

FOREST MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

January 13, 2021

1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

FMAC MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Gary Melow (**Chair**), Michigan Biomass

Andrew Storer, Michigan Technological University (MTU), College of Forest Resources and Environmental Science

Kenny Wawsczyk, North Country Trail Association

Richard Kobe, Michigan State University (MSU) Department of Forestry

Makhayla LaButte, Michigan United Conservation Clubs

Bill Botti, Michigan Forest Association

Ben Schram, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD)

Jeff Stampfly, Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR)

Kim Korbecki (**FMAC Assistant**), MDNR

Warren Suchovsky, Suchovsky Logging

FMAC ADVISORS IN ATTENDANCE

Leslie Auriemmo, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service, Huron-Manistee National Forest

Andy Henriksen, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service

OTHERS PRESENT

None

I. Welcome – Gary Melow, Chair

Chair Melow welcomed everyone and introduced the Forest Management Advisory Committee's (FMAC) newest members, Mr. Kenny Wawsczyk, Regional Trail Coordinator for Michigan, North Country Trail Association and Mr. Paul Jernberg, President, Trailriders Snowmobile Club.

Mr. Wawsczyk spoke a bit about his background. He's the Regional Trail Coordinator for the North Country Trail Association. He graduated from Grand Valley State University and works with the United States Forest Service seasonally. He got the opportunity to work with the North Country Trail Association about five years ago.

II. Consent Agenda

- Adoption of January 13, 2021 Forest Management Advisory Committee (FMAC) Meeting Agenda Motion made and seconded, and the January 13, 2021 FMAC Meeting agenda was adopted unanimously.
- Adoption of October 14, 2020 FMAC Meeting Minutes
Members requested the following revisions be made:
 - Member Ray Gurley's title should be the SFI Coordinator for Michigan Forest Products Council.
 - Bottom of page 7, remove last sentence of location of the Manistee Office.
 - Page 7, in Ben Schram's update, add "Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).
 - Correct the website provided by Rich Kobe to "www.mifbi.org".
 - On Page 8, in Gary Melow's update, add "generator" at end of the sentence reading "in process of rewinding...."
 - Page 7, in Ben Schram's update, change "weening" to "weaning".

Motion: Warren Suchovsky moved to adopt the January 13, 2021 FMAC Meeting minutes with noted corrections; seconded by Ben Schram. The January 13, 2021 FMAC Meeting Minutes were adopted unanimously with noted corrections.

III. Public Comment

None

IV. Interim Exchange on Building Codes – Gary Melow, Michigan Biomass

This is regarding legislation to update building codes. Ultimately, the legislature isn't responsible for building codes. International standards are adopted by the State which is the responsibility of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA). There is a large board of stakeholders and no legislative process unless there is an impetus for the legislature to get involved or unless it's something specific they want to see.

Rich Kobe commented the legislature voted on this. George Burghorn worked with LARA. He doesn't know what the process is for adopting new codes. Gary responded there is a body or commission with LARA that reviews and adopts those codes. The Legislature only has a rubber-stamp role; they adopt the statute.

It was asked if there is anything within this body (FMAC) or within forest management that can further our position with the Michigan Forest Biomaterials Institute (MiFBI). The response was that the Michigan Timber and Forest Products Advisory Council (MTFPAC) is looking at industries to expand FMAC's involvement. Chair Melow looks at the FMAC role as multiple groups. This may be beyond the bounds of this committee to engage in this conversation. With the MiFBI group, they are putting together a list of presentations with the mass timber program.

Paul Jernberg joined the meeting at this time and explained his reasoning for joining and what he hopes to accomplish as a member of the team. He also provided his background to the FMAC.

V. State Forester's Report/Legislative Updates – Jeff Stampfly, Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR)

1. Legislative Updates – [November 12, 2020](#), [December 10, 2020](#)

Jeff Stampfly, Chief and State Forester, MDNR-FRD, asked if the FMAC members wanted to discuss anything in the Legislative Updates that were provided to them. There was no discussion.

