

Recommended Vision, Goals and Strategies: Southeast Landscape



June 2003

Participating Organizations:

- Cannon River Watershed Partnership
- Center for Rural Design
- Community Forestry Resource Center of IATP
- Basin Alliance for Lower Mississippi in Minnesota (BALMM)
- Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center
- Experiment in Rural Cooperation
- Fillmore County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Goodhue Country Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)
- Hiawatha Sustainable Woods Cooperative
- Industrial Hardwood Products, Inc.
- Izaak Walton League
- Johnson Logging, Inc
- MN Audubon Society
- MN Board of Soil and Water Resources (provided County Water Plans)
- MN Center for Environmental Advocacy
- MN Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Divisions of Ecological Services, Fisheries, Forestry, and Wildlife
- MN Forestry Association
- MN Land Trust
- MN Pollution Control Agency (PCA)
- Root River SWCD
- Sierra Club
- Southeastern MN Historic Bluff Country
- The Big Woods Project
- The Nature Conservancy
- University of MN: College of Natural Resources, Community Assistance Program, and Extension
- US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- US Forest Service (USFS) Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry
- Wells Creek Watershed District
- Whitewater Watershed Project
- Winona County Planning Department

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Introduction

This document was created through the Minnesota Forest Resources Council (MFRC) Landscape Program to enhance the sustainability of forest resources in Southeast Minnesota (see map on next page). The Landscape Program promotes multi-ownership (across ownership) planning focused on voluntary involvement and implementation of landscape visions, goals and strategies. *[This report refers frequently to terms such as sustainability and forest resources. A glossary (page 10) has been provided to assist the reader with understanding the definitions of these terms.]*

Minnesota Forest Resources Council's Landscape Program Background

The MFRC was established in 1995 by the Minnesota Legislature to provide advice to public and private organizations on forest sustainability issues. Under the Council's direction, the Act established the Landscape Program to "enable long-range strategic planning and coordination to occur ... across all ownerships" (Minnesota Statutes Chapter 89A.06). This is a voluntary program designed to develop a broad vision of forest sustainability along with goals and strategies to help move in that direction. The planning must recognize existing planning processes and identify a general process that fits with other landscape-based forest resource plans. The program facilitates landscape coordination and public participation between existing regional landscape planning efforts of land managers, both public and private.

