

Minnesota Forest Resources Partnership
2016 Annual Report
Submitted by Chair Matt Radzak

1. Significant Activities

Highlights:

- a) MFRP completed the year in a particularly financially sound position, with a balance of over \$16,000 at year's end 2016.
- b) The MFRP participated in the development of the Forest Habitat Collaborative and is contributing to the planning and potential execution of a major conference in 2017.
- c) Consulting with Accountant Hannu, the executive committee was able to successfully argue against the IRS that it owed a penalty fee for taxes filed.
- d) A thorough review was made by the MFRP Executive Committee regarding executive committee composition, roles, and terms of service.
- e) Board Director Dennis Thompson was selected to serve on the newly formed Deer Management Advisory Board; he will represent the MFRP on that board.
- f) The board was successful in bringing the proposed "Sweetwater Energy" representatives to the board table to discuss the plant, its wood consumption and use, and time lines for building.
- g) The board initiated discussions pertaining to a 'return to the GEIS,' which would potentially result in a recommendation that the Generic Environmental Impact Statement on Timber Harvesting in Minnesota be revisited and updated.
- h) The MFRP was able to freeze assessments for 2017 at the 2016 level because of prudent budgeting and conservative expenditures during 2016.
- i) Board Members Mark Jacobs and Greg Bernu were awarded for their commitment to, and advancement of the mission of the Minnesota Forest Resources Partnership, particularly as that relates to research focused on the long-eared bat. Greg Bernu was noted for his long service as treasurer to the MFRP Board.

2. MFRP hosted programs on a variety of forest ownership and management interests including:

Rich Baker, endangered species coordinator with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources provided information on the northern long-eared bat.

Alan Ek, University of Minnesota: Findings & Solutions from the LCCMR Rapid Forest Inventory Project: Why Are We Taking So Many Plots? The study examined the effect of potential losses in

Lauren Eichelberger and Ron Boillet from Sweetwater Energy, on telephone conference, shared information on the background of Sweetwater and entertained questions about production and procurement.

Rachel Peterson, executive director of Minnesota Logger Education Program discussed the workforce development project and prevailing wage issues with contractors, as well as the commercial drivers license issue.

Dave Chura, MP, updated the board on Energy-Intensive Trade-Exposed Competitive Rates.

Craig Engwall, Minnesota Deer Hunters Association discussed the forestland issue the MDHA is involved in, with its intent to purchase lands to prevent conversion to non-forest uses.

Legislative Update: *Wayne Brandt, Minnesota Forest Industries*, shared a summary of Legislative actions and no-actions taken during the recently adjourned session.

State of the Forest Health – *Brian Schwingle, Forest Health Specialist – Minnesota DNR*. Brian shared information on current forest pest issues. He also introduced new forest health staff at the Minnesota DNR: Jess Harishorn and Mike Parisio.

Timber Sale Program Survey: *Dr. Mike Kilgore – University of Minnesota*

Site Level Monitoring: 2014-15 Report: *Dick Rossman, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources*

Young Forests Initiative: *Bob Tomlinson*

Private Forest Management Update: *Gary Michael, Minnesota DNR*, Gary Michael described the dedication of \$2.5 million the state received from the Minnesota Legislature for a private forestland initiative. That initiative will include increasing DNR staffing, dedicated of funds to a cost-share program, and education of private landowners.

Financing: Trends in the Forest Products Industry – *Ben Mussehl, AgStar Financial Services Officer*. Ben Mussehl described trends in the logging industry.

Buffer Law and the 2016 Amendments: *David Weirens, Asst. Director for Programs and Policy, Board of Water and Soil Resources*. David Weirens discussed Minnesota Statute 103F.48, explaining that this was a water quality protection law.

Big Game Management: The Minnesota Way: *Adam Murkowski, Big Game Program Leader, DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife*. Adam Murkowski discussed the Office of the Legislative Auditor evaluation of the Minnesota Deer Populations. He explained the planned-for statewide deer plan, noting it was not a deer hunting plan but an opportunity to bring a broader public along on deer issues and to strengthen relationships between interested groups/user groups/policy makers.

Ongoing Work/New Initiatives in Research & Guideline Monitoring: *Rob Slesak, Site Level Program Manager – Minnesota Forest Resources Council* Rob Slesak discuss ongoing research projects including: soils, biomass removal and compaction, emerald ash borer and black ash, and forest disturbance mapping. He explained the long-term soil productivity network as a national project.

3. Partnership Activities Requiring Future Efforts

- Continue to carry forward the recommendations/opportunities of the 2014 recommendations of the Competitiveness of Minnesota's Primary Forest Products Industry by serving as convener, catalyst, and recorder of steps toward that end.
- * Continue enhanced efforts to submit grant applications in support of forest management.
- * Explore the updating of the Generic Environmental Impact Statement with the intent to address issues of harvest levels and to contribute toward expansion of forest industry in Minnesota.
- Continue to explore membership in, and support of the MFRP.