

# WISCONSIN HEALTHY FOREST PROGRAM HANDBOOK

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Also see the preliminary outline for the WHFP Report titled, [\*The Next 3 Million Acres: Options for Increasing Family Forest Management in Wisconsin\*](#)

## A. INTRODUCTION

### 1. Background

The Wisconsin Healthy Forest Program (WHFP) originated in 2005 as a pilot program administered jointly by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and Wisconsin Family Forests (WFF). The pilot program began in September 2005 and is scheduled to end in September 2008. Successful elements from the pilot could be used to formulate an ongoing statutory program in the future.

WHFP's underlying goal is to inspire private landowners to adopt a sustainable land ethic and act accordingly. It is intended to complement private forestry programs offered by DNR, the American Tree Farm System (ATFS), the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and other like-minded agencies and organizations. A long-term measure of success will be an increase in the number of Wisconsin private landowners participating in *certified sustainable forestry* that conforms to ATFS or FSC standards.

In a nutshell, the WHFP pilot utilizes a non-governmental partner, Wisconsin Family Forests<sup>1</sup>, to recruit landowners for a sustainable forest stewardship program and lead them to action. Participants receive “free<sup>2</sup>” forest management planning advice from professional foresters, followed by practice implementation services coordinated by the sponsor for a fee. A crucial dimension of the concept that goes beyond plans and services, however, is building local woodland owner networks that encourage active management and instill confidence to follow through. A “Forest Coordinator” employed by a project sponsor is the hub of the network who guides landowners to dependable resource managers and helps them interact with neighbors.

The first year of the three-year WHFP pilot was funded in part by grants to Wisconsin Family Forests from the Turner Foundation and the Weyerhaeuser Family Foundation. WFF received a Wisconsin Forest Stewardship Grant to fund a 2006 coordinated harvest test within the project. About half of the expenses for 2007 and 2008 operations will be paid through a USDA-NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant. The Department of Natural Resources, Cooperative Development Services, the University of Wisconsin and other partners also provide funding or in-kind services. The total program budget from September 2005 through September 2008 is estimated at \$340,000, with \$115,000 in kind and \$225,000 in cash. About \$160,000 of the cash budget is supported by grants.

### 2. Handbook Purpose

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<sup>1</sup> WHFP concepts are intended to be flexible enough to work with non-governmental conservation organizations, private enterprise or local governments that would serve as WHFP sponsors. ***While Wisconsin Family Forests is playing the sponsor role for the test, the WHFP model is not proprietary to that organization.***

<sup>2</sup> Plans under the pilot are paid from grants. An ongoing WHFP might involve a reduced-cost fee for planning assistance, depending on funding sources for a statutory program.

The purpose of this handbook is to explain how the WHFP pilot works. The handbook defines the roles and responsibilities of organizations involved in the program. It describes procedures, management planning and practice implementation, records maintenance, and performance monitoring. Appendices include examples and accomplishments.

The pilot is a short term, three-year experiment intended to test the basic concepts and encourage stakeholders to consider the implications for an ongoing effort. A separate, related [WHFP Report](#) will describe lessons learned from the pilot and options that could be applied in the future. The report will also look at options for how an ongoing WHFP could complement efforts by DNR, local government, forest industry, and environmental groups.

### **3. Pilot Objectives**

The primary objectives of the Wisconsin Healthy Forest Program (WHFP) pilot are to:

- Develop and implement a program for landscape-level, sustainable management on family forestland in defined geographical areas of Wisconsin;
- Evaluate the pilot to provide information for the development of an ongoing statutory program to help landowners adopt a land ethic that counters forest fragmentation, improves forest health and generates certified forest products.

The development of WHFP as a successful sustainable forestry program is intended to benefit:

- Landowners with free or low-cost management planning assistance, improved financial returns, and a relatively simple entry point into certifiable sustainable forestry;
- Professional foresters and loggers by creating an economic connection with landowners;
- Forest industry by providing a supply of potentially certified raw materials;
- The community through strengthened relationships, and;
- The public through all the benefits of sound forestry.