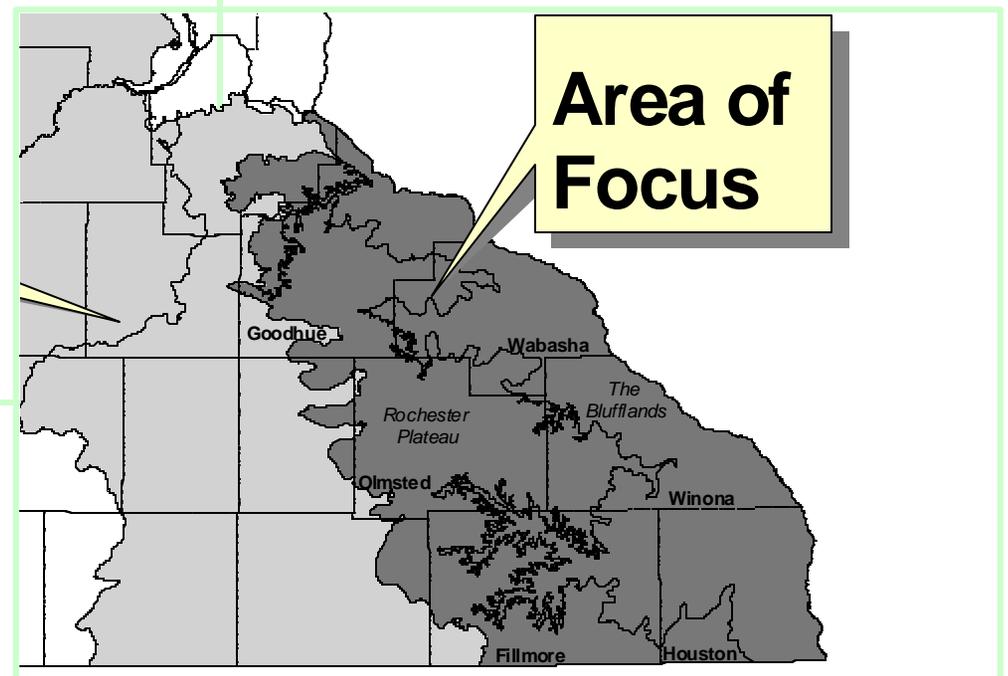
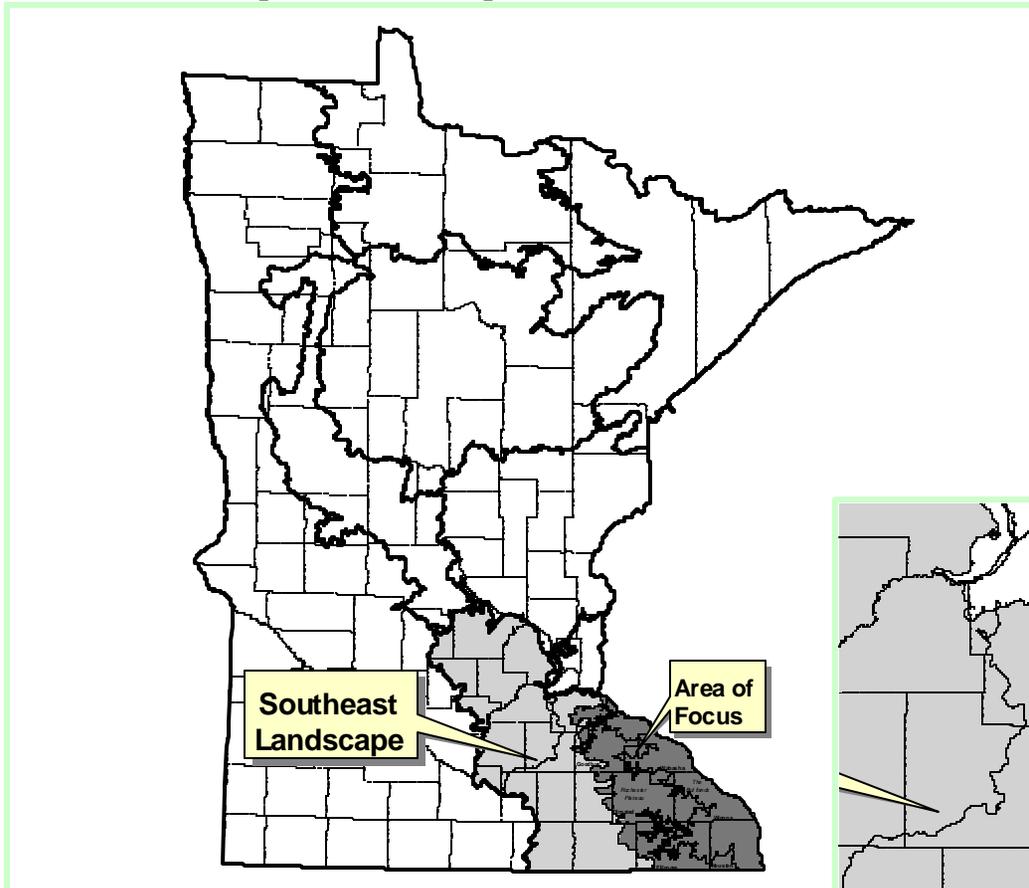
The planning effort began in 2001 in cooperation with the University of Minnesota's Experiment in Rural Cooperation. In July 2002 the Southeast Regional Landscape Committee first formally met (see Appendix A – Planning Process Timeline). Participants of the Regional Landscape Committee developed the content of this report (see the back of the cover for a list of participating groups).

Conditions and Trends

In 2000, a Current Conditions and Trends Assessment was produced for the entire Southeast Landscape (MFRC). This information represents the following counties: Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Houston, Le Sueur, Mower, Olmsted, Rice, Steele, Wabasha, Waseca, and Winona. Some key highlights from that document include:

- There are over 7,000 rare natural features (e.g., special plants and animals, natural communities, geologic processes) (DNR, 2000).
- In the last 100 years forest cover has been greatly reduced from approximately 60% in the late 1800s (Marschner, 1930), to 15% in 1990 (DNR, 1999).
- From the 1970s to the 1990s forest cover has increased by about 3% (Jakes, 1977; Miles et al, 1995).
- Over 95% the land is privately owned (DNR, 1995).
- From 1990 to 2000 the population increased 9.5% with a projected increase of 24.4% from 2000 to 2030 (Census, 2000).
- People aged 60 and older are estimated to increase close to 100% from 2000 to 2030, while other age groups will increase between 0 to 40% (US Census, 2000).