2. State Forester's Report

- a. **Forest Planning** – the Forest Resources Division (FRD), MDNR, submitted the State Forest Action Plan in December. So far there have been no comments received from the Forest Service. This plan consists of two components, a landscape scale assessment that is a living, breathing story map and the actual plan.
- b. **Regional State Forest Management Plans** - The FRD is in the process of revising the Regional State Forest Management Plans. Once completed, the new State Forest Management Plan will combine the original State Forest Management Plan and the three Regional State Forest Management Plans into one, complete State Forest Management Plan. So far there was one engagement survey sent out for input, however participation was poor.
 - To aid in the revision, FRD hired an outside contractor who has experience using a software package called REMSOFT to do forest modeling and planning. This software looks at all attributes of the forest. It was suggested David Price and/or Dan Heckman, MDNR, attend the next FMAC meeting to update the committee on this topic. Jeff commented that if there were questions anyone would like to ask at the next FMAC meeting, to please send them to him in advance.
- c. **Forest Health** – Jeff reported we received some discouraging news just before Christmas regarding forest health. Highlights follow:

- Heterobasidion Root Disease (HRD) was detected in Emmet County. It was found just before Christmas which prompted more surveying of red pine in the area. The FRD is not sure how it got there, but it found 19 plantations in that area that are infected. While HRD This doesn't progress, it will impact management of red pine on these sites. There is a forest health viewer on FRD's forest health web page that can be used if folks want to see known locations of occurrence.
 - Beech Leaf Disease can be found on the website using maps. They are also adding Beech Leaf Disease on the invasive watchlist. Bill Botti asked if FRD has any kind of written plan as to how to deal with these diseases. Jeff responded it depends on what it is. As an example, they've been actively working on Hemlock Wooley Adelgid (HWA) with many partners and are in the process of hiring an additional staff member to work on IT.
 - Mile-a-minute weed was detected for the first time in Michigan at Whitehall Nature Center at Albion College. This invasive vine forms dense mats along the ground and growing up trees and shrubs. It has a curved barb and can grow up to 6 inches per day
 - The FRD is also going back and reviewing what it's doing with HWA. Rich Kobe commented that species like HWA, etc. have its own specific response plans. It isn't comprehensive but it explains how all agencies will work together on the issue.
 - Bill Botti asked about Spotted Lantern Flies. Jeff responded that Sue Tangora, MDNR Forest Health Specialist, has mentioned this a couple of times. It hasn't made the invasive list but is on FRD's radar.
- d. **Good Neighbor Authority (GNA)** – Jeff reported the USFS is proposing a lot of additional activities they would like to accomplish using GNA funding. In addition to timber sales, land survey, forest cultivation and possibly increasing law enforcement patrols have all been suggested. The program continues to evolve beyond just timber sales. FRD is hiring a GNA Specialist that will coordinate GNA activities between the three national forests and DNR.
 - e. **Plan of Work** - The FRD is working on this year's Plan of Work. The number of acres is down from previous years. The sense is the numbers they were originally working from may have been overzealous.
 - f. **FRD Chief Position** - The MDNR is in the process of filling the vacant FRD Chief position. Interviews will be later this week (Friday).

VI. Action Items/ Follow-up

None

VII. Standing Discussion Items

• Trails

Paul Jernberg commented his biggest concern is regarding the motorized trail system on both state and national forestlands. There is a tremendous amount of money that has gone into maintaining the existing trails. Adding more will spend a tremendous amount of funds. He would like to see more conversation on how to deal with this issue. He also suggested increasing law enforcement on the trails, etc.

Paul continued that they would do repairs on the trails and then a few years' later they are degraded. Paul commented the normal chain of events is the Forest Service took money that the MDNR allocated to this. Paul mentioned constant degradation and having to go in and fix the trails over and over. He also stated a lot of the trails in his area are now gated. The MDNR needs more funds on a regular basis to maintain these trails. Ben explained the current procedure. The Parks and Recreation Division (PRD) won't reimburse for maintenance of seasonal roads. There is funding available, but you must put in request through PRD. It takes about 12 months to get a project moving. With the PRD snowmobile program, the funding is 100% contained. Almost 90% of what snowmobiles do

doesn't leave a trail, while ORVs leave trails in bad condition. Recommendations are going to have to come from advisory committees such as the FMAC.

