has not yet been acted upon.

With a total of 43% of family forest land in the sites either enrolled in the Managed Forest Law or impacted by WHFP, the program shows the potential of building on the success of MFL to increase family forest acreage with forest management plans in Wisconsin to 50% or more over the next decade.

2. Reasons for success

Several of the major factors that appear to be associated with the success of WHFP are listed below.

- Focusing the program on local communities;
- Having a woodland advocate working closely with local landowners;
- Focusing on the individual needs and concerns of each landowner.
- Repeated messages about the value of forest management;
- Easy access to an initial visit by a forester;
- Free basic and forest stewardship plans to landowners with 10 to 100 wooded acres; and

¹⁷ This section focuses on the findings from the review of WHFP. **Part Two** of the report presents recommendations for changes in state policy and practices and for private sector actions that are based on this review and on other recent developments related to private forest land in Wisconsin.

- Neighbor-to-neighbor communication about the project.

Two factors that have not yet been adequately tested because of the short duration of WHFP thus far are:

- The development of a sense of community and commitment to improved land management among family forest owners; and
- Joint activities by landowners such as educational events, coordinated thinnings, harvests, removal of invasives and other activities.

These latter program results may or may not develop over the next two or three years depending on the response of landowners and continued support from foresters and a woodland advocate.

3. Areas for improvement

Despite the overall success of WHFP, there are some lessons that can be learned and applied to improve performance in future applications of this community-based, woodland advocate approach:

- e. **Select a coordinator or woodland advocate who resides in or near the community.** In the pilot program, the same person coordinated program activities in both pilot areas, but didn't reside in or near either of them. He played the role of "landowner advocate," but, because of time and travel limitations, was not able to do so on a day-to-day or week-to-week basis. In a scaled-up program, coordinators should live in or near the project sites.¹⁸
- f. **Provide a property tax incentive for having and implementing a plan.** In the pilot program, landowners did not receive a property tax credit for developing and implementing management plans. In a scaled-up program, it would make sense to explore a tax credit for a forest stewardship plan agreement of less than 25 years, the current minimum requirement for MFL.
- g. **Have an accountability system for carrying out plan elements.** Another feature missing from the plans developed in the pilot program is the lack of any consequences related to the implementation of practices specified in the plans. Again, as with MFL, a property tax incentive could be contingent on landowners carrying out the practices specified in their 10-year forest stewardship plans.
- h. **Develop a certification program for this new plan category.** In a scaled up community-based, forest stewardship plan program, there is very good potential to develop a group certification program. The example

¹⁸ Despite these geographical limitations, the coordinator received very high evaluations by respondents to the participant survey as reported above.

of the MFL Tree Farm Certification program provides an excellent precedent.

4. Conclusion

This review of the Wisconsin Healthy Forest Program shows promise of a new kind of outreach approach in Wisconsin that has the potential to substantially increase private forest management in the next decade.

The core elements of landscape-level planning, community-based service delivery, and a simple plan development process for family forest owners have had a significant positive impact on the development of new plans by some family forest owners in the pilot areas and on broadening interest in forest management by others.

The success of the WHFP pilot program suggests that this community-based, woodland advocate approach has the potential to be scaled up to a statewide level. Key components of a possible scale-up are: the addition of a shorter contract option within the MFL program; and state support for education and funding for community-based woodland advocates who would work with family forest owners at the local level.

Part Two of the report provides a detailed analysis and a set of recommendations related to the policy and practice implications of the Wisconsin Healthy Forest Program and on other recent developments related to family forestry in Wisconsin.

Part Two: Policy Implications of the Wisconsin Healthy Forest Pilot Program and Other Recent Developments

INTRODUCTION

This section of the report draws policy implications from the review of the Wisconsin Healthy Forest Program presented in **Part One** and from recommendations in the 1999 and 2004 Wisconsin DNR private forestry program reviews (see Appendix 3). The proposals offered here also relate to Governor Doyle's "Grow Wisconsin" plan that encourages developing forest certification opportunities and increasing awareness of the role of forests in mitigating climate change and meeting our energy needs.

Part Two is divided into four chapters. These chapters focus on the following major issues related to family forest management in Wisconsin.

- The first chapter defines, analyzes and makes recommendations related to **forest management planning services**. It includes a review of different kinds of communications that foresters can have with landowners ranging from simple responses to questions and site visits to various kinds of forest management plans. It also reviews the role that comprehensive forestry plans can play in forest management.
- The second chapter analyzes and makes recommendations related to **coordinated practice implementation services**, including coordinated harvests.
- The third chapter focuses on strategies for **expanding family forest certification** in Wisconsin.
- The fourth chapter is about **encouraging forest management at the community level**. Building on the results of WHFP and other community-based approaches to family forestry, this chapter recommends the increased use of community-based forestry services in Wisconsin as an important means to increase family forest management.

A. FOREST MANAGEMENT PLANNING SERVICES

A forest management plan is a written evaluation of a property that provides a description of the resource, its condition and recommendations for applied management along with a timetable for implementation. The purpose of forest management plans is to enhance or protect an array of benefits including soil, water, aesthetic quality, recreation, timber, water, and fish and wildlife resources based on the landowner's objectives for the land.

Forest management planning for private landowners in Wisconsin evolved from simple cutting schedules for timber crops in the early 1900's to robust, often lengthy documents today providing background and guidance for the spectrum of forest benefits noted above. Many social and technological factors have driven the change. For example, today's landowners come from diverse backgrounds and exhibit more complicated goals than were apparent among the mostly agrarian owners of the mid 20th century. With the advent of computers, it's also easier (sometimes to our peril) to generate intricate planning documents. The state's Managed Forest Law (MFL) property tax incentive that launched in 1985 and the federal Forest Stewardship Program that started in 1991 established comprehensive forest stewardship plans as the norm.

For a time during the 1990's, DNR foresters operated under a directive that all forestry plans they produced should conform to forest stewardship plan standards. After a few years, DNR recognized that policy had swung too far and that not all situations called for complex plans. Many landowners were not at a stage where they would benefit from complicated plans. Stewardship plans are expensive to produce, and the need for planning assistance has grown faster than the supply of foresters. In recognition of such challenges, recommendations from DNR private forestry program reviews in 1999 and 2004 sought streamlined forest management planning tools and policies.

