

DIVISION OF FORESTRY

Proposed Operations Plan for the Strategic Direction



Department of Natural Resources
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Division of Forestry Operations Plan

INTRODUCTION

The Statewide Forest Assessment and Statewide Forest Strategy (2010) were the foundation of our Strategic Direction. They helped us identify with partners the major issues and concerns in forestry and what the forestry community collectively might do to address them.

In the spring of 2011, the Division of Forestry finalized our Strategic Direction with guidance and input from our staff, partners and customers. The Strategic Direction mapped out a path for DNR to take over the next five years to address those challenges that DNR is best suited to tackle.

The Operations Plan

The Operations Plan (Ops Plan), presented here, describes how we will most efficiently and effectively use our limited resources to meet the intent of the Strategic Direction. Where the Strategic Direction explained the ways in which we will increase, maintain or decrease the varied investments in DNR forestry programs, the Operations Plan identifies where and how those changes will take place. We're allocating resources based on our niche and we've made decisions considering our partners' strengths and the private sector's capacity. The Plan, serving as the blueprint for the internal workings of the Division, will enable us to produce the desired outcomes.

Much of the work we currently do will continue, as these functions remain an appropriate and valued role for the Division. However, in several instances, we will be producing the same outcome, but doing it in a different way that is more efficient or effective and provides more accountability and consistency. The Operations Plan guides the Division's programs as they adapt to meet the intent of the Strategic Direction.

This document first describes each of our program areas, then explains changes to our supervisory and organizational structure, and finally the process to align our resources and management systems. In the document, we provide links to several maps that will visually explain the proposed allocations.

DIVISION PROGRAM OPERATIONS

The Nature of Our Work

The Division of Forestry has what we are, for purposes of this plan, calling "Integrated" and "Specialized" programs. What distinguishes the Specialized Programs from the Integrated Programs is the nature of how we staff the work within the Division. The Integrated Programs- Private Forests, County Forests, Fire Protection, and State Lands- are comprised of a workforce that accomplishes outcomes for a combination of the four programs. In most cases, staff will have responsibilities for 2-4 of the program areas. In the Specialized Programs- Industry Development (previously referred to as Utilization & Marketing), Forest Health, Urban Forests, Nurseries, & Cross-Program Activities (service functions) - employees are primarily responsible for the work of their program. There is, of course, collaboration across all programs within the Division, as well as with other DNR programs.

The use of the terms “integrated” and “specialized” refers only to how the work is assigned to employees.

Specialized Programs

Industry Development (previously referred to as Utilization & Marketing)

In order to increase the Division’s capacity to provide assistance to wood-producing and wood-using companies around the state, we will increase our efforts to provide industry analysis, information and guidance regarding forest resource availability and demand, market trends and opportunities (both local and international), harvesting and transportation efficiencies, and manufacturing process improvements.

To do this the Division has allocated resources to fund three additional Industry Specialists. In the coming year the Division will work with representatives from all sectors of the forest industry to determine what type of assistance and expertise is most needed. Based on this input the Division will determine the skills and competencies as well as the location that will best address the needs identified.

Forest Health

In 2005, the Forest Health Program conducted a study of its program which along with partner input evaluated the appropriate role for the Forest Health Program. As a result of that study, the Forest Health Program shifted its focus to provide increased emphasis on invasive species. This direction was affirmed in the Strategic Direction. As a result, no significant changes will be made in the allocation and use of resources.

Urban Forests

The Strategic Direction indicated that the Urban Forest program will shift its emphasis from a public “street tree” model to an integrated “community canopy” model that better reflects how it can maximize the public benefits from all trees and forests in our communities. To facilitate this shift a position will be allocated for an Urban Forestry Partnership Specialist. In addition resources will be allotted to fund an Urban Inventory and Assessment System.

The urban forestry grant program will continue to be funded at its current level to enable the communities, primarily through multi-community partnerships, to leverage local resources

Nurseries

The Nursery program is scaling production and staffing to meet seedling demand. Since the demand for seedlings has decreased, the Griffith and Wilson nurseries will produce the needed supply of 5-8 million seedlings annually. The Hayward Nursery will no longer produce seedlings and no additional seeding will occur at the Hayward facility; existing seedling inventory at Hayward will be depleted by the spring of 2013. The Hayward facility will continue to conduct statewide tree seed extraction. The Division is evaluating options for re-purposing the Hayward facility including: distribution center, reforestation test area, new seed orchard site, and share cropping, among others. In addition, the Division is working with external partners to explore public/private partnership possibilities for specialized seedling production using the Hayward facility.

