

White Birch Chapter revision – Summary of changes based on Public Comments

Thank you to the individuals that provided feedback on the Department of Natural Resources proposed revision of the white birch chapter in the Silviculture Handbook. There are 5 reviewers that submitted comments to the Department during the public comment period. Included in this document are all of the public comments received.

All comments were in support of the proposed revision and 4 had additional changes or areas to review for potential changes. As a result of these comments we made some minor changes. Format changes to the document were done specific to bulleting in the document. Further research on white birch was reviewed (Mladenoff research) and documented in the chapter. We noted the comment about minimizing the “landscape consideration section” and decided to keep the section as is for now due to consistency of handbook. As per one comment, checked distribution map for birch but since this is a large scale representation we can not add small scale one occurrence in the south to the map. Based on the forest health comments, we updated the gypsy moth statements in the chapter as per the recommendations.

The final guidance was issued on Feb 2015

If you have any questions, please contact Colleen Matula at (715) 274-4138 or colleen.matula@wiconsin.gov.

Comments received on the white birch chapter revision (via electronic mail)

-Palik, Brian- 7/28/14 - Ph.D. Research Forest Ecologist & Team Leader, United States Forest Service, Northern Research Station, Grand Rapids MN 55744.

--- It seems like the chapter contains all the needed information for a guide like this.

1. Add the mean values to figure 44.1
2. The range data and figure on pages 44.6-7 seem somewhat unnecessary or at least out of place in the document.
3. Page 44-15. The reference to aspen in this below seems like it might be a typo?
4. Page 44-2. In the final paragraph on this page, you might want to add climate change as another factor making it difficult to sustain birch.
5. Page 44-26. **Landscape Considerations Historic Context:** I think the correct term here is Historical
6. Page 44-30. Here you say this: “White birch is adapted to taking advantage of small and large canopy gaps created by disturbance. Management regimes which maintain complexity by mimicking natural disturbance and creating gap habitat within the forested landscape will be beneficial to maintaining white birch as a component of the forest resource” which I agree with, yet the bulk of the silvicultural recommendations center on even-aged management. The two things seem at odds with each other. It seems like inclusion of approaches for managing birch as a component of other forest types, through gap approaches is needed but mostly missing from this document. I am not sure how often someone would actually be managing white birch in even-aged stands as described in this?

-Barkley, Jeff-7/14/14 – Wisconsin County Forest Association, Rhinelander Wi. 54501.

WCFA supports the proposed change to the white birch chapter. From all accounts it seems as if our experience on county forest white birch stands were taken into account in the development of the chapter. We are pleased to see the flexibility built into the silvicultural guidance. Letter is attached:

Wisconsin County Forests Association

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July 14, 2014

Colleen Matula
Mellen Ranger Station
620 W. Layman Dr.
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Colleen:

Please accept these general comments from Wisconsin County Forests Association (WCFA) regarding proposed revisions to the White Birch chapter of the Silvicultural handbook. WCFA represents the interests of 29 county forests established under state statutes §28.10 and §28.11. Collectively our member counties manage nearly 2.4 million acres of forests, the largest public ownership in the state.

WCFA supports the proposed changes to the white birch chapter. In talking with participants on the Silvicultural Guidance Team (SGT) the county forests were well represented in this chapter revision and provided significant feedback. From all accounts it seems as if our experiences on county forest white birch stands were taken into account in the development of the chapter. We are pleased to see the flexibility built into the silvicultural guidance.

To this point we are also pleased at how the restructured SGT is functioning. The team is well-rounded and appears to be operating productively. Timely completion of the chapter revisions is much appreciated by field staff. The collaboration on the front end has greatly cut down on our review process at this stage of the process.

We look forward to further chapter revisions from the SGT and appreciate being both a part of the overall team and the ad hoc groups working on the individual chapters. Our voices are being heard. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this input.

Sincerely,


Jeff Barkley, Assistant Executive Director
Wisconsin County Forests Association

-Eckstein, Ron 7/9/14 – Wisconsin Silviculture Guidance Team member - bentleydog@charter.net

I have read through the white birch chapter for content. As usual, DNR staff did a very good job of organizing, analyzing, and presenting the information.

I have only a few minor comments:

Page 44-13

- There are various bullets under “White birch stand assessment should include quantifying variables such as:”
- Is it appropriate to add a bullet called “Wildlife habitat considerations”.

Page 44-26

- First paragraph under “Historic Context”. On the Northern Highlands Pitted Outwash Dr. Mladenhoff has done considerable presettlement analysis in preparation for the NHAL State Forest Master Plan. In subsection 212Xb he found, depending on local soils, the following dominant trees in 1866:
 - Red pine dominant with white pine a close associate and white birch a strong third associate
 - White pine dominant with red pine a close associate and white birch a strong third associate
 - White pine a dominant with red pine, white birch, and aspen close associates
- So, while it is true “white birch dominated stands were found in large patches throughout the Northern Highlands”, it is better to say white birch was a common associate of the red and white pine forests that dominated the Northern Highlands in 1866. It was only after the cutting and fires that white birch became a widespread dominant tree across the Northern Highlands.

Page 44-30

- This whole page is a general summary of ecological principles and much of it is not specific to the white birch type. Do we want to put a general landscape management summary in each Chapter or have the general landscape discussion in one separate Chapter? I’m concerned much of this page’s discussion is too general for forest managers to use when deciding what to do with a specific white birch stand.
- We could just summarize landscape considerations with the following points:
 - It is important to keep white birch as a component of Wisconsin’s forests as stands and as individual trees in mixed stands (forest products, aesthetics, wildlife habitat, ecological principles).
 - White birch has declined and is declining very rapidly in Wisconsin.
 - Consult the Ecological Landscapes Handbook to determine white birch’s role in the local landscape.
 - Whenever possible manage to maintain white birch stands instead of conversion to other types.
 - Whenever possible manage to maintain white birch individuals in mixed white and red pine stands and in aspen stands.

-Peterson, Kristin 7/2/14 - Forester – Fitchburg Wi 53711

I was looking at the distribution map for white birch enclosed in the write-up and noticed the absence of white birch stands in Rock County. Not sure what acreage or volume amount would be applicable to the map, but I wanted to share with you that I have come across a small stand of white birch in Magnolia Bluff County Park and State Natural Area (Rock County).

-Lanigan, Todd – 7/2/14 - Forest Health Specialist , Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources 1300 W. Clairemont Avenue Eau Claire, WI 54701.

I looked over the Birch Chapter and in the forest health section you may want to consider adding gypsy moth (GM), they will feed on birch. Outbreaks usually last 2-3 years. There are parasitoids/predators out there that will help control the population, along with a fungus and virus that will kill the larvae, aerial spraying is also an option.