The WHFP addresses forest management guidance with a four-tiered approach. The intensity or detail in a plan is determined by the time, interest or resources of the landowner. The four levels of planning assistance include:

1. Simple Responses

Simple responses provide information related to a single-issue inquiry. This may involve a telephone call, e-mail, letter, mailed brochure or other simple response to questions about topics such as forest pests, tree species to plant, seed collection techniques, etc. In some situations, a volunteer Woodland Advocate might be able to provide a simple response without the involvement of a forester.

2. Basic Plans/Forest Practice Plans

Basic plans (also called forest practice plans) prepared by a forester address specific management practices and may be in the form of a letter or summary of prescriptions. They are often used as a follow-up to an initial contact when the interest and commitment of the owner is not well established or to provide specific step-wise instructions for a task. The basic plan is a tool to reinforce verbal recommendations and encourage action by the owner. Basic plans do not require the completion of a land exam and practices report or entry of details into a database for tracking prescriptions, although entry into a database is optional.

3. Forest Stewardship Plans

The State Forest Stewardship Committee establishes the required elements of Forest Stewardship Plans. Forest Stewardship plans combine the big picture (a comprehensive assessment of the forests and other natural vegetation within the area, their history, their current condition, special needs, and integrated strategies for protection and management) with forest cover type information and management schedules for individual parcels. Stewardship plans consider the management of the total forest resource for all benefits, dependent upon the land capability and the objectives of the landowner.

The WHFP approaches forest stewardship plans in a unique way. *WHFP stewardship plans break the “big picture” elements and the individual parcel elements into two discrete parts.*

The first is a Comprehensive Forestry Plan (CFP) for a specific geographic area. At the broadest level, DNR Ecosystem Management Handbook - Ecological Management Chapters being written for each of the 16 Wisconsin ecological landscapes could be adapted with silvicultural recommendations. CFPs could also be refined at a smaller scale for counties, townships and other units of local government. They could take into account local land use plans such as maintaining green space and wildlife corridors, reducing parcelization, and establishing and maintaining trail systems.

A CFP is prepared once as a standalone document rather repeated as a customized component of each landowner plan. The CFP is a guide to the ecology, management and conservation of forests in the project area. It summarizes landscape-scale issues and objectives (including High Conservation Value Forests) that might otherwise be difficult to identify at an individual parcel level. Appendix 1 – Table 1 provides CFP details.

The CFP is primarily intended for foresters and other natural resources managers that assist individual landowners, but the CFP can be useful to landowners or anyone interested in exploring the concepts behind forest recommendations. An explicit purpose of separating out the CFP is recognition that most landowners do not want to be made into forestry experts. Overloading information into a landowner's plan confuses many of them and makes it harder for landowners to focus on what they need to do. Creating a separate CFP allows foresters to consider a broad array of ecological and socioeconomic factors without overwhelming landowners or degrading the overall planning process.

The second is an Individual Forest Management Schedule (IFMS) that describes the forest reconnaissance and prescriptions for a landowner's tract in language a landowner can easily grasp. An IFMS should cover at least a 10-year period. An IFMS requires a land exam and practices report and entry of the data into a tracking system. The State Forest Stewardship guidelines do not specify data intensity or standard error parameters for field data, but foresters should collect data sufficient to backup management prescriptions that are written. Stands with prescriptions for active management within the term of the plan should have a commensurate level of reconnaissance data based on the size and variability of the stand. See Table 2 in Appendix 1 for IFMS specifics.

The IFMS and CFP *together* satisfy Wisconsin Forest Stewardship Plan requirements.

To streamline IFMS writing in the future, DNR is building an expert template into the Wisconsin Forest Inventory and Reporting System (WISFIRS) that will generate a narrative plan based on stand characteristics input by the foresters. The system will be flexible enough to allow customization of prescriptions to address landowner objectives. Plan content and GIS map layers will eventually be accessible online.

4. Managed Forest Law Stewardship Plans

Managed Forest Law (MFL) plans are also Forest Stewardship Plans, but preparation of MFL plans was not within the scope of the WHFP field pilots. Since a statute change in 2005, DNR foresters are not allowed to write MFL plans unless landowners pay a fee modeled on charges from consulting foresters. The cost of MFL stewardship plans, currently averaging about \$1,000 each, placed them outside the WHFP budget. In the WHFP pilots, landowners were encouraged to apply for MFL and have an MFL plan prepared by a Cooperating Forester if that approach better served their interests.

The current MFL plan method does not utilize the WHFP approach of separating the Comprehensive Forestry Plan overview and the Individual Forest Management Schedule. As a result, many MFL plans are quite long and some landowners find them difficult to comprehend.

Implications for Future Forest Management Planning Policies

The significance of the first two tiers of guidance, simple responses and basic plans, cannot be overemphasized. Often, state programs like MFL and the Wisconsin Landowner Grant Program concentrate resources on comprehensive stewardship plans. Stewardship plans certainly have a place. Based on focus group surveys done for the WHFP and independent research by U.W. Professor Mark Rickenbach and others, however, a large portion of family forest owners are not ready to jump into a long-term active management program. Most are not even aware that their land needs care.

Focus group interviews for the WHFP pilots indicate landowner unwillingness to pay for services that deliver simple initial guidance and basic plans. Not knowing with certainty how they might benefit from active management and the time delay in seeing results may be factors. The cost barrier to initial action is an elementary reason why DNR Service Foresters are essential. Based on anecdotal reports from other states without public foresters providing direct landowner assistance, DNR's Service Forester program is a highly efficient method to provide consistent, objective initial guidance. Although some landowners express concern about working with governmental foresters (an obstacle WHFP can help overcome), having a source of technically competent DNR foresters available to provide initial guidance is extremely important to the continued success of Wisconsin private forestry assistance programs.