State nursery staff will continue to provide technical reforestation expertise to both public and private sectors. Partnerships and technology transfer will be expanded with Wisconsin's private nursery growers. The Division is increasing its investment in the reforestation monitoring program and will disseminate findings and recommendations to internal and external customers.

Cross-Program Activities (Service Functions)

Forest Sciences: The work we do in silviculture, forest ecology and hydrology will continue with two additional positions allocated to address forest economics and genetics.

Research: We will continue to invest resources in both internal DNR research capacity and other research institutions, most notably the University of Wisconsin.

IT/GIS: To more effectively and economically deliver IT/GIS service to our customers and more efficiently accomplish our work through the implementation of new technology and applications, we will allocate four positions to address the increased demand for technology development, application and training, and two additional positions to address district-specific needs.

Outreach & Education: We will evaluate our outreach and education efforts to ensure that we are making the most efficient use of the investments that address all aspects of forestry, rural and urban. Within the coming year, the Division will develop a specific strategic direction, with the input of staff and partners, which will guide the Division's future outreach and education work and investments.

Forest Certification: We will continue to allocate resources and staff time to our work in forest certification to ensure that Wisconsin's forest industry maintains its competitive advantage in the global marketplace.

Assistance to Other Divisions: We will maintain our allocation of time and resources spent assisting other programs and work with them to identify how we maximize the value we provide. Similarly, we will work with those programs to identify priority activities for which they assist the Forestry Division.

Integrated Programs

Major Shifts in our Integrated Programs

- **Enhanced Integration:** There will be a higher degree of integration. For example, more foresters will have a fire assignment to increase efficiency in use of staff, improve safety, provide more flexibility to ensure continued adherence to work/rest guidelines, and reduce overtime costs.
- **Shifting Workload:** A number of forest technician positions are shifting to forester positions, reflecting the change in work over time, particularly the shift in private forestry in which we perform more oversight of work conducted by our private sector partners engaged in MFL planning and implementation.
- **Consolidated Law Enforcement:** We will maintain the current investment in fire safety and law enforcement efforts; however, in order to be more effective and efficient, law

enforcement work will be consolidated into a smaller number of positions. Effective law enforcement necessitates officers spend a significant amount of their time conducting law enforcement. We will also achieve a better match between employee talents and interests by focusing this work. This change implements a recommendation from the 2005 Forestry Law Enforcement Study.

Fire Protection

The fire landscape map developed as part of the 2010 Fire Program Assessment was used to allocate resources based on level of hazard. As a result, some equipment and staff were shifted away from low risk areas to high risk areas. This will enable the Division to more efficiently prepare for, detect, and suppress forest fires.

In order to strengthen the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) program as directed by the Strategic Direction, three positions are allocated to address WUI related needs since the risk associated with WUI is growing and needs to be dealt with in an organized and consistent fashion. Having personnel in the highest risk landscapes with a significant focus on this need will enhance the effectiveness of our program's response. This allocation of resources is also consistent with the recommendation of the 2010 Fire Program Assessment.

We will also pursue several options for cost savings such as alternative scheduling (e.g. 7-day scheduling), and establishing one "Type 3" incident management team (IMT) core short team (10-15 members) per area in organized protection for rapid response, along with maintaining a minimum of four district expanded teams. This approach balances the need for a shorter team locally, while still providing for an expanded team for larger incidents in a district. The change in IMT teams is also consistent with 2010 Fire Assessment recommendations.

As directed by the Strategic Direction, the Division will eliminate exclusive use contracts for the SEAT program while maintaining our current investment in providing Forest Fire Protection (FFP) grants to local fire departments to assist in suppressing and preventing wildland fires.

Funding for training will be maintained at current levels in order to continue our commitment to meeting established national and state training standards for wildland and prescribed fire.

County Forests

The Strategic Direction reduced the amount of assistance given to the County Forestry Program. To assist counties in adjusting to the changes a new framework for how we provide service to the county forests was developed in partnership with the Wisconsin County Forest Association. Now individual counties can select, within budgetary constraints, from offered resources that best meet the needs of their particular county.

As key partners in forest management, and as directed by the Strategic Direction, we will continue to provide liaison support to each county. Resources will be provided for planning, reforestation, inventory and timber sale assistance, fiscal support for counties to hire professional expertise, grants for forest and wildlife management practices, coordination and management of third party forest certification (i.e. FSC, SFI), loans for land acquisition and management needs, and annual acreage payments for land within the program.

State Lands

We are allocating resources to accomplish forest management activities on all state lands as identified in property master plans. The Division will continue to meet allowable harvest goals as determined through the master planning process on all state lands. The Division will also continue to work on reducing the current backlog of forest management practices.