Southeast Landscape and area this plan focuses on.



Vision

The vision, on the next page, was developed by the Southeast Regional Committee based on information collected in the *Forest Resource Management in Southeast Minnesota A Landscape Perspective* (Class and Skally 2001). This report examined over 20 planning documents, used in the region, looking for references to sustainable forest management.



Plans Examined

- Beyond the Suburbs: A Landowner's Guide to Conservation Management, 2001
- Blufflands Design Manual Winona County/La Crescent Area Common Visions Project 1998
- Blufflands/Rochester Plateau Subsection Forest Resource Management Planning, 2001
- Cannon River Watershed Plan, 1996
- Comprehensive County Water Management Plans (Fillmore, Goodhue, Houston, Olmsted, Wabasha, Winona counties), 1989-2001
- Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center Strategic Plan, 2001
- Goodhue County Soil and Water Conservation District 2001 Annual Plan of Work
- Greenways Initiative in Richard Dorer Hardwood Forest, Letter to Deputy Commissioner of MN DNR, 2000
- Lewiston Area Forest Resource Management Plan, 1988
- Lower Mississippi River 2001 Basin Planning Scoping Document
- Managing Landscapes in the Big Woods Ecosystem
- Minnesota 2001-2005 Nonpoint Source Management Program Plan, 2001
- Nerstrand Big Woods State Park Management Plan, 1998
- A Plan for the Big Woods Project, 1996
- Prairie-Forest Border Ecoregion: A Conservation Plan
- Root River Soil and Water Conservation District Comprehensive Plan, 2000
- Southeastern Minnesota Historic Bluff Country Corridor Management Plan
- Wells Creek Watershed Partnership Watershed Plan, 1995/1996
- Whitewater Watershed Forest Resource Diagnostic Report, 1996
- Whitewater Watershed Project Long-Term Watershed Implementation Plan

In approximately 100 years the Southeast Landscape will contain:

- Streams, lakes, and wetlands are surrounded by **healthy riparian vegetation** and dominated by native species. Timber harvest and rural and urban development are restricted close to water resources, thus reducing the potential impact on water quality. **Diversity of vegetation and animals** is promoted through environmental corridors on public and private land. Wild areas, park and trail facilities are managed to **support the integrity of natural areas and facilitate public access and recreation**.
- Cost-share, incentive, and tax break programs that provide **economically viable options to promote forest management** are available for landowners. These programs will help **protect large blocks of forest land** from development. Professional assistance is readily available to forest owners to assist in forest management in order to optimize forest resources and fulfill specific forest owner goals without jeopardizing sustainability and biodiversity.
- **Community and citizen groups are active in forest management**, monitoring, and restoration. **Education programs for children and adults** promote appreciation and stewardship of the environment.
- Best management practices (**BMPs**) are **emphasized in forest management** activities. Education on proper implementation of BMPs is provided to contractors, developers, landowners, loggers, managers and monitoring of their success is performed.
- Natural communities and regionally significant areas are identified and management objectives are developed to sustain them. **Native species are protected** and their populations maintained. Exotic and invasive species are identified and their effects minimized through proper forest management. A geographic information system (GIS) of natural and cultural resource **information has been developed for the region to guide planning** and monitoring activities, and is continually updated. Public agencies, private organizations, and interested individuals correspond often to ensure proper management of forest resources and collaborate to promote the continued health of Southeastern Minnesota's unique environment.



Goals and Strategies

The Committee focused its efforts on two goals: 1) increasing forest land and 2) decreasing fragmentation from development. The following pages provide the specific strategies for each of these goals.

Goal 1: Increase Forest Land

Increase forest land that is high quality, biologically diverse (e.g. appropriate species on appropriate sites) and is in contiguous areas (e.g., large patches).

- ⇒ Increase forest land by 3% of entire land area over the next 5-10 years (approximately 77,000 acres).
- ⇒ Establish appropriate species on appropriate sites:
 - in mesic sites promote a mix of maple, cottonwood, basswood, oak, and other native species.
 - in dry (oak savanna) and dry-mesic (hardwood) sites promote regeneration and management of oak, walnut, shagbark hickory, and other native species.
 - In prairie and wetland areas promote appropriate native vegetation.