Recommendation A1: State policy should stabilize the availability of DNR Service Foresters to provide initial forestry guidance to the private woodland owners of the state. Ideally, the State Legislature would expand DNR Service Forester staffing in proportion to the increased number of private woodland owners.

In the WHFP, WFF favored utilizing DNR Service Foresters as the technical service provider. Since that is not always possible (workload limitations and staff vacancies being factors), the Baraboo Hills pilot provided WFF contracting for private consulting forester visits to landowners. The landowners are apparently as satisfied with help from the contracted foresters as from DNR staff if the help is professional and timely. Considering constraints on the number of DNR Service Foresters, expanding the level of initial guidance in Wisconsin might not be possible without provisions to fund contracting private foresters for assistance.

As important as simple guidance, focused marketing in a local community was a critical element in the WHFP field trials for encouraging forest owners to step forward and ask for help. This took the form of direct mailings, local news releases or town meetings informing landowners of an opportunity to get forestry assistance in their township. It was also noteworthy that help was being channeled by Wisconsin Family Forests, a private landowner organization, not government or the forest products industry. WFF's role boosted landowners' confidence to participate.

Recommendation A2: Cost sharing to groups should be made available through the Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant program or federal programs for landowner recruitment and for contracting with private consulting foresters for simple guidance and basic plans to complement services available from DNR foresters. At least \$400,000 per year should be made available to groups for these purposes.

When a landowner is ready to move beyond a simple response or basic plan into a ten-year or longer forest stewardship plan, the WHFP found that landowners appreciated a streamlined planning document. Breaking stewardship plans into two components, a Comprehensive Forestry Plan (CFP) and an Individual Forest Management Schedule (IFMS) allows landowners to quickly identify prescriptions for their property. Streamlined forest stewardship plans emphasize a landowner's property and their management schedule. In WHFP follow-up surveys, landowners were very pleased with the type of forestry guidance they received.

Although CFPs may not result in dramatic cost reductions¹⁹ for stewardship plans, foresters in the pilots recommend the CFP approach. A CFP gives an opportunity to consider landscape level issues and opportunities that might be overlooked in the traditional stewardship planning approach. Separating ecological and socioeconomic elements into the CFP makes the IFMS shorter and easier for most landowners to comprehend. The foresters writing Individual Forest Management Schedules appreciated having generally accepted silvicultural strategies for an area gathered in one document. This was especially true for plan writers new to an area. Foresters liked being able to refer landowners to one supporting document rather than trying to attach a plethora of extension publications to the plan. DNR's Bureau of Endangered Resources is currently developing ecosystem overviews for each of the 16 Wisconsin Ecological Habitat Types, which could potentially be adapted to include silvicultural guidance. An overall objective would be to slim down forestry plans provided to private landowners, while at the same time improving ecological and socioeconomic information considered in MFL or other stewardship plans.

¹⁹ Personal review by participating foresters of the time requirements of the CFM approach compared to traditional forest stewardship planning indicates at most a 25% time saving after CFPs are available.

Recommendation A3: Adopt the WHFP Comprehensive Forest Plan (CFP) – Individual Forest Management Schedule stewardship planning approach as an option within MFL and future private forest management planning programs. Consider administrative rules for MFL defining an appropriate geographic scope and scale of the CFP planning component, perhaps tied to Wisconsin ecological landscapes or sub-classes.

In the two pilots, one CFP was prepared with the assistance of a paid consulting forester-ecologist. The other was written solely by DNR staff that relied heavily on existing publications. Facilitating CFP writing in an ongoing program under the Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program (WFLGP) is encouraged. This would require a new category within WFLGP, with financial assistance made available to either a governmental or NGO sponsor of a CFP.

Recommendation A4: Create a cost sharing practice within the Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program (WFLGP) for the preparation of Comprehensive Forest Plans (defined as a complement to Individual Forest Management Schedules for forest stewardship plans in a geographic area) by governmental agencies or non-governmental organizations assisting private woodland owners. Also allow cost sharing for Individual Forest Management Schedules prepared under the umbrella of a Comprehensive Forest Plan.

B. COORDINATED PRACTICE IMPLEMENTATION SERVICES

Beyond helping landowners find planning guidance, a sustainable forestry program needs landowners to carry out the activities toward their objectives identified in forestry plans. Providing landowners with plans and then walking away with an expectation they will figure out how to implement plans entirely on their own can result in a high level of failure. Landowners need ongoing support if they are to stay motivated and find the necessary resources to keep on track. Analysis of Forest Stewardship and Managed Forest Law plan compliance bears this out.

The WHFP and other Wisconsin examples demonstrate a practice coordination sponsor can effectively expedite forestry practices. Such a role can be played by DNR, other public conservation organizations, informal neighborhood alliances, consulting foresters, or woodland owner organizations among other possibilities. Tasks such as timber harvesting, invasive species control, prescribed burning, tree planting, pest control, wildlife habitat restoration, etc. can be complicated for an individual landowner but easier for a sponsor who “knows the ropes.” Coordinated activities might have economies of scale, resulting in lower costs or higher revenues for the landowners. Service providers or loggers might not find it

practical to work with landowners on an individual basis, but would be willing to work in a project area if a sponsor were able to aggregate jobs. A practice coordinator could also have more expertise than many individual landowners to evaluate contractors' qualifications to provide dependable service.

