

WISCONSIN HEALTHY FOREST PROGRAM HANDBOOK

Draft – March 5, 2007

Note: This handbook is unfinished. It is presented for discussion and constructive criticism.

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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 WHFP pilot utilizes a non-governmental partner, Wisconsin Family Forests¹, to recruit landowners for a forest stewardship program and lead them to action. It complements existing private forestry assistance programs offered by DNR. Participants receive “free²” forest management planning advice from professional foresters, followed by practice implementation services coordinated by the sponsor for a fee. WHFP is intended to increase the number of private landowners in Wisconsin who carry out sustainable forestry practices and the number of privately owned forest acres that are under sustainable management planning. 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 grant program in the future.

DNR’s private forestry program originated in the 1950’s and at present gives technical forestry assistance to landowners through about 100 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) state forester positions. They administer the Managed Forest Law (MFL) property tax incentive program and offer free initial guidance to woodland owners among other services.

Consistent with broader state policy, DNR operates under constraints that limit the number of public employees. Staff time at DNR is fully allocated to the agency’s existing commitments. Expanding private forestry assistance to a growing population of private forest owners will require additional programs that are less dependent on DNR employees than the current landowner assistance model. DNR’s Cooperating Forester Program, which refers private landowners to a group of private and industrial consulting foresters, is one response but others are needed.

The established DNR programs also have limits both in their product awareness and market appeal to private woodland owners. One indicator is that only a fourth of Wisconsin’s non-industrial private forestland is enrolled in MFL as currently administered by DNR.

¹ 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.***

² An ongoing WHFP might involve a reduced-cost fee for planning assistance, depending on funding sources for a statutory program.

The WHFP could play a valuable counterpart role. A WHFP sponsor might improve DNR and Cooperating Foresters' efficiency by assisting with landowner recruitment, counseling and record keeping for MFL-related or other forestry guidance. A WHFP model could offer an independent, alternative source of forest management planning assistance for landowners reluctant to work directly with DNR. The WHFP concept would have additional benefits such as fostering landowner networks to share information, being able to recommend trustworthy forestry services to landowners, encouraging cross-boundary cooperation, or coordinating practice implementation (such as timber harvests, tree planting or invasive weed control). The WHFP model might also be able to give landowners cost-efficient access to third-party forest certification under Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or Tree Farm standards.

The first year of the three-year WHFP pilot was paid 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

The purpose of this handbook is to explain how the WHFP works and to derive lessons that can be applied to an ongoing, statutory program if enacted. The handbook defines the roles and responsibilities of organizations involved in such a program. It describes procedures for program establishment, management and practice implementation, records maintenance, and performance monitoring.

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;
- Develop one or more business models that identify a realistic mix of public funding and participant fees that will encourage long-term survival and growth of sponsors that host the program; and
- Evaluate the program to provide information for the development of a statutory program (possibly including a category under the Managed Forest Law) for countering forest fragmentation, improving forest health and generating certified forest products.

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

benefit:

- Landowners with 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 mixture 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 survey access to members of its Family Forest program to query private landowners about satisfaction working with industrial foresters. Researchers for the pilot will consider the opportunity if there are parallels.

In order to have enough feedback for the test evaluation, each field test intends to recruit at least twenty landowners per year. 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 (and that only in the first year).

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 well-defined geographic areas;
- The development of forest management schedules for individual landowners consistent with comprehensive overview plans for each area;
- The sponsor's coordination of harvests and other forestry practices consistent with forest management schedules, Managed Forest Law plans, other DNR-approved forestry practices or independent sustainable forestry certification standards;
- 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 will 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 and Private Lands Specialist coordinates 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's Forest Ecology and Management Department** is providing research assistance with a focus on surveying woodland owners in the three pilot sites.
- **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 are represented on the WHFP advisory committee and provide additional input:
 - **Dovetail Partners**
 - **The Nature Conservancy**
 - **Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association**

B. PROJECT ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

1. Roles and Responsibilities

a. Project Sponsor – Group Manager

In the Wisconsin Healthy Forest Program, Project Sponsors provide the local organizational framework to administer WHFP projects. These sponsors can 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. The Project Sponsor must be an organizational entity registered with the state and federal government (with a taxpayer identification number) or unit of local government.

b. Forest Coordinator

The Forest Coordinator is a paid staff position employed and supervised by the Project Sponsor. The Forest Coordinator is the primary contact for a WHFP project. See the Business Model section for more information on the Forest Coordinator position.