It was asked if Michigan has more miles of trails than it can afford. Most forest roads are not improved or are gravel roads or are just on sand. Once it breaks through it takes a lot of money to get in to repair it. Kenny Wawsczyk noted the Iron Bell Trail portion uses over 1,000 tons of sand and has protection during harvesting. There is a lot of action from volunteers. The state has best management practices for the trails; his role is to evaluate them. He is always working with foresters to try to resolve the issue. The trails are better in some parts of state than others.

Bill Botti asked how well the signs are posted on these trails, and whether there are no signs at all or is there direction. Chair Melow mentioned that user conflict is common on the trails. One of the purposes of the FMAC is to provide format for users to address these issues, and they play that role. Funding for trails maintenance is something that would be better for the Trails Advisory Committee to address. He doesn't see the FMAC writing suggestions on how to resolve these issues. Bill commented that he has seen a lot of nice signs when going on the trails. Gary replied he is familiar with this; he has two different interpretations of it. The FMAC has already discussed better signage on the trails. He's looking at Paul and whoever else to bring that information to the other committees.

Jeff Stampfly reported there was legislation in 2016 that compelled FRD to conduct a forest road inventory in Michigan. There is an annual review of roads open to ORVs and conventional vehicles every year. The public can comment on this during the annual reviews. Leslie commented that part of the problem is that the state's roads open to ORVs are sometimes under county jurisdiction and a few miles down the road under Forest Service jurisdiction. The Federal Forest Service will be opening some roads to ORVs. They have received about 200 comments, 190 of which are for it. Chair Melow replied that trails have been a standing discussion items for a couple of years now, signage, shared ownership, etc.

- **Communications from the Field** – no discussion
- **[Registered Forester Board](#)**
The Registered Forester program is currently down to 160 members and has managed to get through the first renewal cycle. Brenda Haskill, MDNR-FRD, feels positive about the Board. Jeff expressed his appreciation to Brenda as secretary of this Board.
- **Timber Harvest Numbers** – none reported at this meeting
- **FMAC Member Program Updates**
 - a. Leslie Auriemmo, USDA Forest Service, Huron-Manistee, reported they are rolling along and still producing through the Society of American Foresters.
 - They have had one hire from Michigan State University.
 - In recreation they are working with HOBs and getting boundaries figured out.
 - Everyone is trying to deal with Covid.
 - This spring they will be starting to prepare for upcoming season. The Great American Outdoor Act passed. They are expecting funds from there to upgrade or maintain their facilities.
 - They are engaging in a recreation analysis.
 - They have a meeting scheduled with Ron from state parks to discuss how to work together and do a little formatting.
 - They have been looking into non-conventional things, i.e. how to funnel money from one place to another.