The coordinated harvest carried out in the WHFP pilot provided useful lessons, but to gain insight from a broader spectrum of experiences, a related study looks at seven additional examples in Wisconsin. A separate report "Coordinated Timber Harvests in Wisconsin" by E.G Nadeau is available from Cooperative Development Services. It looks at a combination of public service, volunteer, and fee-for-service coordinated harvests conducted by a variety of agencies, individuals and organizations. Each approach can yield benefits, but the most sustainable for a programmatic effort is probably fee-for-services. The main factors for success are:

a. Well-targeted recruitment of participants

- i. Landowners with prescribed harvests due under **MFL contracts** are good potential participants.
- ii. **Neighbors** of landowners who have expressed interest in a timber sale are another group of potential participants.
- iii. Use of a **GIS database** provides an efficient means to identify wooded parcels and, thus, to increase the quality of woodland owner mailing lists.

b. Business-like approach

- i. Organizations carrying out coordinated harvests need to do so in a manner that is both **cost-effective and responsive to landowners**.
- ii. In fee-for-service operations, a combination of **an initial fee** for a site visit (or for co-op membership) **plus an hourly fee** (or a fee based on a percentage of the harvest value) for coordinated harvest services can make coordinated harvests a profitable activity for the sponsoring organization.
- iii. **The harvest coordinator must add real economic value** to the harvest process by involving landowners who would otherwise not participate, by providing quality harvest-related services to landowners at a reasonable cost, by helping landowners to identify high quality forestry professionals, by negotiating reduced forestry service fees, by helping to secure reasonable bids from buyers, and by overseeing the harvest to insure that the interests of landowners are being protected.

c. Good relationships with landowners and forestry professionals

- i. To be effective at recruiting landowners to participate in a coordinated harvest, an organization needs to establish and maintain a **trusted relationship with landowners** in the area of

- the harvest.
- ii. At the same time, the harvest coordinator needs to have a **good working relationship with DNR foresters, consulting foresters, industrial foresters, loggers and other buyers** in order to be an effective agent on behalf of landowners.

All of these lessons carry over equally well to other coordinated plan implementation activities such as control of invasive species, prescribed burning, tree planting, etc.

What is clear is that practice coordination by a local sponsor can lead to significant **social, environmental and economic benefits**. A key social benefit is that coordinated practices helped landowners overcome the inertia or fear of undertaking land management on their own. Environmental benefits related to water and air, improved wildlife habitat, and forest growth are evident. The primary economic benefits included better timber prices for landowners, generating employment for forest workers, and supplying wood to forest industry.

How can the number of coordinated practices be increased in Wisconsin? One is to provide financial assistance to sponsors willing to organize projects. A positive example is the addition of \$60,000 per year in the 2009-2011 biennial state budget for Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program cost-sharing for groups to control invasive plants. This is the first time WFLGP funding is being made available to groups. The administrative rules that will be developed for the initiative could pave the way for other practice coordination efforts.

Recommendation B1: Revise WFLGP statutes to allow cost sharing for sponsor-coordinated management practices in addition to group invasive species control. Increase WFLGP funding by at least \$500,000 per year for group-coordinated forestry practice implementation services.

The WHFP and other examples underscore the complexity of meaningful practice coordination. Sponsors need training to develop sound approaches regardless of whether the activity is done as a public service or for profit.

Recommendation B2: Develop state programs to train and support landowner co-ops, woodland owner associations, and other landowner advocate organizations to provide coordinated forestry plan implementation services. Assistance to these organizations could be provided through the Wisconsin Forest Stewardship Grant Program, Wisconsin Environmental Education Board Grants, and other state or University of Wisconsin forestry programs.

Reliable woodland owner contact lists are essential for reaching landowners who could benefit from coordinated practice implementation services and other

forestry programs. We learned that county tax roll data available as text is not focused and requires screening based on land cover, geographic and demographic characteristics to be useful. By applying GIS techniques, lists of thousands of landowners can be narrowed down to a few hundred prime-prospects in a township or county.

Two GIS layers are especially important for landowner contact screening to work. One is reliable land cover data that identifies the spatial location of woodlands. WHFP relied primarily on 1990 WISCLAND coverage, a program that identified broad land cover types through remote sensing (satellite) technology. Unfortunately, WISCLAND has not been updated in over a decade and does not take advantage of more refined forest cover classification now possible. The other indispensable GIS layer is real property parcel maps with attribute files giving landowner names and addresses. As of 2007, only about a dozen of Wisconsin's 72 counties were willing to share complete parcel GIS data with DNR, although all counties are developing the information with funding that has been provided by the state.

Recommendation B3: Encourage the Wisconsin Legislature to require counties to make real property GIS parcel data freely available to governmental agencies and the University of Wisconsin for the purposes of research and educational outreach.

Recommendation B4: DNR or the University of Wisconsin should seek funding for an update of remote sensing land cover data and make the GIS information freely available. The funding could be made available through the state budget or obtained through grants.

C. EXPANDING FAMILY FOREST CERTIFICATION

A primary WHFP objective was to investigate practical methods to increase private landowner participation in third-party forest certification or related “controlled wood” programs. Forest certification is an answer to a market-driven demand for assurance that wood supplies come from responsibly managed forests. An emerging market for trading carbon credits, part of a strategy to control global climate change, also uses forest certification as a method to measure and verify carbon sequestration activities.

WHFP started with a hypothesis that landowners could be recruited to form local groups. Landowners in groups would receive forestry planning guidance and implementation services. They could also potentially participate in FSC or American Tree Farm System group certification schemes. Testing found that leading with a group premise or promise of forest certification does not work.

The concept of inviting landowners to join a group to receive forestry services or to become “certified” did not resonate. Focus group interviews done at the start of the WHFP clearly revealed that family forestland owners are not initially keen on joining groups and that leading with a “group” concept is a deterrent. WFF also substantiated that finding in other efforts to form landowner alliances. The surveys likewise showed that leading with forest certification was not a compelling concept for most landowners. *Interestingly, however, landowners become open to cooperating in groups and having their land management certified after they become engaged in active management that addresses their personal objectives.* The key is getting them connected with responsible or sustainable forestry in the first place. Once there, it then becomes practical to look for efficient ways to set up a certified group.

WHFP recognizes that Wisconsin has an effective, time-tested inducement to pilot private woodland owners to responsible forestry. Wisconsin’s Managed Forest Law is the most successful forest tax incentive program in the nation. A 2006 U.S. Forest Service survey estimates 178,000 non-industrial private landowners with ten or more acres control about 9.7 million acres of forestland in Wisconsin. 2.4 million acres, 25% of Wisconsin’s family forests, are now MFL enrolled under 40,000 designation orders. With creation of an MFL-American Tree Farm System Certified Group in 2005 and current work to gain FSC group certification, MFL is also proving to be a remarkably efficient program to certify large numbers family forest owners. MFL has a meaningful tax reduction that keeps landowners involved and a robust compliance program that assures landowners follow through with program commitments.