### **4. Location and Scope of the Pilot Field Projects**

Two field tests include 1) Liberty Grove Township in Door County, and 2) Baraboo Bluffs located in Greenfield and Caledonia Townships in Sauk and Columbia Counties. Technical forestry services in the first field site are provided solely by DNR staff. The second site utilizes a mix of services from DNR staff and contracted private consulting foresters. The intent is to look for challenges and differences between the two approaches. Stora Enso, Inc. has also offered access to members of its Family Forest program to query private landowners about satisfaction working with industrial foresters.

Each field test intends to recruit at least twenty landowners per year in order to have enough feedback for the test evaluation. Success for the pilot will be measured by identification of useful model elements rather than the number of landowner clients served.

The two field projects will apply the program's core elements listed below. Due to budget constraints, only the Baraboo Bluffs trial will include a coordinated harvest.

## 5. Core Components

The core components of the program are:

- A woodland owner organization or other public or private entity serving as project sponsor and administrator;
- The sponsor providing counsel to landowners, bridging the gap between the clients and professional resource managers who are contracted to provide services;
- The development of comprehensive overview forest plans for each pilot landscape;
- The development of landowner-specific forest stewardship plans consistent with the comprehensive overview plan for each area;
- The sponsor's coordination of harvests and other forestry practices;
- Monitoring oversight of projects by either DNR or third-party forest certification auditors; and
- A foundation of public funding (such as grants in the pilot) that finance base operations for project sponsors.

## 6. Pilot Advisory Committee

- **Wisconsin Family Forests (WFF)** is the grant recipient and project sponsor for the two pilot sites. A WFF employed Forest Coordinator directs market research, landowner recruitment, record keeping, landowner counseling, and coordination of forestry services in these pilot areas. WFF is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that focuses on woodland owner education, joint landowner activities and forestry services at the local level.
- **Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR)** provides oversight, central office and field staff services, use of facilities, and in-kind and financial support for the WHFP pilot program. DNR involvement includes the Division of Forestry; the supervisory hierarchy of the DNR Northeast and South Central Regions; and DNR Service Foresters in Door, Sauk and Columbia County. DNR's Forest Certification Coordinator manages DNR involvement in the program.
- **Cooperative Development Services (CDS)**, a non-profit organization, is providing expertise in organizational planning, landowner outreach, and evaluation.

- **University of Wisconsin Stevens Point - Forestry Outreach Specialist John DuPlissis** is providing guidance and assistance with surveying woodland owners in the pilots.
- **University of Wisconsin – Department of Forest Ecology and Management - Professor Mark Rickenbach** is providing guidance on cross-boundary cooperation between landowners.
- **Stora Enso**, an international wood products manufacturer, participates on the WHFP oversight committee through the Stora Enso Family Forest Coordinator. He brings a certified forest industry perspective and shares landowner assistance techniques that have worked well in Stora Enso’s outreach program.
- **Clark Forestry**, a forestry consulting company, developed templates for Comprehensive Forestry Plans and Forest Management Schedules. Clark Forestry also wrote the Comprehensive Forestry Plan for the Baraboo Hills pilot with assistance from the local Nature Conservancy forest ecologist.
- The following organizations and individuals participate on the WHFP advisory committee and provide additional input:
  - **Dovetail Partners**
  - **The Nature Conservancy**
  - **Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association**
  - **John Koning, USFS – retired**
  - **Taylor Conservation, LLC**
  - **Integrated Forest Management, LLC**
  - **Genesis Forestry Consulting, LLC**
  - **And Others**

## **B. PROJECT ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION**

### **1. Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **A. Project Sponsor – Group Manager**

Wisconsin Family Forests is the pilot sponsor providing the organizational framework to administer the WHFP. Beyond the pilot, sponsors could be private for-profit or non-profit organizations, cooperatives or local governments. Project sponsors must be committed to sustainable forest management and have a proven ability to work with private forest owners at the local community level. A project sponsor must be an organizational entity registered with the state and federal government (with a taxpayer identification number) or unit of local government.