Through implementation of the Strategic Direction the Division will increase the number of lump-sum timber sales. And where it is cost effective, the Division will contract cooperating consulting foresters to establish a portion of timber sales in order to maximize DNR's ability to accomplish workload priorities across the Division.

The Division increased the amount of funds for reforestation on all state lands, ensuring adequate resources to meet identified reforestation needs.

Additional resources were allocated to state forests so they can enhance unique niche recreation activities such as remote camping and trails and serve high demand recreation facilities while continuing to provide for visitor safety. In doing so, the Division will be implementing recreation priorities articulated in property master plans.

The Division increased the investment in land surveys and workload associated with property boundary issues such as trespasses and newly acquired land.

Resources dedicated to planning efforts are being reduced due to the pending completion of state forest master plan revisions. Focus will be shifted to assisting other DNR programs with the planning needs for other state lands.

Privately Owned Forest Lands

The Managed Forest Law (MFL) is a major tool the state uses to keep forests as forests, providing sustainable management that produces an array of public benefits. As a result, we will continue to make a significant investment in this program. However, over the next five years we will reduce the amount of time spent on its administration. Time savings will be realized through efficiencies from increased automation (WisFIRS computer system) and a shift towards an increased use of audits, rather than individual reviews, to monitor program compliance. In addition, we are undertaking a thorough evaluation of the administrative processes within the program to generate additional time savings.

Over time, as these time savings are realized, we will shift resources and staff time to increase efforts to reach the large percentage of private forest landowners who receive no professional assistance in caring for their forest land. We will work with partners to pilot different techniques for reaching private landowners and then evaluate the level of success achieved with each investment.

In order to address increasing workload associated with managing conservation easements on working forest land, an additional position has been allocated for administration and monitoring.

Division Resource Allocation Maps

- The [Division of Forestry Strategic Direction Proposed Staff Allocation](#) map shows where staff will be located in the state after the Strategic Direction has been implemented. Supervisory positions and staff positions that work at the Area, District or multi-District scale are included in the call-out boxes. All other positions are included on the map.
- The [Division of Forestry Strategic Direction Proposed Fire Equipment](#) map shows the location of fire equipment after the Strategic Direction has been implemented.

SUPERVISORY AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The following section describes the management and organizational structure changes in the Operations Plan. We developed our management structure only after we determined how best to allocate our staff resources to accomplish our priority work. The Forestry Leadership Team believed that we had to first determine the extent and nature of staffing in various parts of the state before we could assess how many supervisors we need to most efficiently deliver program.

The [Proposed Forestry Supervisory Structure](#) map shows the new organizational structure for the Division of Forestry, including all District, Area, and Team boundaries.

‘Right-sizing’ our Regions (now Districts)

Currently there is a large disparity in the number of employees in our regions. In 2009, we had five regions that ranged in size from 7 to 183 permanent employees. In 2010, we combined the South Central and Southeast Regions to begin to address the imbalance. Through the Operations Plan, we will take further strides to improve our organizational structure. We will be adjusting the boundaries and maintaining the reduction from the five regions to four districts (the term all Divisions in DNR will now be using for the largest geographic units), ranging in size from 46 to 113 permanent employees. We feel that the new four district organizational structure, which better balances staff and geography, will help improve consistency and accountability in program delivery across the Division.

Supervisory Structure

The new organizational structure will have fewer supervisors overall. Only 59 of the current 65 supervisory positions will continue to be used for supervisory positions. Although there will be a total of 63 supervisory positions in the new structure, four are the result of reframing existing coordinator positions to include supervisory responsibilities.

Nearly 75% of our employees work within our Integrated Programs, producing outcomes in both forest management and fire protection. Staff assigned to a piece of ground will report in geographic teams. Teams will continue to report to Areas, which will report to the four Districts. The new structure reduces the number of Areas from 14 to 11 and eliminates one fire dispatch group.

Staff in the Specialized Programs (Industry Development, Forest Health, Urban Forests and Nurseries), will now report to a program supervisor within our Bureau structure, similar to how the aeronautics program has functioned since coming to the Division. For example, currently the Forest Health staff report to several different positions depending on where they are located. Now all Forest Health staff will be part of one team which will report to one person responsible for the management of that program. This change in supervisory structure was made to:

1. Provide a consistent structure for all Specialized Program supervision in the Division;
2. Increase consistent statewide program implementation;
3. Increase the ability of the program to implement new direction;
4. Increase the ability of leadership to monitor program direction and implementation; and
5. Improve the efficient use of supervisor time.