The Forest Coordinator (representing 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;
- Coordinates with local DNR foresters or contracts with consulting foresters to prepare a Comprehensive Forestry Plan for the targeted area and Forest Management Schedules or other basic guidance for landowners who participate in the project;
- Conducts demographic and other research on the forest base and forest ownership in the targeted area;
- Establishes and maintains a database on forest owners in the targeted area;
- Contacts forest owners regarding participation in the project;
- Coordinates initial site visits between landowners and DNR or consulting foresters;
- Maintains a file of Basic Plans, Forest Management Schedules, information on Managed Forest Law Plans, and other forest planning information related to landowners in the targeted area;
- Assists landowners to carry out practices consistent with their forest plans by:
 - providing information on forestry professionals who provide forestry services,
 - helping landowners to 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.

c. Project Oversight Authority

Some form of external WHFP project oversight is needed to assure woodland owners that the advice and services they receive are reliable.

i. DNR

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) provides project oversight for the pilots through the central office Private Forestry Specialist and DNR Regional supervisors and field foresters. In addition to participating on the Advisory Panel, the DNR Private Forestry Specialist confers on WFF work plans and accomplishment reports for the project. In the field tests, DNR field foresters must approve forest management plans prepared for landowner participants to qualify practices in the plans for future cost sharing.

For an ongoing, statutory program, DNR could be assigned to conduct periodic monitoring assessments of WHFP sponsors and program participants. Alternatively, monitoring could be contracted with another agency or private audit firm.

ii. Certifiers

An ongoing WHFP could receive third-party certification under standards established by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or the American Tree Farm System. Wisconsin DNR or individual WHFP sponsor organizations could be group certification managers under FSC or Tree Farm schemes³. Audit firms accredited by FSC or Tree Farm would conduct periodic full audits and annual surveillance reviews to verify if the WHFP sponsors and landowner participants are in conformance with the certification standards. Third-party forest certification could replace DNR for program assurance or at least minimize the time required by DNR to provide oversight administration.

c. WHFP Advisory Committee

The statutes related to WHFP could provide for a State Advisory Committee to review operations and make decisions on how to apply the programs. The Advisory Committee could review and approve proposals to establish WHFP projects, received periodic accomplishment or monitoring reports, designate

³ Too many layers in a certification scheme would be unacceptable to the certifiers.

program standards, and resolve disputes between local project sponsors and program participants. An existing advisory board such as the State Stewardship Committee could be expanded to provide oversight to an ongoing WHFP.

d. Program Participants

Eligible program participants are private landowners who own 10 to 200 acres⁴ of forested land in the designated plan areas. 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.

Forests in larger tracts or those owned by Indian tribes and by schools, counties, and other public entities may also be eligible for participation in some aspects of WHFP such as educational activities and coordinated forestry services.

2. Healthy Forest Project Establishment

a. Selection of Project Sponsors

If a statutory WHFP is established, organizations and local governments interested in being Project Sponsors would submit a WHFP grant plan to DNR on forms provided by the Department. Applications would be approved by the Chief State Forester based on recommendations from the WHFP Advisory Committee. As stated above, sponsors can be private for-profit or non-profit organizations, cooperatives or local governments. Project Sponsors must be committed to sustainable forest management, have a proven ability to work with private forest owners at the local community level, and must designate a paid staff person or consultant to serve as WHFP Project Coordinator.

Projects must be two or more years in length. Details for an ongoing WHFP grant program (possibly administered from within the Wisconsin Forest Land Owner Grant Program or the Wisconsin Forest Stewardship Grant Program), would need to be developed under Wisconsin Administrative Rules.

b. Geographic Boundary Identification

The designated geographical areas for WHFP projects may be townships, small clusters of townships, watersheds or other area with practical continuity.

Selection of a designated geographical area must take into account:

- Location in parts of the state with high priority based on the Forest Stewardship Spatial Analysis Project (see <http://www.fs.fed.us/na/sap/>);

⁴ In the two field tests, a maximum of 100 acres of woodlands was used. The purpose of a maximum acreage is efficiency so that a forester can complete field work in one day or less. Larger landowners would be directed to other programs. Appropriate acreage limits are open to discussion.