There appear to be three main factors needed for broad-scale family forest certification to succeed: That certification is 1) free to the landowners; 2) delivered by a trusted program or sponsor; and 3) provides immediate and tangible benefits.

The Wisconsin Managed Forest Law Certified Group satisfies the formula for many landowners, but other choices might be needed in the future to reach the 75% of private, non-industrial forestland not enrolled in MFL. Recent developments recognizing the role of forests in carbon sequestration (to controlling climate change) and a potential to meet the nation's energy needs through bio-fuels production add urgency for innovative programs to engage more private woodland owners. A multi-stakeholder policy development group is need as a catalyst for new private forestry incentives to meet today's needs.

Recommendation C1: To extend forest certification, carbon sequestration and bio-fuels production to more family forest owners, explore the development of new property tax or income tax incentives. A Wisconsin Legislative Council Committee or other public participation forum should be convened to develop and evaluate alternatives.

The following ideas have not been fully examined but are offered as “discussion starters” for a future policy development group.

Consider:

- A new ten-year “Wisconsin Family Forest Certification” program, possibly allowing broader eco-system management objectives than MFL, using a two-part forest stewardship planning format with a Comprehensive Forestry Plan (CFP) overview and Individual Forest Management Schedules (IFMS) as in the Wisconsin Healthy Forest Pilot.
- Authorization for DNR Service Foresters to prepare 10-year IFMS plans under a Wisconsin Family Forest Certification program at no charge for landowners with 10 - 50 acres of woodland.
- Dual Tree Farm and FSC Group certification for a Wisconsin Family Forest Certification program, including necessary program elements that conform to American Tree Farm System and Forest Stewardship Council standards.
- Carbon credit payments to participating landowners (either individually or to groups coordinating land management services) in the form of cost sharing assistance administered through the Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program.
- Reduced harvest taxes (or eliminate the MFL yield tax) as an incentive for landowners to participate in coordinated timber harvests administered by professional foresters or harvested by Master Logger Certified® (or equivalent) timber producers.
- Fiber for bio-fuel production incentives, including expanded access to cost sharing for reforestation, forest thinning practices and invasive plant control.

D. ENCOURAGING FOREST MANAGEMENT AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL

One of the more insightful lessons from the WHFP is the impact a trusted, non-technical counselor can have on a woodland owner. The Woodland Advocate concept is an outgrowth of the WHFP experience. A Woodland Advocate is a volunteer trained landowner who responds to calls from neighbors with forestry questions. Woodland Advocates can provide answers to simple forestry inquiries and may visit another landowner's property, but their most important function is to build trust and direct others to capable resource professionals. People are more confident about turning to professional land managers if they first have the opportunity to speak with a respected peer. Landowners like to learn from neighbors or friends who have done well in similar circumstances.

Perhaps that should not be a profound realization considering we behave similarly in almost every other aspect of life. There is a natural client-professional barrier that friendly advice can overcome. Not to say that we haven't recognized and acted on that concept before. It's at the heart of why landowner organizations like the Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association, Wisconsin Tree Farm Committee, or Wisconsin Family Forests form. The role of the trusted advisor is also the underlying foundation for the former Wisconsin Forest Productivity Council (WFPC) and the current UWEX Woodland Leader program. This report looks to the WFPC model and ties to UWEX Woodland Leaders to grow a future "Woodland Advocate" program based on the principles of community interaction and support.

The non-profit Wisconsin Forest Productivity Council (WFPC) was established in the early 1990's as an educational outreach program. Its programs were billed as a woodland owner's "First Step to Sustainable Forestry". The WFPC director (first Al Barden and later Geary Searfoss, both of whom were woodland owners with forestry-related expertise) would target 2-3 counties a year in which to set up landowner conferences. Through direct mailings and other publicity, WFPC was successful in bringing together fairly large groups of property owners. They would be given "Sustainable Forestry 101" education at meetings and field tours. Landowners also received WFPC resource guides of professional land managers who could provide them ongoing assistance. A Woodland Advocate program, as described below, could provide a missing element by adding local landowner mentors to help assure results.

Unfortunately, when large domestic papermaking firms who funded the WFPC were bought out by international interests after 2000, key financial support flagged. WFPC was forced to cease operations in 2004. Financial markets forced the companies to drop landowner assistance programs that did not exhibit short-term profitability. Unfortunately, sustainable forestry attitudes that precede landowner action grow slowly. The need, however, for the sort of landowner counseling and forestry leadership provided by the WFPC is stronger than ever as the number of small private forest holdings has grown. WFF has successfully

used similar techniques to recruit landowners for the WHFP and its local organizations such as the Deerfield Alliance in Waushara County.

In respect to the UWEX Woodland Leader Program coordinated by John DuPlissis began in 2002. The Coordinator position is funded by UWEX, and DNR provides \$50,000 a year for outreach programming. There are two tracks, a Woodland Leader Institute (WLI) and a Master Woodland Steward course. Many landowner graduates of WLI have gone on serve as directors and board members for Wisconsin forest owner programs (including Gerry Mich who coordinates the WHFP). Master Woodland Stewards are given more hands-on forestry training patterned on UWEX Master Gardeners.

A WHFP-Woodland Advocate program could help address two challenges that Landowner Outreach Coordinator John DuPlissis has encountered. One is ongoing coordination of volunteer efforts by people who complete either of the two tracks. The other is recruiting new landowners to participate. A Woodland Advocate program could leverage the good work already being accomplished by the UWEX Woodland Leader Program by providing a framework in which to function and assistance with expenses related to landowner's volunteer activities.

Recommendation D1: A program is needed to organize and present local landowner outreach, and to recruit, train and support volunteer landowner mentors. A future Woodland Advocate Program could accomplish that with a sponsor working in cooperation with UWEX and DNR. The Woodland Advocate sponsor role could be filled by a landowner organization such as Wisconsin Family Forests, the Wisconsin Tree Farm Committee, the Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association or landowner cooperatives. Another alternative sponsor might be UWEX through changes in the existing Woodland Leader and/or Basin Educator programs. A legislative forum is recommended to work out organizational details and appropriate funding.