Related Goals:

- Increase forested corridors and buffers.
- Increase forest management planning and improve timber harvests.
- Reduce soil erosion and contaminated runoff.
- Expand and increase outreach and education to contractors, developers, landowners, land managers and public officials.
- Increase use of state and federal cost-share and incentive programs.
- Increase interagency partnerships between state, federal, local, and other land planners.



Strategies

On-the-ground forest management:

- ❑ Establish appropriate species on appropriate sites (see goal)
- ❑ Use prescribed fire to support regeneration of oak.
- ❑ Prepare and implement Stewardship Plans.
- ❑ Encourage reforestation next to existing forested areas.
- ❑ Remove exotic/invasive species (e.g. buckthorn, garlic mustard, gypsy moth).
- ❑ Reduce cattle in forests.
- ❑ Increase seedling production and have landowners promote regeneration on their forests.



Research / Information:

- ❑ Identify areas of exotic/invasive species.
- ❑ Research methods for exotic/invasive species removal/control/prevention.
- ❑ Research how private lands are being managed.
- ❑ Monitor and report on indicators every year. (e.g. number of stewardship plans prepared, acres enrolled in plans, implementation activities conducted, timber harvests, buckthorn removal, etc).

Economic/Policy:

- ❑ Provide tax law information to landowners.
- ❑ Examine pros/cons of various tax laws (e.g. mill tax, gas tax, etc.).
- ❑ Research long-term economic benefits of contiguous forest land.
- ❑ Develop/support laws and mechanisms to increase forest land.
- ❑ Research developing a program where landowners enroll their forest land into and receive yearly payments based on the revenue from the management of all the forest land in the program.
- ❑ Promote forest businesses that support sustainable management of forests.
- ❑ Establish non-traditional forest product markets.

Outreach and Technical Assistance:

- ❑ Have loggers recommend that landowners have a stewardship plan prepared and implemented for their land.
- ❑ Provide unique outreach activities (e.g. field days, workshops) to various groups including: private woodlot owners, farmland owners near forested areas, marginal cropland owners, seasonal residents, elected officials and stakeholder groups.
- ❑ Create a forest resources contact list for each county.

Education:

- ❑ Promote long-term benefits of forest management.
- ❑ Provide silvicultural examples for management of mesic, oak savanna and hardwood sites.
- ❑ Provide workshops and field days (e.g. woodland advisor classes) for loggers and private landowners on stewardship planning and landscape goals.
- ❑ Show successful forest management (use passive demonstration areas and active field days).

Goal 2: Decrease Fragmentation from Development

Support development patterns that sustain forest resources (decrease fragmentation).

- ⇒ Interagency and public coordination and cooperation is critical to better forest resources planning in the region.
- ⇒ Sustainable management needs long-term commitments from:
 - political structures
 - funding sources
 - planning groups



Related Goals:

- Increase interagency partnerships between state, federal, local, and other land planners.
- Increase ordinances pertaining to sustainable forest resources management.
- Increase outreach activities.
- Increase monitoring.



Strategies

On-the-ground forest management:

- ❑ Implement development patterns that sustain forest resources.
- ❑ Activate Forest Legacy areas in the region.

Research / Information:

- ❑ Define and promote development patterns that maintain and enhance forest resources (use success stories).
- ❑ Research current and future infrastructure costs in compact/clustered development versus costs from scattered housing.
- ❑ Monitor and report on indicators every year. Indicators could include:
 - zoning
 - land use patterns
 - variances issued
 - population
- ❑ Examine county and city plans looking for places they can be enhanced with regard to forest resource conservation.

Economic/Policy:

- ❑ Develop consistent policies for the region.
- ❑ Establish continuity between plans.
- ❑ Develop/support laws and mechanisms to increase forest land.
- ❑ Develop methods to support long-term commitments from:
 - political structures
 - funding sources
 - planning groups

Outreach and Technical Assistance:

- ❑ Provide developers, elected officials, administrators and planners access to forest resources information (e.g. GIS) possibly via an Internet data warehouse.
- ❑ Utilize private/public partnerships to assist in implementation of these strategies. One on one relationship building is important.
- ❑ Develop issue papers that groups can use during discussions relating to sustaining forest resources.
- ❑ Meet with groups (e.g., non-profits, civic leaders, and agencies) in the region to see how they can promote sustainable development.
- ❑ Create a forest resources contact list for each county.
- ❑ Establish a regional calendar of public meetings that landowners can attend.