- The quality and cost-effectiveness of the project proposal;
- The capability of the project sponsor to implement the proposed project;
- The amount of privately owned forestland within the area;
- The percentage of landowners who do not have forest management plans within the area; and
- The ability of the project to have an effective impact in the area.

Important considerations in selecting designated areas are that they are small enough so that:

- Landowners can be easily contacted;
- Coordinated forestry and educational services can be efficiently provided; and
- It is convenient for landowners to communicate with one another about the project.

c. General Eligibility

As stated above, eligible project participants include private landowners who own 10 to 200 acres⁵ of forested land in the designated plan areas.

Landowners can be individuals, families, partnerships, trusts or corporations. Forests owned by Native American tribes and by school, county, and other public entities may also be eligible for participation in some aspects of WHFP such as educational activities and coordinated forestry services.

Landowners, who have 10 to 200 forested acres; who are not enrolled in the Managed Forest Law Program; and who do not have a current Forest Stewardship Plan are eligible to receive a Basic Plan or a 10-Year Forest Stewardship Plan as part of the project. (These plans are described below.) Planning assistance is free under the pilot but may involve a reduced-cost (subsidized) fee under an ongoing WHFP project.

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.

All forest owners in the designated area may participate in other components of the project, including workshops, coordinated harvests and other coordinated forestry services. In some cases, forest owners in nearby areas may be invited to participate in coordinated forestry services in order to make the provision of these services more efficient.

d. 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.

⁵ Appropriate acreage limits are open to discussion.

e. Landowner Recruitment

Project Sponsors may vary in the strategies they use to recruit landowners into WHFP projects. All sponsors are expected to establish and maintain a computerized databank of forested landowners in their designated project areas. They are also expected to contact all landowners with 10 to 200 forested acres within the plan area at least once during the project period.

f. Initial Contacts with Landowners Electing to Participate

Project Sponsors may vary in the strategies they use to make initial contact with landowners who express an interest in participating in a WHFP project. At a minimum, Forest Coordinators must make an initial response to landowners requesting information on the project within one week of the request. If a landowner appears to be eligible for a free or reduced cost forester visit, the visit should be scheduled within three months of the landowner's request for such a visit. All requests for information and site visits and the responses of the Project Sponsors should be maintained in an electronic database.

g. Management Sideboards

1. Land management will recognize that private woodlands contribute to local and statewide economies and to a healthy natural environment. The WHFP sponsor will promote the practice of sustainable forestry for a full range of benefits for present and future generations. These benefits include soil protection, public hunting, protection of water quality, production of recurring forest products, outdoor recreation, native biological diversity, aquatic and terrestrial wildlife, and aesthetics. The WHFP sponsor, contractors and partners will 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).

2. WHFP plans shall 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.

3. In managing lands, the WHFP plans shall recognize that management may consist of both active and passive techniques.

h. Managed Forest Law Option

If an ongoing WHFP is established by statute, the Legislature could include a property tax incentive under the Managed Forest Law as an optional incentive to landowners who receive a WHFP stewardship plan. To maintain compatibility with a project's Comprehensive Forestry Plan, the management

sideboards listed above should take precedence for WHFP-MFL participants over narrower commercial timber constraints in the current MFL program. Other specific details (such as a contract period, public access provisions or the amount of the tax incentive) for a WHFP-MFL incentive program are open for discussion and could be developed in a legislative proposal or future administrative rule.

3. Business Model – Organization Chart [Placeholder – To Be Completed by E.G. Nadeau and Gerry Mich]

a. Public Funding

b. Participant Fees

c. Organizational Relationships [use diagrams to explain a, b and c]

d. Forest Coordinator

Establish qualification standards as identified by the research and other input.

- Integrity
- Ability to listen and address the landowners' goals
- Experience more than a degree
- Local person who was familiar with the area
- Agendas and biases needed to be revealed
- Knowledgeable enough to refer them to reputable experts on a preferred provider list
- A woodland owner

Work with the UW Extension Forestry Outreach Program

- Establish a training program including
 - Curriculum
 - An evaluation process
 - Credentials
- Recruit participants
- Hold training sessions
- The initial participants may be recruited from those already doing some volunteer forestry advising and they will help refine the program.