The Project Sponsor:

- Identifies a defined geographical area as a potential location for a WHFP Project;
- Develops a strategy, measurable performance indicators, and a budget for administering the project;
- Secures financing to implement the project;
- Supervises the Forest Coordinator; and
- Provides administrative support.

#### **B. Forest Coordinator**

The Forest Coordinator (a sort of Forestry Concierge) is a paid staff position employed and supervised by the Project Sponsor. The Forest Coordinator is the primary contact for a WHFP project. Gerry Mich fills the Forest Coordinator role in the pilot.

The Forest Coordinator:

- Recruits landowner participants;
- Provides initial advice about the benefits of sustainable forestry and how the program can help;
- Matches up landowners with local DNR foresters or contracted consulting foresters for forestry guidance;
- Conducts satisfaction surveys with the forest owners in the targeted area;
- Establishes and maintains a database on forest owners in the targeted area;
- Maintains a file of forestry plans and scheduled activities for landowners in the targeted area;
- Assists landowners to carry out practices consistent with their forest plans by:
  - Providing referrals to foresters, professional timber producers and other natural resource managers,
  - Helping landowners access cost-share funds; and
  - Coordinating harvests and other practices.
- Provides opportunities for landowners to interact in local networks,

sharing information about sustainable forestry or cooperating in other ways;

- Maintains clear financial records on the project's operation; and
- Prepares quarterly and annual performance reports on the project.

See the WHFP Report for more information about the role of the Forest Coordinator to use social marketing tools to encourage sustainable forestry.

### **C. Project Oversight Authority**

WHFP project oversight assures woodland owners that the advice and services they receive are reliable.

#### **i. DNR**

In the pilot, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) provides project oversight through the DNR Forest Certification Coordinator and DNR field foresters. In addition to participating on the Advisory Panel, the DNR Forest Certification Coordinator confers on WFF work plans and accomplishment reports for the project. In the field tests, DNR field foresters approve forest management plans prepared for landowner participants to qualify practices in the plans for future cost sharing.

#### **ii. Certifiers**

The WHFP might be eligible for third-party certification under standards established by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or the American Tree Farm System. An initial scoping assessment of the pilot is planned for the fall of 2007, although a full audit will not be pursued unless a statutory program is eventually adopted.

### **D. Program Participants**

Eligible pilot participants are private landowners who own 10 to 100 acres of forested land in the designated plan areas (although exceptions are allowed on a case-by-case basis). Landowners can be individuals, families, partnerships, trusts or corporations. Landowners with larger tracts are encouraged to participate in alternative programs such as the regular DNR-administered Managed Forest Law or cost-shared stewardship plans.

In order to receive assistance under the field pilots and to comply with federal grant requirements, a landowner must complete a W-9 form providing their name and address and a tax payer identification number.

## **2. Identification of Potential Participants**

Potential participants are identified through an analysis of plat maps, Managed Forest Law data, forest cover data (especially the use of "WISCLAND," the Wisconsin Initiative for Statewide Cooperation on Landscape Analysis and Data), and through other means. News releases, direct mailings and town meetings are used to recruit landowners.

### **3. Initial Contacts with Landowners Electing to Participate**

The Forest Coordinator makes an initial response within one week to landowners requesting information on the project. If a landowner is eligible, the Forest Coordinator sends a referral to a forester who will visit the landowner within three months. All requests for information and site visits are maintained in an electronic database.

### **4. Management Sideboards**

- a. Land management recognizes that private woodlands contribute to local and statewide economies and to a healthy natural environment. WHFP promotes the practice of sustainable forestry for a full range of benefits for present and future generations. These benefits include native biological diversity, aquatic and terrestrial wildlife, soil protection, protection of water quality, production of recurring forest products, outdoor recreation, hunting and fishing, and aesthetics. WHFP contractors and partners offer forest management advice and services consistent with uses and values desired by landowners in balance with the ecological capability of the land and with the long-term maintenance of sustainable forest communities and ecosystems as described by principles in the *Wisconsin Forest Management Guidelines* (Chapter NR 1.25, Wisconsin Administrative Code).
- b. WHFP plans recognize that not all benefits under paragraph (1) can or should be provided on every tract. The range of benefits addressed in forestry management schedules should strive to reflect each tract's unique character and position in the regional landscape as described by the project's Comprehensive Forestry Plan.
- c. In managing lands, the WHFP plans recognize that management may consist of both active and passive techniques.