The following figure diagrams the potential relationships in a Woodland Advocate Program framework.



In this possible structure, an Advocate Coordinator would be a paid position and the Woodland Advocates, or landowner mentors, would be volunteers. The program would provide training and screening for mentors. While the mentors are envisioned as volunteers, their travel and communications expenses should be reimbursed. Funding could come from a combination a state and private support.

E. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY

Engaging another 2 million acres of private woodland in responsible forestry by 2020 will require innovative programs that appeal to more sectors of the “family forest” marketplace. Experience with the WHFP and reaction to emerging private forestry assistance issues prompts the following recommendations:

Forest Management Planning Services

DNR Service Foresters provide critical initial guidance to landowners who rely on them for objective advice at no cost. The State needs to assure adequate access to public foresters. To extend private forestry assistance beyond the bounds of permitted DNR staffing, however, additional innovations in planning efficiency and forestry planning services coordinated by local conservation groups are recommended.

A1: State policy should stabilize the availability of DNR Service Foresters to provide initial forestry guidance to the private woodland owners of the state. Ideally, the State Legislature would expand DNR Service Forester staffing in proportion to the increased number of private woodland owners.

A2: Cost sharing to groups should be made available through the Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant program or federal programs for landowner recruitment and for contracting with private consulting foresters for simple guidance and basic plans to complement services available from DNR foresters. At least \$400,000 per year should be made available to groups for these purposes.

A3: Adopt the WHFP Comprehensive Forest Plan (CFP) – Individual Forest Management Schedule stewardship planning approach as an option within MFL and future private forest management planning programs. Consider administrative rules for MFL defining an appropriate geographic scope and scale of the CFP planning component, perhaps tied to Wisconsin ecological landscapes or sub-classes.

A4: Create a cost sharing practice within the Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program (WFLGP) for the preparation of Comprehensive Forest Plans (defined as a complement to Individual Forest Management Schedules for forest stewardship plans in a geographic area) by governmental agencies or non-governmental organizations assisting private woodland owners. Also allow cost sharing for Individual Forest Management Schedules prepared under the umbrella of a Comprehensive Forest Plan.

Coordinated Practice Implementation Services

Just as local conservation partners can extend planning services to more family forest owners, they can also effectively promote and facilitate the implementation of practices that are recommended in plans if given appropriate support. To help DNR and partners identify and contact private landowners who would benefit from responsible forestry services, improved access to real-property parcel and land cover data is also needed.

B1: Revise WFLGP statutes to allow cost sharing for sponsor-coordinated management practices in addition to group invasive species control. Increase WFLGP funding by at least \$500,000 per year for group-coordinated forestry practice implementation services.

B2: Develop state programs to train and support landowner co-ops, woodland owner associations, and other landowner advocate organizations to provide coordinated forestry plan implementation services. Assistance to these organizations could be provided through the Wisconsin Forest Stewardship Grant Program, Wisconsin Environmental Education Board Grants, and other state or University of Wisconsin forestry programs.

B3: Encourage the Wisconsin Legislature to require counties to make real property GIS parcel data freely available to governmental agencies and the University of Wisconsin for the purposes of research and educational outreach.

B4: DNR or the University of Wisconsin should seek funding for an update of remote sensing land cover data and make the GIS information freely

available. The funding could be made available through the state budget or obtained through grants.

Expanding Family Forest Certification

While MFL appeals to a significant segment of private landowners, emerging issues related to market assurance, climate change and energy needs advise developing new approaches that are relevant to more sectors of the forest owner population.

C1: To extend forest certification, carbon sequestration and bio-fuels production to more family forest owners, explore the development of new property tax or income tax incentives. A Wisconsin Legislative Council Committee or other public participation forum should be convened to develop and evaluate alternatives.

Encouraging Forest Management at the Community Level

The willingness of good private forest stewards to voluntarily mentor their neighbors could be tapped to overcome barriers to responsible forestry.

D1: A program is needed to organize local landowner outreach, and to recruit, train and support volunteer landowner mentors. A future Woodland Advocate Program could accomplish that with a sponsor working in cooperation with UWEX and DNR. The Woodland Advocate sponsor role could be filled by a landowner organization such as Wisconsin Family Forests, the Wisconsin Tree Farm Committee, the Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association or landowner cooperatives. Another alternative sponsor might be UWEX through changes in the existing Woodland Leader and/or Basin Educator programs. A legislative forum is recommended to work out organizational details and appropriate funding.

Appendix 1 - WHFP - Forest Management Planning Assistance

Table 1. Comprehensive Forestry Plan - Required Components (L=Landowner Friendly)

Component		Content
Executive Summary	L	An introduction in “landowner friendly” terms.
Regional Landscape Overview		Describe climate and general geology. Depending on scale of plan map and provide descriptive information on Wisconsin Ecological Landscapes, Land Type Associations, or both.
Soils Info / Descriptions		Describe predominant soil types, woodland suitability, etc. Optionally consult with NRCS staff.
Description of Timber / Vegetation Types		General description of predominant timber types, ages, management history, etc. Include discussion of various seral stages.
Sensitive Natural Communities		Description and management implications for sensitive Native Communities. Consult with Bureau of Endangered Resources (BER) staff to clarify reports if needed.
Threatened and Endangered Species		Summary of Threatened and Endangered Species; Sub-listing of species most affected by forest practices. Consult with Natural Heritage Inventory or BER staff if needed.
Invasive Species Present		Compilation of invasive species known from area.
Cultural / Historic Resources		Check cultural resources database. Consult with experts to clarify occurrences if warranted.
Forest Health Considerations		Predominant forest health threats within region. Consult with Forest Health Protection staff. Include considerations for Gypsy Moth and Oak Wilt.
Practices to protect / restore soil, water, wildlife, ecosystem, timber resources etc.		Wisconsin Forest management Guidelines is the presumed standard. Plan writers may develop customized prescriptions where appropriate.
Forest Health Recommendations		List of Special Forest Health Practices appropriate to area (i.e., provide specific technical treatment specifications that might be needed by a forester or other professional manager), together with reference to handbooks and existing Forest Health publications.