C. FOREST MANAGEMENT PLANNING SERVICES

1. Comprehensive Forestry Plans

a. Elements of the Comprehensive Overview 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. 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 for landowners practicing sound forestry and for the foresters who assist them in managing their property. The Comprehensive Forestry Plan is the complement to a simple Forest Management Schedule for each property. The Forest Management Schedule includes information pertaining to a particular property while building on and referring guidance provided in the CFP. Together those two documents, when accepted by a participating landowner, will comprise a Forest Stewardship Plan for the property. Both parts are necessary to qualify the landowner for cost sharing or other benefits provided by Forest Stewardship Plans.

The Comprehensive Forestry Plan is an opportunity to summarize landscape-scale issues and objectives (including High Conservation Value Forests) that might otherwise be difficult to identify at an individual parcel level. While primarily intended for people who own and manage forestland, the Comprehensive Forestry Plan could be useful to anyone interested in regional forests.

Although preparing a CFP requires a significant initial investment, it is intended to make management schedules for individual landowner's tracts simpler and easier to understand. Uncomplicated management schedules should be easier for landowners to implement. Building from a CFP might also make forestry planning under WHFP less expensive than traditional Forest Stewardship Plans in the long term.

c. Selection of Comprehensive Plan Writers and Reviewers

A project sponsor could recruit local public foresters or contract with private consulting foresters and other professional resource managers to prepare a CFP. In addition to the efforts of the primary authors, selected peer review is recommended. A sponsor or the primary authors could seek additional input as needed to assure that relevant considerations are taken into account. A CFP is intended to be an overview of objective, factual information about a region. Since it is not meant as regulatory policy, broad public input into CFP would not be needed.

d. Template for Comprehensive Plans

Table 1 lists required elements of Comprehensive Forestry Plans. Also see the Baraboo Hills Comprehensive Forestry Plan in the Appendix as an example.

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

Component		Content
Regional Landscape Overview	L	Describe climate and general geology. Depending on scale of plan map and provide descriptive information on either Wisconsin Ecological Landscapes, Land Type Associations, or both.
Soils Info / Descriptions	L	Describe predominant soil types, woodland suitability, etc. Optionally consult with NRCS staff.
Description of Timber / Vegetation Types	L	General description of predominant timber types, ages, management history, etc. Include discussion of various seral stages.
Sensitive Natural Communities	L	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	L	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	L	Compilation of invasive species known from area.
Cultural / Historic Resources	L	Check cultural resources database. Consult with experts to clarify occurrences if warranted.
Forest Health Considerations	L	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.
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 inquires, three of which would be classified as WHFP plans:

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.

iii. Forest Management Schedules/Forest Stewardship Plans

Forest Stewardship Plans are comprehensive plans. 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.

Forest Stewardship Plans under the Wisconsin Healthy Forest Program have two components: A Comprehensive Forestry Plan (described

above) for the WHFP project and a 10-Year⁶ Forest Management Schedule for the landowner's property. Both components are necessary to make a "Forest Stewardship Plan." For efficiency, the Forest Management Schedule portion should not try to duplicate the background detail available in the Comprehensive Forestry Plan. Both parts need to be provided to landowners. Components of basic plans and Forest Management Schedules are listed in Table 2.

⁶ 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.

Table 2. Basic Plan and Forest Management Schedule Components				
L= Landowner Friendly Content; R = Required Information				
Component		Content	Basic Plan - Practice Plan	Forest Management Schedule
Landowner Name and Address		As per existing Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) Standards.	R	R
Landowner Signature			R	R
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
Parcel map, etc.	L		Parcel maps should follow FSP mapping standards using aerial photo base maps wherever available.	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

Table 2. Basic Plan and Forest Management Schedule Components

L= Landowner Friendly Content; R = Required Information

Component	Content	Basic Plan - Practice Plan	Forest Management Schedule
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 Management Schedule Components				
L= Landowner Friendly Content; R = Required Information				
Component		Content	Basic Plan - Practice Plan	Forest Management Schedule
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 comprehensive 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 and the Forest Management Schedule) as an alternative planning approach for MFL.

b. Scheduling of Foresters' Visits with Landowners

Landowners seeking WHFP assistance may contact the project sponsor. The project sponsor should respond by telephone or other appropriate means within one week to gather basic information about the landowner's needs. The project sponsor should also send the landowner a W-9 form and explain the need to have it returned. The project sponsor would then assign the

request to one of the project's professional resource managers (a DNR Service Forester or contracted forester, biologist or other specialist).