### **5. Performance Monitoring**

One of the constraints in the pilot is the lack of authority to prescribe mandatory practices or enforce follow through. Conformance with planning recommendations within the pilot is entirely voluntary.

Performance monitoring and enforcement become feasible when designed as part of the incentive framework. For example, a landowner receiving *cost sharing assistance* would be obligated to install a management practice according to an implementation plan and to maintain the practice for an agreed period of time. Most cost-sharing programs involve repayment of the incentive if the terms are violated. Other types of incentives might be an *annual payment* (like the Conservation Reserve Program) or an *annual property tax reduction* (like the Managed Forest Law) in return for compliance with a stewardship plan. The costs associated with performance monitoring should be planned as part of the administration of each of those types of incentives.

Forest certification itself can be an incentive, with withdrawal from certification the penalty if a landowner fails to conform to their stewardship plan. At present, however, certification alone may not be a sufficient market incentive to motivate performance. That could change if forest certification becomes a more firmly established prerequisite for market access.

Financial inducements aside, the WHFP can encourage landowner performance by establishing informal commitments and societal norms, giving prompts reminding landowners of scheduled work, and removing external barriers to taking action. These behavior tools are described in the WHFP Report.

## **C. FOREST MANAGEMENT PLANNING SERVICES**

### **1. Comprehensive Forestry Plans**

#### **a. Elements of the Comprehensive Forestry Plan**

A Comprehensive Forestry Plan (CFP) is a guide to the ecology, management and conservation of forests in the project area. It includes an assessment of the forests and other natural vegetation within the area, their history, their current condition, special needs, and guidance for protection and management. The CFP provides the big picture or landscape view of the region to highlight unique opportunities or challenges that cross individual property boundaries. See Table 1 for additional detail.

#### **b. Purpose of the Comprehensive Forestry Plan**

A Comprehensive Forestry Plan is specifically intended as one part of a two-part Forest Stewardship Plan. It complements a forest management schedule for each property. The Comprehensive Forestry Plan summarizes landscape-scale issues and objectives (including High Conservation Value Forests) that might otherwise be difficult to identify at an individual parcel level. *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. Including an executive summary or interesting graphics in the CFP is encouraged to help non-technical readers understand its meaning.

Although preparing a CFP requires a significant initial investment, building from a CFP could make forestry planning under WHFP less expensive than traditional Forest Stewardship Plans in the long term.

#### **c. Comprehensive Forestry Plan Writers and Reviewers**

The Baraboo Bluffs CFP is an original document based on an ecological analysis of the region by consulting forester Fred Clark, DNR Service Foresters and staff at the Nature Conservancy. The Door County pilot used a

different approach. DNR Service Foresters aggregated existing information from a variety of publications produced by DNR, University Extension, the State Historical Society and other sources. Peer review was invited and considered in preparing the CFPs. The CFP authors recognize there is room for continued improvement in the documents. (The Baraboo Hills and Door County CFPs are online at [http://www.wisaf.org/file\\_transfer.htm](http://www.wisaf.org/file_transfer.htm).)

Since the CFPs are intended to be an overview of objective, factual information about each region, they are not considered regulatory policy with a need for broad public input.

**d. Template for Comprehensive Plans**

Table 1 lists required elements of Comprehensive Forestry Plans. Also see the example Comprehensive Forestry Plans in the Appendix.

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

Component		Content
Executive Summary	<b>L</b>	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.

Component	Content
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.
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.

**e. Updating Procedures:**

The Comprehensive Forestry Plan is intended to be adaptive. It can be updated as experience or research warrant.

