

SUBJECT: Request approval of the 2011 Wisconsin Forest Management Guideline (Pub-FR-226) revisions.

FOR: MARCH BOARD MEETING

TO BE PRESENTED BY: Carol Nielsen

SUMMARY:

The Department requests approval of the 2011 Wisconsin Forest Management Guideline (FMG) revisions (Pub-FR-226). Section NR1.25 Wis. Admin. Code references the FMG in the definition of "generally accepted forestry management practices" and directs the Department to periodically update the publication.

The FMG provides basic sensible concepts that outline responsible resource management at the site level for resource managers and enthusiasts. It contains Department guidelines which private foresters participating in the Department's Cooperating Forester Program are expected to follow.

Over the last 14 months the Department has worked with internal and external experts and forestry partners/public to identify, draft and review these revisions. Some of the more significant changes included: updating the table of generally accepted forest regeneration methods, the Forestry Best Practices (BMPs) for Water Quality and tree marking guidelines; adding the Forestry BMPs for Invasive Species, a new chapter on invasive plants, insects and diseases and green tree retention guidelines; combining the chapters on mechanical site preparation and reforestation.

RECOMMENDATION: Approve the proposed revisions to the Wisconsin Forest Management Guidelines (Pub-FR-226).

LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS:

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|----|-------------------------------------|---|-----|-------------------------------------|----------|
| No | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Fiscal Estimate Required | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | Attached |
| No | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Environmental Assessment or Impact Statement Required | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | Attached |
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> | Background Memo | Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Attached |

APPROVED:

Robert M. Stepp
Bureau Director,

2/7/11
Date

Paul D. Long
Administrator,

2/7/11
Date

Matthew Moroney
Secretary, Cathy Stepp

2/17/11
Date

cc: NRB Liaison
DNR Rules Coordinator

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 7, 2011

TO: Natural Resources Board Members

FROM: Cathy Stepp, Secretary, Department of Natural Resources

SUBJECT: Approval of 2011 Wisconsin Forest Management Guidelines (Pub-FR-226) Revision

The Department is recommending approval of the 2011 revision of the Wisconsin Forest Management Guidelines (FMG). The FMG was first published in October 2003. It was written to establish basic and sensible concepts that outline responsible resources management at the site level for resource managers and landowner enthusiasts. The guide outlines the importance of other resources when considering forest management, provides guidance on how to carry out practices normally implemented in the management of a forest and contains additional resources and sources of assistance. The publication brings together key concepts and information on sound forestry management practices from Department handbooks, manuals and other publications. The FMG is a cornerstone of the Department guidelines which private foresters agree to follow when participating in the Cooperating Forester program.

The FMG gained additional significance in 2005 when Wisconsin Act 79 was passed. The act provided that a forestry operation may not be declared a nuisance or be prohibited by zoning if the forestry operation conforms to generally accepted forestry management practices as determined by the department by rule. The legislation further provided that a rule promulgated by the department may incorporate the most recent version of the FMG (Pub-FR-226) by reference.

In accordance with these statutory changes s. NR 1.25, Wis. Admin. Code was created (effective 5-1-07) to define "generally accepted forestry practices". The definition sets forth that "generally accepted forest management practices" includes those practices contained in the most recent version of the FMG (Pub-FR-226). It also provided that the FMG contain forestry management practices that are recommended and approved by the Department to promote sound management of a forest and that the FMG be updated a minimum of every 5 years using a process that incorporates public participation. This is the first revision of the FMG.

REVISION PROCESS

Over the last 14 months the department has been working with partners to complete the first review and update of the FMG. This revision encompasses the entire publication. The process of reviewing and updating the publication included Department staff (Division of Forestry and Division of Lands) and many forestry partners (e.g., UW-Madison and UW-Stevens Point staff, US forest Service, Wis. Cooperating Forester firms, Society of American Foresters, Wisconsin Consulting Foresters, Forest Industry, Wisconsin Woodland Owners Associations).