The resource manager would contact the landowner and arrange a time for a meeting and property walk-through or reconnaissance. The field visit should be scheduled and completed within three months unless other arrangements are acceptable to the landowner.

c. Forest Management Plan Approval Protocol

The following procedure is used to prepare Forest Management Schedules for the two WHFP field tests.

1. The WHFP sponsor informs the landowner that a forester will be in contact. The sponsor requests a W-9 form from the landowner. The sponsor also informs the landowner that if there are questions anywhere along the way, including concerns about the plan, that the sponsor is available to help.
2. The sponsor refers the request to a forester to fulfill if the W-9 is returned.
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 Forest Management Schedule.
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 schedule (specifying the date and property), with a copy of the message going to the sponsor. If a DNR forester writes the plan, he or she should have someone else proofread it.
6. The forester who wrote the Forest Management Schedule sends the landowner:
 1. The printed Forest Management Schedule including two signature pages
 2. The project's Comprehensive Forestry Plan and any supplemental information
 3. A copy of the DNR forester's e-mail approval.
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.
8. The forester sends a digital copy of the final Forest Management Schedule to the sponsor and the local DNR forester. The landowner may request a digital copy as well.
9. The forester sends a hard copy of the revised plan to the landowner and an updated digital copy to the sponsor and DNR forester. 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

sponsor should confer with the landowner.

10. The forester sends the signed signature page and the stand exam form to the sponsor. The sponsor enters the data from the stand exam form into the PlanTrac database (if the forester has not already done so). If a statutory WHFP includes a MFL benefit, the sponsor would send a copy of the signed plan and any other necessary forms or digital information to the DNR.

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

As shown above, the planning process becomes complicated if DNR must review and approve each individual plan (which is currently required to qualify practices prescribed in a Forest Stewardship Plan for cost sharing benefits). If a statutory WHFP is developed, it is recommended that plan writers and the sponsor be authorized to approve individual plans without DNR review of each, provided the plan writers meet training qualifications established by DNR. DNR or third-party auditors could still review a sample of plans, but requiring separate DNR review and approval of each plan at the time of preparation is inefficient and time consuming.

d. Enrollment in WHFP – MFL Incentive Program

Landowners who develop 10-Year Forest Stewardship Plans through WHFP may choose to enroll in the WHFP- MFL Incentive Program if such a statutory benefit is created. To enroll in the program, landowners would enter into an agreement with DNR, maintain their enrolled land as forestland for at least ten years, and carry out practices on the land consistent with their Forest Stewardship Plans. Landowners who are in compliance with their agreements would receive an annual reduction in the property tax on the enrolled land. Landowners in good standing in the program could be eligible to re-enroll at the end of their 10-year contracts.

D. PRACTICE IMPLEMENTATION FOR FOREST MANAGEMENT PLANS

A critical WHFP goal is to help landowners carry out the activities identified in their Forest Management Schedules. If a number of landowners in a project area need similar practices, the WHFP sponsor 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 a WHFP sponsor were able to aggregate jobs. The WHFP sponsor 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.

1. Coordinated Harvest Assistance Component

The local WHFP sponsor is a one-stop source of help to landowners interested in an environmentally responsible timber harvest. WHFP provides a landowner with a forest condition report and suggests a Forest Management Schedule (the plan). If a harvest is included in the plan, 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 planning component 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 fee⁷, 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 local WHFP sponsor will assign 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 will be 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.

⁷ The Baraboo Hills Coordinated Harvest trial did require a \$100 fee to initiate work on the harvest, but it may not be entirely useful or necessary.

- d. Timber Marketing and Sale:** The WHFP sponsor 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 WHFP sponsor 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). The timber producer will provide a performance bond⁸ as set in the contract, to be held in escrow by the WHFP sponsor until the harvest is satisfactorily closed. Timber harvest payments will be made directly to the landowner.