**2. Landowner Basic Plans and Forest Management Schedules**

**a. Purpose and Types of Plans**

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 prescriptions along with a timetable for implementation. The purpose of forest management plans is to enhance or protect soil, water, aesthetic quality, recreation, timber, water, and fish and wildlife resources based on the landowner's objectives for the land.

The intensity or detail in a plan is determined by the forester based on the time, interest or resources of the landowner. Four types of responses would be appropriate for landowner inquiries:

**i. Simple Response**

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. The Forest Coordinator or forester responding to a referral is encouraged to keep a record of these types of landowner requests.

## **ii. Basic Plans/Forest Practice Plans**

Basic plans (also called forest practice plans) address a specific management practice or 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. Basic plans do not require a landowner signature and do not qualify a landowner for cost sharing assistance. DNR forester approval of basic plans is not required.*

## **iii. Forest Stewardship Plans**

WHFP Forest Stewardship Plans are plans that combine the big picture of the CFP (described above) with management schedules for individual parcels. They consider the management of the total forest resource for all benefits, dependent upon the land capability and the objectives of the landowner. The State Forest Stewardship Committee establishes the required elements of Forest Stewardship Plans.

WHFP forest stewardship plans cover at least a 10-year<sup>3</sup> period. Plans require 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.

To be eligible for cost sharing assistance or forest certification, a forest stewardship plan must be signed by the landowners to signify their intent to follow through with it. WHFP prefers landowners sign plans within two weeks of receiving them so the foresters can address any concerns the landowners might have, but landowners may elect to delay signing plans until they are prepared to move forward with cost sharing or certification. DNR forester approval of forest stewardship plans is required, but not necessarily with a signature on the plan.

Components of basic plans and WHFP forest stewardship plans are listed in Table 2. For efficiency, the landowner portion of forest stewardship plans should not try to duplicate the background detail

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<sup>3</sup> WHFP Forest Management Schedules should cover at least a ten-year time frame, although they can project further if needed, but not so long as to become inefficient to prepare.

available in the Comprehensive Forestry Plan.

<b>Table 2. Basic Plan and Forest Stewardship Plan Components</b>				
L= Landowner Friendly Content; R = Required Information				
<b>Component</b>		<b>Content</b>	<b>Basic Plan - Practice Plan</b>	<b>Forest Stewardship Plan</b>
Landowner Name and Address		As per existing Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) Standards.	R	R
Landowner Signature				R <sup>4</sup>
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 Overview Plan accessible to landowner <sup>5</sup> (see Table 1)			R	
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

<sup>4</sup> A Stewardship Plan must be signed by the landowner to be eligible for cost-sharing or forest certification benefits.

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<b>Table 2. Basic Plan and Forest Stewardship Plan Components</b>				
L= Landowner Friendly Content; R = Required Information				
<b>Component</b>		<b>Content</b>	<b>Basic Plan - Practice Plan</b>	<b>Forest Stewardship Plan</b>
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
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

Table 2. Basic Plan and Forest Stewardship Plan Components				
L= Landowner Friendly Content; R = Required Information				
Component		Content	Basic Plan - Practice Plan	Forest Stewardship Plan
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 be developed. Note any deviations from generic prescription if needed.	R	R

**iv. Managed Forest Law Plans**

Managed Forest Law (MFL) plans are also Forest Stewardship Plans. They consider the management of the total forest resource for all benefits, dependent upon the land capability and the objectives of the landowner. Managed Forest Law plans must conform to requirements in state statutes and administrative rules.

*Preparation of MFL plans is not within the scope of the two WHFP field pilots. A long-term statutory WHFP could include services to prepare traditional MFL plans or allow the two-part WHFP Stewardship Plans (including the Comprehensive Forestry Plan) as an alternative planning approach for MFL.*

**b. Forest Stewardship Plan Approval Protocol**

The following procedure is used to prepare forest stewardship plans for the WHFP pilot. *WisFIRS, a plan preparation and tracking computer system being developed by DNR, will greatly simplify these somewhat awkward review procedures in the future.*