Education:

- ❑ Conduct regional topic meetings, forums or workshops. Example topics include how to: manage your forest, use forest tax laws, sell development rights and run in an election.
- ❑ Convene a group of civic leaders, planners, citizens, etc., to begin discussions on sustaining forest resources while managing sprawl.

Implementation and Coordination of this Plan

Implementation and coordination of this plan needs to be a permanent function. Currently, the MFRC Landscape Program has funding through June 2005 to support this task. Should this funding be diminished the Southeast Regional Landscape Committee would establish a permanent position to continue this effort.

The Southeast Regional Landscape Committee will meet quarterly to discuss methods for implementation and coordination of the strategies presented in this document. At each meeting the committee will focus on 2-3 strategies selected at the previous meeting.

Monitoring is an important component to implementation and coordination of the strategies. The Southeast Regional Landscape Committee will meet yearly to pull together monitoring information for the region.

Outreach is another critical process of implementation and coordination. At every Committee meeting there will be time for people to give updates on current activities. Also outreach activities will be established as needed during implementation, coordination and monitoring.



Outreach is Critical

- For both goals outreach is an important strategy.
- Outreach methods include news releases, fliers, mailings, presentations, field days and demonstration areas.
- Some key groups to work with in outreach include:
 - 4H
 - Agencies (DNR, PCA, USFS, USFWS, SWCDs)
 - Association of Consulting Foresters (IA, MN and WI)
 - Association of MN Counties.
 - BALMM
 - Center for Rural Design
 - Community Forestry Resource Center of IATP
 - County Forest Committees
 - Experiment in Rural Cooperation
 - Future Farmers of America
 - Hiawatha R C & D
 - Local planning groups (city, township, watershed and county)
 - MN Forestry Association
 - MN Land Trust
 - MN Loggers Education Program
 - Resource Conservation and Development groups
 - Society of American Foresters (MN and WI Chapters)
 - The North American Horse and Mule Logger Association
 - Timber Producers Association
 - University of MN College of Natural Resources and Extension
 - Woodland Advisor Program
 - Water Resource Board (and planners group)

Glossary

Forest Management - includes regeneration, management, utilization, and conservation of forests to meet specific goals and objectives (exert from the Dictionary of Forestry, Helms 1998).

Forest Resources (e.g. Natural Resources) - natural assets of forest lands, including timber and other forest crops; biological diversity; recreation; fish and wildlife habitat; wilderness; rare and distinctive flora and fauna; air; water; soil; and educational, aesthetic, and historic values (Minnesota Statute 89.001).

Goals – measurable benchmarks to strive towards in addressing visions and resolving issues in the next 10 years. Goals answer the question addressed with regard to a vision statement “How much in the next years?” For example “increase the number of landowners with Stewardship plans by 10%”.

Strategies - tools and techniques to accomplish goals and move toward achieving visions. Strategies answer the questions, with regard to goals, “Who?” and “What methods?” For example “Increase the number of public and consulting foresters that provide assistance in creating Stewardship plans by applying for grants to assist in paying for these additional resources through the Stewardship Committee”.

Southeast Regional Committee - Group of interested stakeholders established to develop a strategic landscape plan and work to increase coordination, implementation, and monitoring of the plan. The committee is open to anyone from the public who is interested in sustainable forest resources management in southeastern Minnesota.

Southeast Landscape - Area where visions, goals and strategies apply. In July 2002 the regional committee decided to focus in the Blufflands and Rochester Plateau ecological subsections and the overlapping counties (Fillmore, Goodhue, Houston, Olmstead, Wabasha, and Winona).

Sustainable (e.g. Stewardship) - Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Minnesota Statute 89a.01).

Vision (e.g. Common Theme, Desired Future Condition, Desired Outcome) - refers to a desired condition for an area 100 years or more in the future. It often is very vague, yet helps managers and stakeholders come to agreement and begin to develop goals. For example “increase technical assistance for public and private landowners in forest management”.

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Appendix A – Planning Process Timeline

Previous Achievements:

2000 – Completed Current Conditions and Trends Assessment

2001 to 2002 – Completed Issue Identification and Summary of Existing Plans in cooperation with the UMN Experiment in Rural Cooperation