Component	Content
Summary of Silvicultural Prescriptions	Technical information about stand tending and regeneration harvest methods for timber types based on the DNR Silviculture Handbook and Chapter 2 and table 2-1 in Wisconsin Forest Management Guidelines. Comprehensive plan writers may develop customized prescriptions based on sound forestry and local situations where appropriate. If WHFP is adopted long term, it would be helpful to develop a digital library of prescriptions (an "expert system") for use by plan writers.

CFP Updating Procedures:

A Comprehensive Forestry Plan is intended to be adaptive. It can be updated as experience or research warrant. For ongoing projects that adopt a CFP approach, the CFP should be reviewed by the DNR Silviculture Specialist Team at least once every 15 years. Amendments could be made, however, at any time.

Table 2. WHFP Basic Plan and Forest Stewardship Plan – Individual Forest Management Schedule (IFMS) Components				
L= Landowner Friendly Content; R = Required Information				
Component	Content	Basic Plan - Practice Plan	Forest Stewardship Plan - IFMS	
Landowner Name and Address	As per existing Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) Standards.	R	R	
Landowner Signature			R ²⁰	
Name of Plan Preparer		R	R	
Legal Description		R	R	
Acres Covered Under Plan		R	R	
Plan Length		Variable	10-25 Years	
Owners Goals and Objectives		R	R	
DNR Forester approval				R
Comprehensive Forest Plan			R	

²⁰ A Stewardship Plan must be signed by the landowner to be eligible for cost-sharing or forest certification benefits.

Table 2. WHFP Basic Plan and Forest Stewardship Plan – Individual Forest Management Schedule (IFMS) Components

L= Landowner Friendly Content; R = Required Information				
Component		Content	Basic Plan - Practice Plan	Forest Stewardship Plan - IFMS
(CFP) accessible to landowner ²¹ (see Table 1)				
Parcel map, etc.	L	Parcel maps should follow FSP mapping standards using aerial photo base maps wherever available.	R	R
General Property Description	L	As per existing standards. Property description should include a jargon-free narrative that addresses the resource values on the property identified as priorities for the landowner, significant features, current conditions and implications for management. Include a brief statement of the primary management methods to be employed on the property over time.	R	R
Soils Info / Descriptions		Note Primary Soil Series for Property		R
Stands / Cover Types		Included in Land Exam Report and Management Schedule. The intensity of plot data should be commensurate with the age or condition of a stand and whether a practice that is sensitive to stand density, composition or other pertinent factor is recommended during the term of the plan.		R
Description of Timber / Vegetation Types		Brief comment field specific to stand in Management Schedule	R	R

²¹ The CFP can be provided to landowners in printed format, digital format on a CD, or as a link to a web site. Digital formats may be preferable depending on cost and landowner interest.

Table 2. WHFP Basic Plan and Forest Stewardship Plan – Individual Forest Management Schedule (IFMS) Components

L= Landowner Friendly Content; R = Required Information

Component		Content	Basic Plan - Practice Plan	Forest Stewardship Plan - IFMS
Forest Characteristics		Land Exam Report (which does not need to be given to the landowner)		R
Sensitive Natural Communities		Note Presence Where information is available.		R
Threatened and Endangered Species		Note presence or likelihood if known.	R	R
Invasive Species Present		Note presence and density of invasive species from property reconnaissance.	R	R
Cultural / Historic Resources		Note presence where information is available.		R
Forest Health Considerations		Note presence or likelihood of forest health threats if known. (Includes Gypsy Moth, Oak Wilt)	R	R
Long-term Silvicultural Objective / Desired Future Conditions		A statement of desired future conditions based on current conditions and site potential.	R	R
Recommended Practices	L	Practices are listed drawn from tables in Comprehensive Forestry Plan or Wisconsin Forest Management Guidelines. A "landowner friendly" summary table will include the harvest method or practice, year of scheduled practice, and technical comments for future foresters providing specific details for the practice such as regeneration system, BA residual target if appropriate, species to favor or discriminate against, special precautions, etc. If preferred, the technical details can go into a separate table. Custom written prescriptions may	R	R

Table 2. WHFP Basic Plan and Forest Stewardship Plan – Individual Forest Management Schedule (IFMS) Components

L= Landowner Friendly Content; R = Required Information

Component	Content	Basic Plan - Practice Plan	Forest Stewardship Plan - IFMS
	be developed. Note any deviations from generic prescription if needed.		

CFP and IFMS examples from the Baraboo Hills and Door County WHFP pilots are available for download on the Internet at http://www.wisaf.org/file_transfer.htm.

Appendix 2 - WHFP Coordinated Harvest Assistance

The following procedures were used in the WHFP Baraboo Hills coordinated harvest field trial. The approach was experimental, and lessons learned could be applied to other situations.

Eligibility: A landowner wishing to participate in a Coordinated Harvest must have a forestry plan for the harvest area or property. The plan may be obtained through the WHFP or some other source such as a Wisconsin Cooperating Forester or the Managed Forest Law Program. At a minimum, the forestry plan needs to address the landowner's objective, site capability, current condition, and forestry (silvicultural) intention or goal and how it will be achieved.

Consent to Proceed: To initiate a timber sale, a landowner sends a "Coordinated Harvest – Consent to Proceed" form and a W-9 form (if not already on file) to the WHFP sponsor. A \$100 fee, which will be applied to expenses related to the establishing the harvest, is paid at that time. If a landowner later changes his or her mind about the going ahead, the fee can be refunded only if no set-up work has commenced.

Timber Sale Set-Up: The Forest Coordinator assigns a forester to mark trees or designate timber to be cut, estimate the volume, map the timber sale boundary and identify any operational constraints needed to protect water quality, endangered resources or other issues of concern. This information is included in a timber harvest prospectus (a short description of the project used to advertise for bids) and timber sale contract. The landowner reviews the proposed timber sale contract, based on UW-Extension Forestry Fact publication FR-202-2002, and requests any desired changes or additions. The sale type may be either lump sum or scaled as defined in FR-202-2002, although scaled sales may entail additional fees for on-site measurement of cut products if needed. Necessary cutting notices or other permits will be obtained for the project.