1. The Forest Coordinator responds to a landowner request and assesses the landowner's interest, inquires if there is a current plan for the property, asks about any concerns, and requests that the landowner sign and return a W-9 form. The Forest Coordinator also informs the landowner that if there are questions anywhere along the way, including concerns about the plan, he or she is available to help.
2. The Forest Coordinator informs the landowner that after the W-9 form is returned a forester will be in contact.
3. The forester arranges a site visit with the landowner to gather information including landowner objectives and property reconnaissance data.
4. The forester writes the plan.
5. If the forester is a consultant, a digital copy is sent by e-mail to the local DNR forester for review. The DNR forester responds by e-mail to express approval of the plan (specifying the date and property), with a copy of the message going to the Forest Coordinator. If a DNR forester writes the plan, he or she should have someone else proofread it.
6. The forester who wrote the plan sends the landowner:
  - a. The printed plan including two signature pages
  - b. The project's Comprehensive Forestry Plan (printed, digital or web link) and any supplemental information
7. The landowner reviews the plan. If there are changes needed, the landowner communicates with the forester who wrote the plan to make modifications. Substantive changes in silvicultural treatments would require DNR forester approval. The forester requests return of the signed signature page within two weeks. If the landowner does not return the signature page, the forester or the Forest Coordinator should confer with the landowner. The forester sends the signed signature page and the stand exam form to the Forest Coordinator.
8. The forester sends a digital copy of the final plan to the Forest Coordinator and the local DNR forester if there were changes. The landowner may request a digital copy as well.

Forest stewardship plans should be created in Microsoft Word® format. Digital copies provided to the landowner are recommended to be in Adobe Acrobat® PDF format.

#### **D. PRACTICE IMPLEMENTATION FOR FOREST MANAGEMENT PLANS**

A crucial WHFP goal is to help landowners carry out the activities identified in their forest stewardship plans. If a number of landowners in a project area need similar practices, the WHFP could be an effective coordinator to expedite and implement the work. Some tasks such as timber harvesting, invasive species control, prescribed burning,

tree planting, pest control, wildlife habitat restoration, etc. can be very complicated for an individual landowner but much easier for a sponsor who knows the ropes. Coordinated activities might have economies of scale, resulting in lower costs or higher revenues. Some service providers might not find it practical to work with landowners on an individual basis, but would be willing to work in a project area if the WHFP were able to aggregate jobs. The WHFP should also have more expertise than many individual landowners to evaluate contractors' qualifications to provide dependable service.

The only plan implementation service tested as part of the WHFP pilots was a coordinated timber harvest that occurred in 2006-2007 in the Baraboo Hills. The following procedures were used in that trial. The approach was experimental, and lessons learned could be applied to other situations. The appendix includes a review of coordinated harvests conducted by others to learn from them as well.

## 1. Coordinated Harvest Assistance Component

If a harvest is included in a basic plan or forest stewardship plan, the WHFP can secure the set-up and administration of a timber sale for the landowner. The project utilizes trained resource managers, skilled marketing, professional timber producers and careful monitoring.

- a. **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.
- b. **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.
- c. **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.

- d. **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.

- e. **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.

- f. **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.)

## **2. 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 WHFP sponsor can have more flexibility in identifying ethical and trustworthy contractors and service providers.

## **3. Case Studies of Other Forestry Practice Implementation Efforts**

The Coordinated Harvest conducted in the Baraboo Hills field test is one experiment in aggregating landowners’ efforts to implement work that is prescribed in their forestry plans. Lessons can also be learned from similar efforts by Wisconsin Family Forests and other groups and agencies. See the WHFP Report for a summary of case studies prepared by E.G. Nadeau of Cooperative Development Services.

## **E. ENCOURAGING LANDOWNER NETWORKS**

A landowner can receive assistance through the WHFP without ever talking to another woodland owner or neighbor. In practice, however, woodland owners benefit from interacting to share information and experiences. As an example, it will quickly become apparent to most woodland owners that the control of invasives requires a local network to be truly effective.

