

FOREWORD

HANDBOOK APPLICATION

Silviculture is the practice of controlling forest composition, structure, and growth to maintain and enhance the forest's utility for any purpose. Although forest land management goals and objectives may vary, it has long been recognized that the application of silviculture to diverse forest management units needs a unified, systematic approach. The procedures described in this Handbook are expected to fulfill that need. Continual improvement may be expected as new research results become available. This Handbook will be amended when new information dictates change.

This Handbook has several parts. Chapters are organized around general silvicultural practices, policies, and major forest cover types found in Wisconsin. A standard format is followed throughout the major forest cover type sections, presenting ecological characteristics and recommended silvicultural practices and systems. Additional silvicultural information can be obtained by referring to the list of publications at the end of each chapter.

Typically, these silvicultural guidelines are written to encourage a stand containing the greatest quality and quantity of timber. The emphasis on timber quality and quantity recognizes the short term and long term impacts of silvicultural activities, and the responsibility of tending or replacing the forest. A stewardship ethic is fostered to encourage vigor within all developmental stages of forest stands, managed in an evenage or unevenage system.

This guide in no way lessens the need for technical skill and sound silvicultural judgment when selecting proper practices to achieve the intended integrated resource management objectives, such as aesthetics, wildlife, endangered resources, biological diversity, the production of timber, and the protection of soil and water quality. The practice of silviculture is as much an art as a science. The management recommendations are basic guidelines. These recommendations are based on research and general silvicultural knowledge of the species being managed. They are not rules for every situation. The forester may adapt them to accommodate conditions specific to the stand being managed.

Habitat type information based on the Forest Habitat Type Classification System is included in upland forest cover type chapters. This system categorizes sites by ecological capability. Recognizing best available ecological information at the site level reflects an appreciation for the dynamic change of forests. Thus, the management alternatives for a stand can be based on inherent site capability as well as the present conditions of the stand. The management toward different species or communities in time (through the course of forest succession) may be considered as an alternative to perpetuating current forest types. Identifying site capabilities and feasible silvicultural alternatives can assist landowners and managers with defining forest management goals and objectives. In addition, it is expected that broader area (landscape scale) ecological assessments will offer better information and support for feasible goals and objectives.

This Handbook provides silvicultural guidance that applies to all forest properties owned by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), all county forest lands as specified in the comprehensive county forest land use plan, and private forest tax law lands. Department personnel and cooperating partners will follow the management alternatives outlined in this Handbook, unless the approved property management plan makes an exception, or in the judgment of the forester, a variance from these guidelines is warranted and can be documented to the satisfaction of the Department. In addition, these management alternatives will be recommended on other public and private forest lands. Review and approval procedures within the various private and public programs will determine the appropriateness of recommended silvicultural prescriptions.

This document is intended solely as guidance, and does not contain any mandatory requirements except where requirements found in statute or administrative rule are referenced. This guidance does not establish or affect legal rights or obligations, and is not finally determinative of any of the issues addressed. This guidance cannot be relied upon and does not create any rights enforceable by any party in litigation with the State of Wisconsin or the Department of Natural Resources. Any regulatory decisions made by the Department of Natural Resources in any matter addressed by this guidance will be made by applying the governing statutes and administrative rules to the relevant facts.