- e. Timber Sale Administration and Close Out:** A forester contracted by the WHFP sponsor 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. If the corrections are not made within a reasonable period, WHFP can apply funds from the buyer's performance bond.

When cutting and hauling are completed or the time period of the timber sale contract elapses, the administering forester and WHFP sponsor will determine if the terms of the timber sale contract have been met. If so, the buyer's performance bond shall be returned. If not, the WHFP sponsor 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 sponsor or forester. The project sponsor may, however, provide assistance to the landowner on MFL cutting reports.

⁸ Performance bonds were not required in the Baraboo Hills Coordinated Harvest trial. WHFP Sponsor will need to decide whether they wish to deal with performance bonds.

- f. **Fees:** Less the \$100 “Consent to Proceed” fee, the WHFP Sponsor will bill 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.)
- g. **External Monitoring:** If public funding is used to support a local WHFP project, a DNR forester or other official may review whether Wisconsin Forest Management Guidelines are being met. If a timber producer who purchases the harvest is a Wisconsin Certified Master Logger or if the timber producer sells to Sustainable Forestry Initiative or Forest Stewardship Council certified mill, then reviewers for those programs may request to visit a harvest site. The landowner may deny entry to external reviewers unless access is required under some other agreement or by statute.

2. Referral to Reliable Contractors

Short of coordinating land management practices for landowners, the WHFP sponsor could prepare a list of recommended timber producers, tree planting firms, consulting foresters, biologists, or other resource professionals. This is a service many public agencies are not allowed to provide. A WHFP sponsor may, however, have more flexibility in identifying ethical and trustworthy contractors and service providers. The Wisconsin Family Forests – Deerfield Alliance produces such a “Power Page” for landowners to consider.

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 appendix for a summary of case studies prepared by E.G. Nadeau of Cooperative Development Services.

E. ENCOURAGING LANDOWNER NETWORKS [Placeholder]

A landowner can receive assistance through the WHFP without ever talking to another woodland owner or neighbor. In practice, however, woodland owners often benefit from interacting to share information and experiences. Following are some of the techniques and opportunities a WHFP Forest Coordinator can use to encourage landowner networking. [Gerry Mich to provide detail.]

As the forest coordinator addresses a woodland owner’s initial needs, it will quickly become apparent to the woodland owner that the control of invasives requires a local network to be truly effective. This will move the owner to consider working with others for the benefit of their property and the community. As the woodland owner experiences

success with an initial project by trusting providers of services, they will be more confident to undertake other projects.

- Recruitment Meetings
- Field Tours
- Web Information
 - Program Description
 - Web Blog
- Newsletters and Awareness Media
- Formation of Local Alliances
- Woodland Owner Organizations to Join

F. RECORDKEEPING AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING

1. Recordkeeping Procedures

a. Master Listing of Project Participants and Potential Participants

Project Sponsors must establish and maintain a database of project participants or potential participants and scheduled forestry practices in Excel, DNR PlanTrac or comparable computer files. DNR will provide a template for such a database to all Project Sponsors, and, on request, will provide assistance in establishing and maintaining Project Sponsors' databases.

b. Comprehensive Forestry Plans

The comprehensive overview plans describe the habitat types in the geographical area and address sustainable forestry options and recommendations. Each participating, individual tract within the geographical area has site-specific forest reconnaissance and practices scheduled based on procedures outlined in the overview plan. DNR will provide sample Comprehensive Forestry Plans (CFPs) to all potential Project Sponsors that request them. On request, DNR will also provide assistance to Project Sponsors in identifying DNR and Cooperating Foresters to carry out the CFP in each project area. Project Sponsors must submit each CFP to DNR for review and approval. DNR must respond to these submissions within one month of receipt. Copies of each project's CFP are retained by DNR and the Project Sponsor. CFPs are public documents and available on request to interested parties.

c. Forest Management Schedules and Basic Plans

DNR will provide sample templates for Forest Management Schedules (FMS) to all potential Project Sponsors. Project Sponsors must provide landowners who are eligible for, and agree to the terms of, an FMS within three months unless other arrangements are made or, if the CFP has not yet been approved by DNR, within three months of the approval of the CFP. If DNR review of a FMS is required, it shall be provided by DNR within one month. Electronic files of Landowner Management Schedules are to be maintained by Project

Sponsors.