ALIGNMENT OF RESOURCES AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

The process to align our workforce and our management systems will not be completed all at once. We will implement portions of the alignment and other program improvements as opportunities arise, primarily over the next couple of years, but in some cases longer-term.

One aspect of the Operations Plan that will be implemented on a certain date is the supervisory structure. We intend to shift to the new structure at the beginning of the next fiscal year, July 1, 2012. Other changes, such as administrative efficiencies in the Managed Forest Law program, will gradually be phased in over the next three years so that we will be able to meet the intent of the Strategic Direction within five years. Staff changes will be implemented gradually, depending on the particular circumstances of the position and the affected employees. Our goal is to achieve the program intentions as quickly as possible while minimizing employee disruption, to the extent possible.

Workforce Alignment

We are currently working with the Bureau of Human Resources to identify the processes by which supervisors and staff will transition to the new organization and new locations. Although we do not yet know many details about the processes that will be used for the alignment, we will share them as they are developed. We are committed to open communications throughout this alignment process. We want employees to understand what is happening and to be able to make well-informed decisions.

- There will be no layoffs of employees in this alignment process, but there will be considerable change for some employees, including change of duties and, in some cases, change of location, protective status, or credentials.
- Our goal is to minimize disruption as much as possible.
- All integrated position descriptions will be updated in a process coordinated by the Forestry Operations Team (FOT).
- We will use a combination of direct appointments, lateral transfers, and competitive open recruitment to move existing staff when needed and to fill new positions.
- We will follow civil service rules and protocols.
- We will encourage employees to explore and express preferences for new opportunities that play to their strengths.
- Limited term employee positions in some cases will not be changed, in some cases will be replaced by permanent positions, and in some cases will be eliminated. Current supervisors will work directly with affected staff to clarify their particular situation.

Alignment of Management Systems

Along with aligning our workforce and equipment, we will also work on aligning our management systems to support the implementation of the Strategic Direction. Management systems include the ways we set priorities, plan our work, define our positions, hire and develop our workforce, measure our accomplishments, hold ourselves accountable, lead the program forward, and stay focused on

achieving mission. Our management systems can be better integrated and coordinated, and implementing the Strategic Direction is a perfect time to make those improvements. For example:

- Improving communications through routine contact with supervisory chain is critical.
- We will clarify the membership, roles, & functions of Forestry Leadership Team, Forestry Operations Team, Working Groups, and Specialist Teams.
- Budgets will be aligned with our new teams and refocused program investments.
- Work planning, accomplishment reporting, and activity codes will be refocused and better integrated into one system.
- The Department's new performance review system will be customized for the Division and will be better integrated with Division-wide performance measures, succession planning, and staff/leadership development.

Facility Consolidation

The Department has multiple facilities in a number of Wisconsin counties. In many cases, the Division has staff in two or more facilities within a county due to the location of work and for fire response. As part of this process, the Division has identified five counties that warrant further evaluation with respect to the possibility for facility consolidation, either within a county or with an adjacent county.

Between now and the end of the year, the Division will be engaging local units of government and other affected interests to assess our facilities in five counties. The criteria to be used in the evaluation will include the cost of operations (including facility costs and travel costs), the efficiency of accomplishing our priority work, and the effectiveness of our emergency response. We will be assessing facilities in the following counties:

- Ashland County -- We will assess our facilities in Mellen, Ashland, and Washburn (Bayfield County)
- Langlade County -- We will assess our facilities in Antigo, Langlade and Oconto Falls (Oconto County), as well as a partner facility (USFS) in Lakewood
- Manitowoc County -- We will assess our facilities in Mishicot and Point Beach State Forest
- Monroe County -- We will assess our facilities in Tomah and Sparta
- Price County -- We will assess our facilities in Park Falls, Phillips and Prentice

NEXT STEPS

We are planning to finalize the Operations Plan by the end of 2011.

Once the Operations Plan has been finalized, the Division will initiate a process to work with partners to produce a business plan that will identify the specific outcomes the Division will produce to meet the intent of the Strategic Direction. Affected partners and customers will be invited to participate in parts or all of this effort. Examples include:

Strategic Direction Operations Plan

- Working with industry partners to help us to determine the areas of focus for our enhanced Industry Development (formerly Utilization & Marketing) program
- Identifying specific targets for implementing sustainable harvests on state forests and other state lands tied to annual allowable harvest levels identified in property master plans
- Working with our urban forestry partners to help us to describe how we will implement our new emphasis on canopy cover

We will also begin the process of aligning our resources in January. As a result, over the next few years we will be enhancing our ability to accomplish our mission – to protect and sustainably manage Wisconsin’s magnificent forests.