

1 Introduction

1.1 Planning Area Description

This North Shore subsection forest resource management plan (SFRMP) includes state forest lands administered by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) divisions of Forestry, Fish and Wildlife, and Trails and Waterways in three subsections. The North Shore Highlands, Toimi Uplands, and Laurentian Uplands subsections landscape unit is approximately 2.4 million acres. It covers an area from west of Duluth near Cromwell northeast along the entire length of the North Shore of Lake Superior in Minnesota and northwest to the Iron Range near Aurora and Babbitt.

Recreation, forestry, and tourism are the major land uses. Public ownership is 64 percent. The federal government owns 740,581 acres (31 percent), managed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) as part of the Superior National Forest. St. Louis, Lake, Cook, and Carlton counties own 463,151 acres (19 percent). State lands comprise 324,338 acres (14 percent). Of the state lands, approximately 218,000 acres (9 percent of the landscape unit) are timberlands, which will be considered for timber and other resource management purposes in this plan. The other state lands are state parks, scientific and natural areas (SNAs), and non-timberlands such as bogs and brushlands. Privately owned lands comprise 737,432 acres (31 percent). Industry owns 3 percent and tribal governments own 2 percent of the lands.

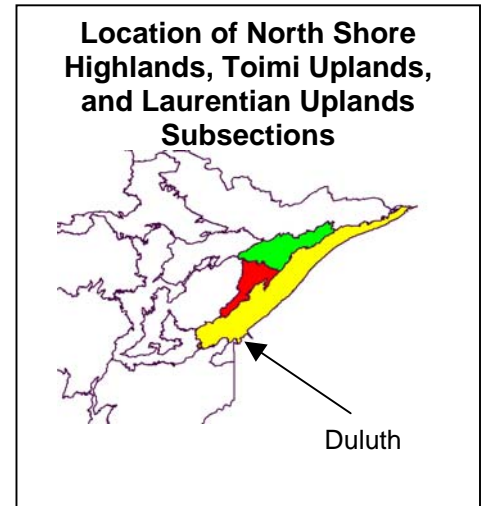


Figure 1.1: Land Ownership in the North Shore Highlands, Toimi Uplands, and Laurentian Uplands

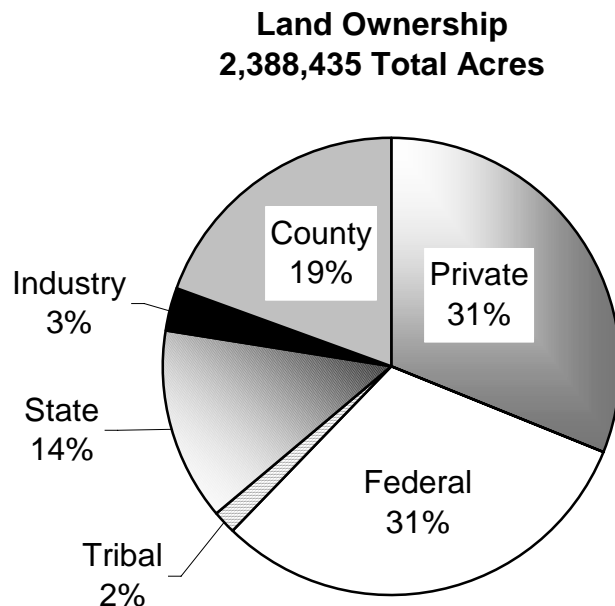


Table 1.1: Land Ownership by Subsection

Owner	Laurentian Uplands	Toimi Uplands	North Shore Highlands	3 Subsections Total
Private	15%	14%	41%	31%
Federal	62%	33%	19%	31%
Tribal	0%	0%	3%	2%
State	15%	9%	14%	14%
Industry	5%	0%	3%	3%
County	3%	43%	20%	19%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Total Acres	567,281	339,285	1,481,869	2,388,435

Based on recent Gap Analysis Program (GAP) classification by the DNR using satellite imagery of all lands in the subsection, 90 percent of the subsection is covered by forest and shrubs (73 percent forest and 17 percent shrubs). Table 1.2 shows the general cover type percentages for all ownerships based on GAP data for forested classes of land and for state lands in this SFRMP plan based on state land forest inventory data (Cooperative Stand Assessment, CSA).

Table 1.2: Generalized Forest Cover Type Composition in the Three Subsections

Cover Type Group	All ownerships (GAP)	State lands in SFRMP (CSA)
Aspen, birch, balm of Gilead	60%	41%
Other upland hardwoods (maple, basswood, oak)	5%	5%
Lowland hardwoods (ash, elm, silver maple)	1%	3%
Pine (red pine, white pine, jack pine)	8%	7%
White spruce, balsam fir, upland black spruce	6%	11%
Lowland conifers (black spruce, tamarack, white cedar)	16%	22%
Stagnant conifers (black spruce, tamarack, white cedar)	3%	10%
Other	1%	1%

For additional information, see the Preliminary Issues and Assessment (November 2002) document or <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/forestry/subsection/northshorearea/index.html>.

