

Wisconsin Silviculture Guidance Team Scoping

Wisconsin Council on Forestry Issue Brief

Authors: Greg Edge, Brad Hutnik, and Colleen Matula

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Presenter: Paul DeLong

Expected Outcomes:

Council members will understand the purpose of developing a Wisconsin Silviculture Guidance Team proposed by the WDNR and provide input regarding the scope, membership and timeframe.

Background:

In the late 1980s, Wisconsin DNR - Division of Forestry developed the Silviculture Handbook and in the early 1990s the WDNR Silviculture Team was established. The Silviculture Handbook provides silvicultural guidance to all forest properties owned by the WDNR, all County Forest lands specified in their land use plan, and private forest tax law lands. The guidance also affects private consulting foresters who sign a Cooperating Forester Agreement with WDNR. This guidance has offered management alternatives to a wide variety of partners in forestry for many years.

The Silviculture Specialist Team is responsible for the development and maintenance of handbook guidance. Since its inception, the team's structure has been mainly WDNR Forestry, Wildlife, and Endangered Resources representatives, with the addition of one County Forest representative and more recently, one industry representative. The team's work has been governed by a biennial work plan which details team responsibilities, accomplishments, proposed activities, and team membership (see attached current draft work plan).

During the past few years, the Division has heard concerns regarding how silviculture guidelines are developed and specifically how they are interpreted in the field. The concerns are that the guidelines are too rigid and that there are situations where silvicultural alternatives are interpreted too narrowly with existing laws or programs (i.e. MFL). Concerns have also been voiced that perhaps a more diverse stakeholder group should develop/review the guidelines. Although, the team has tried to diversify by adding an industry representative, this model still has not addressed the concerns of our partners. Division silviculture specialists and leadership recently explored several new team models to increase partner involvement. The following proposed model is the result of those discussions.

Scope of project:

Wisconsin Silviculture Guidance Team

Membership - The Wisconsin Silviculture Guidance Team would be comprised of representatives from affected forestry stakeholder groups, including industry, government, consulting foresters, conservation organizations, landowners, and university (see attached model). The proposed composition of the team reflects a desire to provide enhanced forestry community input relating to the WDNR Silviculture Handbook and other silviculture guidance. The Wisconsin Council on Forestry could assist with the nomination of these stakeholder representatives. Division of Forestry representation would be limited to a Silviculturist, an Area Forestry Leader to provide DNR field input, and the Sciences Section Chief. The team would be co-chaired by one partner representative and one WDNR representative.

Roles - The Guidance Team's primary role would be to review draft Silviculture Handbook revisions and other silviculture guidance from the ad hoc subject teams. Guidance Team comments would be used by the ad hoc teams to refine the draft guidance. Once the draft guidance is approved by the Guidance

Team, the team would facilitate a review by internal, external and expert partners. Final approval of Silviculture Handbook revisions and other silviculture guidance would lie with the WDNR Division of Forestry Administrator. The team's goal would be to develop sustainable silviculture guidance that is based on best available science and field experience from a wide variety of Wisconsin's forestry stakeholders.

Ad Hoc Subject Teams

Membership - Ad hoc subject team membership would be developed by the Guidance Team and would vary according to the topic and the expertise required. Membership would consist of appropriate DNR field staff, but interested partners may be part of these teams as well. A WDNR Silviculturist would be assigned to each ad hoc team to facilitate the work. A representative from WDNR Wildlife and Endangered Resources programs would also be assigned to each ad hoc team.

Roles - The ad hoc teams would be the main "workers" that develop the draft guidance based on best available information, current research, and field experience. The ad hoc teams would be charged with gathering information and developing guidance on a specific subject matter (e.g., red oak cover type chapter) and submitting drafts to the Guidance Team for review. The ad hoc teams would then revise the draft guidance based on this feedback.

Work Plan Development

The Wisconsin Silviculture Guidance Team work plan would be developed with input from the Wisconsin Council on Forestry, Wis. Silviculture Guidance Team, and the WDNR Division of Forestry. The final work plan would be approved by the WDNR Division of Forestry Administrator or a delegate to ensure it is consistent with the Division of Forestry's strategic direction.

Review Process

The Wisconsin Silviculture Guidance Team would review all work done by the ad hoc subject teams and coordinate review of draft guidance documents by representatives from affected forestry stakeholder groups, including industry, government, consulting foresters, conservation organizations, landowners, and university partners. Final approval of Silviculture Handbook revisions and other Guidance Team work would lie with the WDNR Division of Forestry Administrator.

Team Ground Rules

Guidance Team members would be expected to attend each meeting and complete any assigned tasks. If the member is not able to fulfill their duties, they would be responsible for finding an alternate from the interest they represent to serve on the team. While demonstrating mutual professional respect for one another, each member would have the responsibility to freely express his/her feelings and perspectives on the issues discussed at any meeting. Other ground rules include:

- a. Recognize that all foresters work within different constraints and demands.
- b. Keep an open mind and remember that proposals consistent with the tenets of sustainable forestry are valid and legitimate.
- c. Avoid conflict through proactive communication. Take the initiative and make the first contact.
- d. Talk with one another or other objective experts prior to an issue becoming controversial.
- e. Be prompt in response to review of Team work. If delays are anticipated, say so. Allow one another adequate time to respond.

Decision Making Process

The Guidance Team would strive to use full consensus as a decision making process. "Consensus" is defined as a point where all team members can agree to support the decision. The team would strive for consensus by ensuring that all members feel they have had an opportunity to explain their position and influence the decision. Discussions would be interest-based, not position-based. Committee members

agree to clearly articulate the basis for their inability to reach consensus when such a situation arises, and to articulate what could be done to allow them to reach consensus. All Silviculture Handbook revisions or additions would be approved by the WDNR Division of Forestry Administrator or their designee.

Areas to be examined:

Costs/Benefits:

- Costs – Increased internal staff time and operational expenses. Increased cost to external partners involved in Guidance Team.
- Benefits - Greater stakeholder input into WDNR silviculture guidance. Perhaps broader acceptance and therefore implementation of sustainable silviculture practices.
- Guidance development could take longer due to the more complex process or it may move more quickly due to the greater focus in resources.

Council Action:

1. Discuss and approve scope.
2. Determine level of Council involvement.
3. Provide recommendations.

Appendix:

#1 Current WDNR Silviculture Team draft work plan and membership.

#2 Proposed Wisconsin Silviculture Guidance Team model.