The scope of the revision was developed by surveying Division of Forestry staff, other Department experts, external experts, forestry partners and public on what revisions they saw a need for in the FMG. The responses were reviewed and suggestions that fit within the scope of the publication were included in the scope of the revision. The majority of the 60 survey respondents indicated that the FMG was a good publication and recommended updating information to reflect current guidelines. Twenty-six Subject Matter Experts from the Department, the UW-Madison and the UW-Stevens Point assisted with drafting

the revisions. Draft chapters were then submitted to internal and external experts and forestry partners for review. The Guidance Team reviewed comments received and worked with the Subject Matter Experts to incorporate comments that were within the scope of the FMG and the scope of this revision (summary of comments and responses below). The proposed revisions were made available on the Department website and at a public meeting on January 20, 2011. No significant changes were identified at the public meeting.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED REVISIONS

The scope of the proposed revisions for the FMG was developed from a survey in November and December 2009 of internal and external experts, forestry partners and public at the beginning of the process (60 organizations/individuals responded to the survey). The following is a summary of the changes/enhancements included in the proposed revisions.

- Throughout the publication the Forestry Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Water Quality (WQ-BMPs) were updated to reflect the revisions contained in the recently updated field manual.
- Through out the publication the Forestry BMPs for Invasive Species (IS-BMPs) were incorporated.
- A new chapter on invasive plants, insects and diseases was created (Chapter 8). It includes background on the IS-BMPs and key management considerations for some of the most common and threatening invasive insects and diseases.
- Updated and added silvicultural information including the generally accepted forest regeneration methods (Chapter 2), tree marking and retention guidelines (Appendix A), and clump thinning guidelines (Chapter 16).
- Combined the mechanical site preparation and reforestation chapters so all information related to afforestation and reforestation would be in one chapter; also added descriptions of common mechanical site preparation methods (Chapter 15).
- Updated information on soil compaction, water tables, and nutrients (Chapter 7).
- Added information on third party forest certification in Wisconsin (Chapter 1) and a new Appendix on forest certification systems (Appendix C).
- Added general information about the role of forests in carbon storage (Chapter 1) and references for more information on climate change research (Resource Directory).
- Added a general discussion in the economics chapter on emerging carbon and biomass markets (Chapter 9).
- Enhanced and updated information on the Natural Heritage Inventory and related discussions (Chapter 3).
- Updated the discussion on timber sale contracts (Chapter 13) and replaced the Sample Timber Sale Contract (Appendix B) based on the 2009 revision of the UW Extension Forestry Facts No. 94/WDNR Pub-FR-202 *Understanding Timber Sale Contracts* (Appendix B).
- Updated the Plan Standards table to reflect current Department and Forest Service guidance for Forest Stewardship Plans, Managed Forest Law plans and Basic Plans (Chapter 10).
- General grammar and language updates (throughout).
- Re-formatted the publication to a three-ring binder style. This is to allow us to update individual chapters or appendices without affecting the rest of the publication.

COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

The changes drafted by Subject Matter Experts were submitted for review during September and October 2010. Eighteen organizations/individuals submitted comments on the draft changes during this review period. Generally the changes in the draft FMG were very well received especially the new chapter on invasive plants, insects and diseases, a new section in the timber harvest chapter on harvesting systems, and the inclusion of general information on certification, carbon and biomass.

The following is summary of the comments received and how they were addressed.

1. The majority of the comments were related to grammar, language and punctuation and were addressed in the proposed revisions.
2. **Landscape Level Concerns** (multiple locations) - One individual made a number of recommendations advocating the inclusion of information or references to the Ecological Landscapes and other important non-forest natural communities. "It is my understanding that as a Department, we are now managing lands in the context of Ecological Landscapes ... Including that there are locations within the state where cover types other than forests are a better ecological choice."

Decision: Ecological Landscapes and natural communities are not ignored in the FMG but the purpose of this publication is to provide site level forest management guidelines for landowners (and resource professionals) who have made the decision to manage their forests sustainably. The Ecological Landscape Handbook and other landscape level tools should be used by managers and landowners in making the decision regarding what to manage for. The FMG cannot contain all of this information nor is it designed for this purpose.