- They're looking at things from oil and gas rehabilitation they haven't been able to accomplish yet.
 - Have been working with the State and they have learned a lot from each other. This allows the Forest Service to get things in the spots they need to get done.
 - Michigan is the leader in the use of Good Neighbor Authority.
- b. Andrew Storer, Dean, Michigan Technological University, reported that classes started up this week. Returning students must go through Covid testing and then maintain the testing while attending classes.
- They had a faculty member leave in September and will be posting the position in the next several weeks.
- c. Andy Henriksen, State Forester with USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, reported the USDA is under an umbrella. He explained programs offered has remained relatively unchanged over the last few years.
- d. Richard Kobe, MSU, reported the Department of Forestry at MSU was established in 1942.
- The Corona virus has limited the number of classes meeting face to face.
 - They are currently involved in a search for mass timber.
 - They recently hired a new timber forester.
 - The new grant program has started.
 - Undergrads in forestry have almost a 100% chance of getting a position after schooling.
 - In new grants funding, they have a partnership and are working out the curriculum so students can transfer their credits to MSU.
 - Muskegon Community College is focused on a community forester.
 - Jesse Randall, U.P. Forestry Innovation Center Director, received a grant focusing on maple.
- e. Makayla LaButte, Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC), reported they've been working with MSU's conservation club, one of the largest in the country. It represents 40,000 members.
- She commented she's a new FMAC member, serving on the committee as the MUCC representative, and appreciates being a part of it.
 - MUCC is closely watching the federal regulations.
 - She mentioned habitat work from Mike Smalligan (DNR); he's looking to get tree planting numbers from MUCC. They also discussed habitat projects.
- f. Ben Schram, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD), commented he is working on agricultural environmental program to migrant labor housing, farmland preservation, etc.
- Discussed the Forestry Assistant Program. They are hiring a professional forester to work with private landowners.
 - Qualified Forestry Program – Ben reported this makes things more affordable for landowners. It was asked if this program is growing. Ben reported this was a concern, but they enrolled 20,000 acres in August and ended up with about 70,000 acres for the year. They are getting close to the 800,000-acre mark for acres statewide. The Legislature voted to remove the 600,000-acre cap.
 - Reported on a property tax reduction, called the 'school operating tax' which was levied on all real properties in the State.
- g. Warren Suchovsky, Suchovsky Logging, reported they have been looking at using natural resources (DNR) for some projects.
- h. Bill Botti introduced himself and stated he is a retiree from the DNR. Before he worked with computers and stuff. He is the Program Leader for Timber Managers. He managed the state forest in Newberry at one time. He graduated from Michigan Tech. He retired from the DNR in 1987 and was then the Executive Director of the Michigan Forest Association for nine years.
- i. Kim Korbecki, MDNR, introduced herself as the FMAC Assistant.

- j. Chair Melow, Michigan Biomass, reported his company is renewable energy providers and have been making energy from residuals and mill byproducts since the mid-80s. He reported that windmills play a significant role in Michigan's energy portfolio.
 - Biomass is a significant tool for forest management as there is a lot of wood that needs to be removed from the forest.

- **Michigan Timber and Forest Products Advisory Committee Update** – Gary Melow

Chair Melow reported the TFPAC has been working diligently to put together a dashboard to track its progress. They've been working on it for a couple of years. They are beginning to develop plans and strategies for improvement. A subcommittee that includes Gary, TFPAC Chair Charlie Becker and Larry Leefers from MSU have been working on this.

VIII. Next Meeting Date

Meeting Date: April 14, 2021

Location: Michigan United Conservation Clubs or TEAMS Meeting. Chair Melow suspects it will be an online (virtual) meeting again but would love to meet face-to-face.

IX. Future Agenda Items

1. Recommendation in support of MAEP

A comment was made that at one of the last FMAC in-person meetings, it was suggested the FMAC move forward to making a recommendation to the Natural Resources Commission to formally adopt a recommendation of MAEP (Michigan Association of Environmental Professionals) in acceptance of the Registered Forestry Act. Chair Melow didn't recall and stated if the FMAC wanted to pick it back up, he would do his due diligence to see what he could find. He asked Ben Schram to review the last minutes to see if any movement was made on the subject, and Ben agreed. Ben recommended writing a letter stating that the FMAC recognizes and supports the program.

2. PRT Update (commercial operations at southern nursery site)

Bill Botti mentioned the commercial operations at a southern nursery site update (PRT). Gary asked Jeff about the PRT established nursery. The FRD obtained some property that the Parks and Recreation Division was going to declare surplus and put into the disposal process. The FRD is harvesting the site and will be doing some contour work to establish a seed orchard. The PRT's containerized nursery operations are up and running, and seedlings are being produced there.

3. Trillion Tree Campaign

Warren Suchovsky suggested that some people think the MDNR oversees planting on federal and state lands. Leslie Auriemmo replied that initiative is still in Washington. The feds are behind by one year and it hasn't filtered down from them yet.

X. Adjournment

Chair Melow adjourned the January 13, 2021 FMAC meeting at 3:30 p.m.