Following are some of the techniques used by the WHFP Forest Coordinator in the pilot to encourage landowner networking:

- Recruitment Meetings
- Field Tours
- Web Information
- Web Blogs
- Newsletters and Awareness Media
- Social events
- Serving as a counselor to landowners
- Helping others become landowner mentors

See the WHFP Report for a discussion about how these and other tools can be used for Community Based Social Marketing and to build social networks.

## **F. RECORDKEEPING**

### **1. Master Listing of Project Participants and Potential Participants**

The Forest Coordinator maintains a database of project participants, potential participants, and the status of referrals in Excel. Longer term, DNR's WisFIRS database system will be a more efficient and powerful tool for tracking projects.

### **2. Comprehensive Forestry Plans**

The comprehensive overview plans describe the habitat types in the geographical area and address sustainable forestry options and recommendations. Copies of each project's CFP are retained by DNR and the Forest Coordinator. CFPs are available on request to interested parties.

### **3. Forest Management Plans**

WHFP provides sample templates for basic and stewardship forest management plans. Copies of completed plans are maintained by the Forest Coordinator. DNR foresters also keep copies of forest stewardship plans.

### **4. Coordinated Harvests and Implementation of Other Practices**

The WHFP Forest Coordinator maintains electronic databases of all coordinated harvests, contracts and related files.

### **5. Financial Records**

Wisconsin Family Forests maintains financial records for the WHFP pilot. Financial records contain annual budgets, quarterly comparisons of budget vs. actual expenditures that itemize contractual expenses, fees for services and other sources of income and expenditures. Wisconsin Family Forests provides financial statements to the USDA - NRCS as required for the Conservation Innovation Grant.

### **6. Disposition of Records if Project Closes**

If Wisconsin Family Forests decides to discontinue WHFP operations, all landowner-related records shall be turned over to the local DNR foresters.

## **G. APPENDICES**

1. Baraboo Hills and Door County Comprehensive Forestry Plans (see [http://www.wisaf.org/file\\_transfer.htm](http://www.wisaf.org/file_transfer.htm))
2. Sample Forest Management Schedule
3. Landowner Assistance Accomplishment Reports for Pilots
4. WISCLAND Forest Owner Identification Method
5. WisFirs Database Description

# **The Next 3 Million Acres: Options for Increasing Family Forest Management in Wisconsin**

The purpose of this report is to propose a set of options for increasing the number of acres of private forest land in Wisconsin that have Forest Stewardship Plans. The report first reviews the history of private forest management in Wisconsin and the role of state policy in promoting management. It then examines current factors affecting forest management, including recent changes in the Managed Forest Law Program and the pilot Wisconsin Healthy Forest Program. Finally, it lays out several options for increasing private forest management in the future.

## **Outline**

1. Executive Summary
2. Acknowledgments
3. Table of Contents
4. Introduction
5. Historical Review of Family Forest Management
  - a. History of DNR programs – Griffith, FCL, forest mil tax, WTL, MFL
  - b. Landowner organizations and local government involvement – WWOA, WFF, landowner co-ops, RC&Ds, county land conservation departments, others
6. Recent Developments
  - a. Changes in MFL, DNR Forestry activities -- recent and proposed
  - b. Changing roles of consulting foresters and loggers
  - c. Certification of MFL lands
    - i. Tree Farm Certification
    - ii. Forest Stewardship Certification
  - d. WHFP pilot project
7. Options for the Future
  - a. Non-statutory changes in MFL – comprehensive forestry plans (what else?)
  - b. Addition of a second-tier plan category to MFL – 10 year contracts, diverse forest management goals, lower property tax reductions, increased role of private certifiers (and reduced role of DNR) in overseeing compliance, and a revised family forest certification system
  - c. Funding for woodland owner advocate organizations to coordinate local initiatives to increase forest management, including a summary of Gass and Rickenbach's cross-boundary research which supports a combination of local coordination and professional services
8. Conclusion

## References

## Appendices

- a. More info on certification programs
- b. WHFP Marketing Surveys and Pilot Program Participant Surveys
- c. Rickenbach's Social Network/Cross Boundary Cooperation Research
- d. Coordinated Harvest Report
- e. Other?