While the original 2003 publication included references to landscape level tools and issues, the proposed revisions include enhanced discussions and references to landscape level tools (e.g., Ecological Landscape Handbook (ELH), the Wildlife Action Plan (WAP)) including in the:

- o Chapter: Purpose - Explanation of the purpose of the guidelines as site level forest management guidelines and recognition of the importance of landscape level considerations and planning but that they are beyond the scope of this publication.
 - o Chapter 1: Overview - Added a reference to and a map of the Ecological Landscapes in Wisconsin.
 - o Chapter 3: Wildlife and Biodiversity – Enhanced the description of natural communities and references to the Ecological Landscape Handbook and the Wildlife Action Plan
 - o Chapter 10: Forest Management Planning – Enhanced the existing discussion and provided a graphic illustrating how an individual's land fits within the bigger picture
 - o Chapter 15: Reforestation & Afforestation - Added the following as an Integrated Management Consideration "Consider the impact planting trees can have to non-forested natural communities (e.g., fragment open landscapes, provide predator habitat)."
 - o Appendix G: Resource Directory - Added a section on Statewide and Landscape Level Tools
3. **Green Tree Retention Guidelines** (appendix A) – Several comments referenced the on going work of the Silviculture Team with the Wisconsin County Forest Association in addressing concerns with the currently approved green tree retention guidelines in the Silviculture Handbook.

Decision: The guidelines provided in Appendix A will be left as is reflecting the currently approved guidelines in the Department's Silviculture Handbook. Revisions to the retention

guidelines approved in the handbook after this FMG revision will be incorporated into the next revision. Based on the new formatting (three-ring binder style) Appendix A can be updated without affecting the rest of the publication.

4. **Chapter 1: Overview –**

Forest History - Several comments noted that there is little agreement on the estimates of Native American populations prior to Euro-American settlement and suggested removing the estimates. An additional comment suggested removing the entire history section.

Decision: The Native American population estimates were removed but the rest of the history section was retained. The history section provides context and background to forestry in Wisconsin.

Vegetation Map The Finlay Vegetation Map was replaced with a newer pre-European settlement vegetation map created by David Mladenoff and the UW – Madison Forest Landscape Ecology Lab (2009). There was one recommendation to put the Finlay map back because the new map refers to oak forests instead of differentiating between savannah, open oak woodlands and forest. Another comment expressed appreciation of the new map.

Decision: The new Mladenoff map was kept.

5. **Chapter 3: Wildlife and Biodiversity - “Eco-Region Applicability” sections –** One comment questioned the definition of term “eco-regions” and suggested that it be dropped.

Decision: Upon review of the information the term eco-region was removed and the applicable information in each section was included within the appropriate remaining sections.

6. **Chapter 9: Economics: – stand level comparison example (page 9-4) –** Several comments indicated that the new stand level example comparing the costs of straight economic goals to multiple use goals is worthwhile but too confusing.

Decision: It was recognized that the example was not written to the level of the FMG. A new example was created which provided a simplified comparison which better fit the discussion in the beginning of the chapter.

7. **Chapter 10: Planning –** One concern was submitted that there is no mention of commercial viability of prescriptions in the list of items a plan should do on page 10-2 (e.g., Be tailored to a landowners needs..., Be concise..., Be based on ecosystem considerations, etc.). The concern expressed that **landowners** need to know if the recommended prescription is going to cost money or generate income and have the option to request more economic detail and variations of management prescriptions that take cash flow into account.

Decision: The FMG demonstrates the standards of what is included in a Forest Stewardship Plan (FSP) and since the requirements of FSP do not currently include marketability it was decided to leave this list as is. In addition, markets are subject to change from year to year and the management plan contains the practices that are silviculturally needed. For the Managed Forest Law the difference between commercial and non-commercial practices are identified by mandatory and non-mandatory designations but is subject to change (may be postponed) if a market is not available at the time of harvest.

8. **Chapter 13: Timber Harvesting** – One question was submitted on where the following statement came from: “As a general rule, no more than three percent of the harvest area should be occupied by permanent roads and landings that remove forestland from production. Roads, landings, and skid trails should not occupy more than 15 percent of the harvest area.”

Explanation: The language came from the team directed by the Council on Forestry with developing the Biomass Harvesting Guidelines (BHG). It was originally identified as an important issue included in the BHG but later decided that it did not belong in the BHG as it applies to all types of harvests. The suggestion was to include the guidance in the FMG.

DECISION: The Department recommends Natural Resources Board approval of the 2011 revision of Wisconsin Forest Management Guidelines (Pub-FR-226).