

DNR Alignment, Division of Forestry proposal: **Decreased Investment in MFL & Increased Investment in Private Forestry (non-MFL)**

Concept:

A proposed concept has been developed to achieve the desired outcome of decreasing the amount of time that field staff spend administering MFL by 20% and to re-invest that time into private forestry (non-MFL) assistance, resulting in a 50% increase in investment in that work. At this time, no decision has been made whether to implement the concept. We are looking for feedback on the concept and welcome thoughts and suggestions on this idea.

The proposed concept relies on several factors. First, the current MFL workload would be divided into three different work areas – integrated field foresters, MFL forestry specialists, and the Private Forestry Team. Attached is a table that briefly describes how and what work is proposed to be divided amongst the three areas. Second, the expectation is that landowners and the professionals that they work with understand the program requirements and will comply with program standards. Third, the time savings from MFL administration is expected to be realized by proactively verifying mandatory practices prior to preparing mandatory practices lists, by relying on landowners to self-certify that their land meets program requirements when completing an application, and by auditing a percentage of the applications/maps/cutting notices instead of reviewing (and often field checking) every one that is submitted. Please note that if a landowner requests it, a cutting notice would still be reviewed in the office, and that review may or may not require a field visit. By completing verifications prior to generating mandatory practice lists, the expectation is that reviews of cutting notices should be easier and not require as many field visits.

The shift in resources from the proposed MFL Administration/Private Lands alignment concepts would result in investing:

- approximately 25,500 hours in MFL assistance to private landowners (which includes verifying mandatory practices, confirming NHI hits and suitable habitat, assisting with cutting notices, and conducting recon following mandatory practices) by integrated field foresters
- approximately 23,750 hours in MFL administration (which includes reviewing and auditing MFL applications, plans, cutting notices, and cutting reports) by MFL forestry specialists
- approximately 33,000 hours per year on private service forestry (non-MFL) assistance by integrated field foresters (which may include providing walk-throughs with landowners, assisting with tree planting plans, acting as a liaison for a local WWOA chapter, preparing DMAP plans, and other services for non-MFL landowners)
- approximately 16,000 hours per year split between MFL and private service forestry (non-MFL) assistance by forestry technicians

This would result in a total investment of approximately 98,000 hours per year. In addition, approximately 23,000 hours would be invested by Bureau staff in the MFL Program administration. At the Bureau level, this work would include processing MFL applications and fees, handling withdrawals, transfers and corrections, leading enforcement actions, and working with large landowner accounts.

Current Status:

The Division of Forestry has 167 integrated field forester and technician positions. Their responsibilities include management of state lands, county lands and private lands, as well as suppression and prevention of wildfire. Within those positions, the Division has invested:

- approximately 88,000 hours per year (average 2010-2015) on MFL assistance and administration

- approximately 21,000 hours per year on private service forestry (non-MFL)

This is a total investment of approximately 110,000 hours per year of field staff time. In addition, nearly 18,000 hours is spent by Bureau staff in administering the MFL Program.

Desired Outcome:

The intent of the Forestry Division is to decrease the amount of time that field staff spend administering MFL by 20% and to re-invest that time into private forestry (non-MFL) assistance, resulting in a 50% increase in investment. Additional investments, at a much smaller scale, will also be made in administering GNA, providing NHI assistance, and coordination of prescribed fires.

In addition, this proposal is also intended to achieve the following objectives:

- Provide answers to tax law questions by empowering and defining the staff with the knowledge, skills and capability to decide tax law issues
- Facilitate wood procurement by assisting landowners and industry in management activity
- Determine timber availability on MFL lands by verifying both the ripeness of scheduled MFL practices and the anticipated products available for harvest.
- Provide accurate MFL timber inventory by maintaining WisFirs database
- Determine landowner compliance by using basic eligibility requirements for entry and continued enrollment
- Administer MFL compliance by conducting enforcement on willful neglect of MFL obligations
- Maintain accurate accountability of MFL obligations by completing administrative processes in a timely manner, including corrections, transfers, withdrawals, and open/closed designations.

Assumptions:

Integrated Field Foresters – It is estimated that approximately 11,750 hours per year would be required to field verify scheduled mandatory practices and complete NHI and archeological checks. This is based on approximately 5,400 mandatory practices per year with an estimate of 2 hours for field verifications and 1 hour for NHI and archeological reviews on each property (there may be multiple practices scheduled on a single property). This would still allow over 13,000 hours per year for integrated field foresters to provide other MFL assistance to landowners, foresters, loggers, and others, in addition to assistance provided by technicians. Integrated field foresters would also continue to have work responsibilities in the fire, state lands, and county forest programs, as appropriate.

MFL Forestry Specialists – Under this concept, the MFL forestry specialists would be responsible for a larger geographic area than integrated field foresters. For the MFL forestry specialists, approximately 13 positions would be 75% - 100% focused on MFL administration. All reviews would be conducted as needed, but the percentage of supplementary audits would be determined by workload.

Private Forestry Team – To handle all the transfers, corrections, withdrawals, and to act as the lead on enforcement cases, three positions would be added to the Private Forestry Team. This is based, again, on time estimates and work load. These positions could be located in Madison or Tomahawk.

Questions to Consider – MFL Concept:

1. What do you see as the pros and cons of this proposal?
2. Does the distribution of workload make sense between the three work areas? Integrated field foresters? MFL forestry specialists? Are there concerns?
3. Are there issues that will need to be addressed if this proposal is implemented?
4. Are there other ways we could achieve the desired outcome? How would those ideas be implemented?

Questions to Consider – Private Forestry (non-MFL) Assistance:

1. What do you see as the pros and cons of this proposal?
2. Does the type of assistance to provide for private forestry (non-MFL) make sense? Walk-throughs? Tree planting plans? Liaison with local WWOA chapters? Are there other types of assistance we could provide?
3. Are there issues that will need to be addressed if this proposal is implemented?
4. Are there other ways we could achieve the desired outcome? How would those ideas be implemented?

MFL Workload Concept

Integrated Field Foresters	MFL Forestry Specialists	Private Forestry Team
Initial contact with landowners		
	Review/audit MFL applications & management plans	
		Process MFL applications & fees
Verify mandatory practices & confirm NHI hits		
Make minor changes to management plans, if needed, or notify landowner if major changes required, as a result of verification process		
		Prepare mandatory practice list & send out practice due letters
Assist with cutting notice preparation, if needed		
Assist with mandatory practice set-up, if needed		
	Review/audit cutting notices	
	Follow-up on cutting reports & volumes	
Conduct recon following mandatory practices		
		Process withdrawals, transfers, and corrections
		Lead enforcement actions with assistance from other staff