Samples of Basic Plan will be provided to all potential Project Sponsors. Project Sponsors must provide landowners who are eligible for, and agree to the terms of, a Basic Plan within two months after the request is made. Basic Plans do not require the review and approval of DNR staff. Electronic files of Basic Plans are to be maintained by Project Sponsors.

d. Coordinated Harvests and Implementation of Other Practices

Project Sponsors must maintain electronic databases of all coordinated harvests and other coordinated practices.

e. Financial Records

Project Sponsors must establish and maintain financial records in a manner that meets DNR requirements. Financial records must contain annual budgets, monthly comparisons of budget vs. actual expenditures that itemize contractual expenses, fees for services and other sources of income and expenditures. Project Sponsors must provide year-end financial statements to DNR within one month of the end of each project year.

f. Disposition of Records if Project Closes

If a WHFP Sponsor decides to discontinue operations, all landowner-related records shall be turned over to the local DNR forester.

2. Performance Monitoring

a. Monitoring Project Sponsor Performance

All approved Project Sponsors must identify measurable performance objectives that they intend to achieve as Project Sponsors. Key objectives include the number of landowners to develop 10-Year Forest Stewardship Plans, the number of acres represented by these plans, the number of landowners who enroll in a WHFP Incentive Program, and the number of acres enrolled in the Incentive Program.

Project Sponsors submit quarterly reports indicating their actual performance relative to their objectives, and, if they are not meeting their objectives, the corrective actions they are planning to take. Project Sponsors prepare an annual report at the end of each project year. DNR or third-party forest certification auditors conduct annual performance audits with each Project Sponsor. Project Sponsors not in compliance with their performance objectives may be required to take specific corrective actions or may be terminated from the program as a result of these audits.

b. Self-Monitoring by Participants in WHFP [open for discussion]

At the end of each calendar year, landowners enrolled in the WHFP Incentive Program must sign a form indicating that they are in compliance with their

WHFP Incentive Program contract and submit the form to DNR in order to receive a property tax credit for that year. Failure to submit a form may jeopardize the landowner's participation in the program and may result in the repayment of previous tax credits.

c. 1st Party Internal Monitoring

Project Sponsors are responsible for monitoring their own performance related to their WHFP Forest Stewardship Grant agreements as described above. This includes the responsibility to track the performance of WHFP participants, including:

- Requests for initial forester visits from landowners
- Initial forester visits
- Forest Coordinator check-ins with participants to inquire about their satisfaction or questions
- Landowners who receive Basic Plans, including number of landowners and acres
- Landowners who receive 10-Year Stewardship Plans, including number of landowners and acres
- Compliance of landowners enrolled in WHFP Incentive Program with program requirements
- Landowners who are referred to the Managed Forest Law Program, including number of landowners and acres
- Status of other landowners
- Coordinated harvests and other forestry practices
- Coordination with third party certifiers

d. 2nd Party Incentive Program Monitoring

DNR is responsible for:

- Entering into agreements with landowners who want to be enrolled in WHFP Incentive Program;
- Monitoring landowners eligibility for receiving property tax credits during their ten year agreements;
- Enforcing the agreements;
- Seeking repayment by landowners who do not comply with their agreements.

e. 3rd Party Forest Certification Monitoring

Third party certifying organizations are responsible for:

- Verifying conformance of the WHFP conforms to their sustainable forestry standards
- Issuing Corrective Action Requests if needed

3. Annual Performance Review of Healthy Forest Program

DNR staff are responsible for conducting an annual performance review of WHFP and presenting the results of the review to the WHFP Advisory Committee.

G. RESEARCH [Placeholder]

WHFP Marketing Surveys [CSK Focus Groups]

WHFP Pilot Program Participant Research [Rickenbach]

H. APPENDICES

1. Baraboo Hills Comprehensive Forestry Plan (see http://www.wisaf.org/file_transfer.htm)
2. Sample Forest Management Schedule
3. Landowner Assistance Accomplishment Reports for Pilots
4. Other Coordinated Forestry Practice Implementation Case Studies
5. WISCLAND Forest Owner Identification Method
6. Other...