Timber Marketing and Sale: The Forest Coordinator will aggregate recently prepared timber sales into offering that will be sent to reputable, professional timber producers. Offerings that include multiple harvest listings typically generate more interest and better prices than single listings. For very small harvests that are not merchantable on their own, the Forest Coordinator may work with landowners on a combined or group listing. A public bid opening will be conducted at an appointed place and time. The landowners will retain the right to reject any or all bids on their timber.

If a bid is accepted, the landowner and timber producer shall sign the timber sale contract within a reasonable time (usually two weeks). Timber harvest payments will be made directly to the landowner.

Timber Sale Administration and Close Out: A forester contracted by the WHFP will administer the timber harvest, providing periodic inspections to assure that the terms of the timber sale contract are adhered to. The forester may also measure cut products if on-site scaling rather than mill-scaling is called for in the timber sale contract. In the event that adjustments or remedial measures are needed to correct problems, the administering forester will specify the actions needed and verify implementation.

When cutting and hauling are completed or the time period of the timber sale contract elapses, the administering forester and the Forest Coordinator will determine if the terms of the timber sale contract have been met. If not, the Forest Coordinator will advise the landowner to take necessary legal action against the timber producer.

Upon completion of the project, the landowner will be requested to complete a satisfaction survey that can be used to improve the WHFP.

Note: Filing of any Managed Forest Law cutting reports and yield tax payments will be the responsibility of the landowner, not the WHFP or forester. The Forest Coordinator or forester may, however, provide assistance to the landowner on MFL cutting reports.

Fees: Less the \$100 "Consent to Proceed" fee, the Forest Coordinator bills the landowner for timber harvest services based on contractor time, material and travel expense plus a reasonable administrative overhead. For the Baraboo Hills field test, the sponsor's administrative overhead was paid from a Forest Stewardship Grant. Landowners were only billed for services contracted from a consulting forester.

Referral to Reliable Contractors

In addition to coordinating land management practices for landowners, the Forest Coordinator can prepare a list of recommended timber producers, tree planting firms, consulting foresters, biologists, or other resource professionals. (Wisconsin Family Forests calls this their "Power Page".) This is a service many public agencies are not allowed to provide. A non-governmental WHFP sponsor can have more flexibility in identifying ethical and trustworthy contractors and service providers. A sponsor can also set up a web blog to help landowners share personal reviews of service providers, much as customers of online retailers express their opinions of products.

Appendix 3 - 1999 and 2004 Private Forestry Report Findings Related to Proposals in the 2008 WHFP Report

In 1999, DNR completed a comprehensive program review of the Wisconsin private forestry assistance program. An ad hoc study was conducted in 2004 and reviewed by the DNR Forestry Leadership Team (FLT) in 2005-2006 to track progress on the 1999 recommendations and to identify additional needs. The following topics from those reports connect to components of the Wisconsin Healthy Forest Program and recommendations in this report.

2004 Private Forestry Ad Hoc Report Themes (approved by FLT in 2006)

A7. Identify outreach opportunities or methods to engage the unmotivated or uninformed forest landowners, including those in the agricultural community.

A11. Develop programs to enable non-profit, non-governmental organizations to play a larger role in private forestry assistance. Provide sufficient public financial support, combined with fees or other revenue sources, to assure that NGOs involved in the private forestry effort survive and grow. Establish clear objectives, performance measures and monitoring to evaluate the initiatives.

D6. Management plans should be streamlined to provide a) a simple message the landowner can understand, b) an executive summary, c) less complex text or length and d) supplemental publications for more details. Foresters are encouraged to help landowners identify various objectives that would be reasonable to consider when developing written management summaries. Use more non-comprehensive, initial plans or letters [more initial guidance].

E3. Request funding for a program through the Forestry Account to contract with private organizations to address collaborative forestry educational efforts for forest landowners. A minimum of \$200,000 annually is suggested.

E4. Pursue state funding and collaborative efforts for forest certification opportunities for private landowners.

F4. Develop a Landowner Mentoring Program. Forestry professionals would actively direct interested individuals to a "mentor" landowner or forestry organization as a means to share and implement sustainable forestry. This would foster more one-on-one dialogue between forest landowners.

"Develop work priority revisions to elevate initial contacts and first-time service to landowners; recognize the value of simple, focused advice in contrast to complex services; distinguish between educational activities; focus on incentive programs which are most effective in serving the needs of landowners." In October 2005, the FLT determined that this recommendation should be a high priority for continued attention. The Division of Forestry needs to be proactive in finding ways to elevate the priority of initial contacts and simple, focused advice to improve the efficiency of staff.

A2. Department personnel should continue to advocate cooperating forester services with private landowners.

A3. Utilize all forestry-related organizations and agencies by maximizing their unique niche and professional services for Wisconsin forest landowners.

A9. Explore ways to reach people who have different learning styles.

A12. Encourage organizations to take the lead for forestry education within their niche.

A18. Encourage partners to be actively engaged in the political process to promote the aspects of private land management that generate public benefits and sustainable forestry.

1999 Private Forestry Study Themes

(R34) Reaffirm the Department's commitment to providing private forestry assistance by elevating it to a more prominent position in the work planning and budget processes.

(R13) Collaborate with external partners to develop new and innovative methods for delivering sustainable forestry guidance to NIPF owners.

(R7) Strengthen the requirement that DNR actively promote the cooperating forester program through handbooks, directives and work plan objectives.

(R28) Develop additional quality forest management reference materials for private landowners.

(R16) Implement new forestry plan standards and formats to address tax law requirements, ecosystem elements applicable to the land and the landowners' objectives.

(R17) Implement new forest tax law management plan format and support system that meets the requirements of the law and uses technological automation and standard statements wherever practical.

(R24) Establish that DNR foresters' first educational priority should be with individual private forest landowners and landowner groups, with emphasis on providing assistance to first-time contacts.

(R26) Develop initiatives to continue and strengthen partnerships that focus on education.
