

What Are HCVFs?

As a Department, Minnesota DNR (DNR) is committed and required by statute (*MS 89 & MS89A*) to manage for a broad set of objectives and forest resources. This commitment aligns with Principle 9 in the Forest Stewardship Council™ (FSC)® Forest Management (FM) Standard, which requires certificate holders to identify High Conservation Value Forests (HCVFs) and manage such areas to “maintain or enhance” identified High Conservation Values (HCVs). There are 6 types of HCVF’s:

1. HCV forest areas containing globally, regionally or nationally significant concentrations of biodiversity values, including Rare, threatened, and endangered species and their habitats;
2. HCV forest areas containing globally, regionally or nationally significant large landscape level forests, contained within, or containing the management unit, where viable populations of most if not all naturally occurring species exist in natural patterns of distribution and abundance;
3. HCV forest areas that are in or contain rare, threatened or endangered ecosystems;
4. HCV forest areas that provide basic services of nature in critical situations (e.g., watershed protection, erosion control);
5. HCV forest areas fundamental to meeting basic needs of local communities (e.g., subsistence, health); or,
6. HCV forest areas critical to local communities’ traditional cultural identity (areas of cultural, ecological, economic or religious significance identified in cooperation with such local communities).

What Does This Mean for Resource Managers?

Management decisions should be based on the interpretation that most areas managed as HCVFs will remain working forests, although the management activities shall maintain or enhance the attributes which define such forests. Decisions regarding high conservation value forests shall always be considered in the context of a precautionary approach. Essentially, management activities likely to affect the HCVs should only occur if they are likely to maintain or enhance the identified HCVs. Management activities unlikely to impact HCVs should proceed.

Background

In 2006, DNR began a comprehensive approach to operationally define the HCVF Principle. The Department created an interdisciplinary HCVF workgroup to develop a systematic approach to identify, conserve, and monitor HCVs within already established special management and protected areas. In 2007, the Department developed a process for identifying, managing, and monitoring high conservation value forests on state lands which provided the initial framework for resource managers to begin identifying, managing, and monitoring HCVFs.

Process for Designating and Managing HCVF’s

DNR’s process included the following key steps:

- Step 1 – Recommendations for HCVF’s Framework (2007/2008)
- Step 2 – Identify Priority HCVs
- Step 3 – Identify a Subset of Minnesota Biological Survey Sites
- Step 4 – Gather Field Input
- Step 5 – Interdisciplinary Consensus of HCVFs
- Step 6 – DNR Leadership Approval for Candidate HCVF’s (2013)
- Step 7 – Stakeholder Review & Comment (2014)
- Step 8 – Finalize HCVF Designations (2015)
- Step 9 – Identify Management and Monitoring Strategies (ongoing)
- Step 10 – Develop Future HCVF Designation/Delisting Process

Note: The HCVF concept extends to all areas on FSC-certified lands that contain significant and unique concentrations of HCVs. Thus far, DNR has emphasized the biological components of the HCVF Principle (HCVF’s 1-3). HCVF’s 4-6 are planned for evaluation in 2015. For questions regarding the interpretation of this information, please contact DNR’s Forest Certification Program Consultant: Tim Beyer @ 651-259-5256 or Tim.Beyer@state.mn.us. REVISIED: May, 2015