1.2 Scope of SFRMP

Subsection Forest Resource Management Plan (SFRMP)

An SFRMP is a DNR plan for vegetation management on forest lands administered by the DNR divisions of Forestry, Fish and Wildlife, and Trails and Waterways. Vegetation management includes actions that affect the composition and structure of forest lands, such as timber harvesting, thinning, prescribed burning, and reforestation. The geographic area covered by these plans is defined by Ecological Classification System (ECS) subsections. Previous forest management plans were based on administrative boundaries (e.g., DNR forestry areas). SFRMPs

also consider the condition and management of forest lands not owned by the DNR, but only propose forest management direction and actions for DNR lands. The amount of DNR-administered forest lands within forested subsections varies across the state. Consistent with state policy (Minnesota Statutes 89A), the SFRMP process will pursue the sustainable management, use, and protection of the state’s forest resources to achieve the state’s economic, environmental, and social goals.

Planning Activities Beyond the Scope of SFRMPs

Examples of forest resource management planning activities that are beyond the scope of SFRMPs are: OHV trail system planning, comprehensive road access planning, state park land management planning, old-growth forest designation, SNA establishment, wilderness designation, wildlife population goal planning, cumulative effects analysis at the watershed level, fire management, and recreation facilities/systems planning. OHV trail system planning is currently in progress for state forests in these subsections.

1.3 SFRMP Process

SFRMP Steps

The SFRMP planning process is divided into five steps. In steps 1 and 2, the subsection team prepares information to assess the current forest resource conditions in the subsection and identifies forest resource management issues that will be addressed in the subsection plan. In Step 3, the subsection team finalizes the issues and develops general directions and strategies to address these issues. The strategies will help in developing the cover type management recommendations, stand selection criteria, and stand treatment levels. In Step 4, stands to be evaluated for treatment during the 10-year plan period are selected and preliminary prescriptions are assigned. In Step 5, the plan is finalized. There are three opportunities for public input.

ECS Subsections

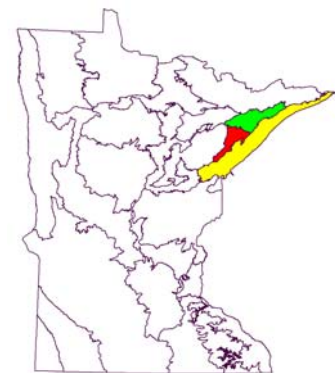
The DNR uses the ECS as a tool to help identify, describe, and map ecosystems. ECS units are defined by climatic, geologic, hydrologic, topographic, soil, and vegetation data. The ECS divides the state into six levels of ecological units. Subsections are the third level down in the ECS hierarchy in Minnesota. There are 17 forested subsections in the state, ranging in size from 339,285 to 3,657,011 acres.

Goals for the Planning Effort

While the planning process will produce many tangible “products,” such as assessment information, issues, and strategies, the end result is two key products:

- **Desired Future Forest Composition (DFFC) goals.** The goals will include long-term (50 years or more) and short-term (10 years) desired changes in the structure and composition of

ECS Subsections in Minnesota (North Shore Highlands, Toimi Uplands, and Laurentian Uplands Subsections are highlighted)



DNR forest lands in the subsection. Composition goals could include the amount of various cover types, age-class distribution of cover types, and geographic distribution of cover types across the subsection. DFFC goals for state forest lands are developed from assessment information, issues, the general direction identified in response to the issues, and strategies to implement the desired management direction.

- **List of DNR forest stands to be treated over the next 10-year period.** SFRMPs identify forest stands on DNR Forestry- and Fish and Wildlife-administered lands that are proposed for treatment (e.g., harvest, thinning, regeneration, and re-inventory) over the 10-year planning period. Forest stands are selected using criteria developed to begin moving DNR forest lands toward the long-term DFFCs. Examples of possible criteria include stand age and location; soils; site productivity; and size, number, and species of trees. Many decisions and considerations go into developing these criteria and the list of stands proposed for treatment. Examples include 1) identification of areas to be managed as older forest or extended rotation forest (ERF), 2) identification of areas to be managed at normal rotation age, 3) identification of areas for various sizes of patch management, 4) management of riparian areas and visually sensitive travel corridors, 5) age and cover type distributions, and 6) regeneration, thinning, and prescribed burning needs. Decisions are made based on the management activities (including no action) that will best move the forest landscape toward the DFFC goals.

Who Develops SFRMPs?

SFRMP team members include DNR Forestry, Wildlife, Ecological Services, and other staff. The team members for the North Shore SFRMP are listed on page ii. SFRMP teams have primary responsibility for the work and decisions involved with the subsection plans. The team makes decisions through an informed consent process. Forest resources data relating to all ownerships is used in the planning process.

1.4 SFRMP and Minnesota Forest Resources Council (MFRC) Regional Landscape Planning

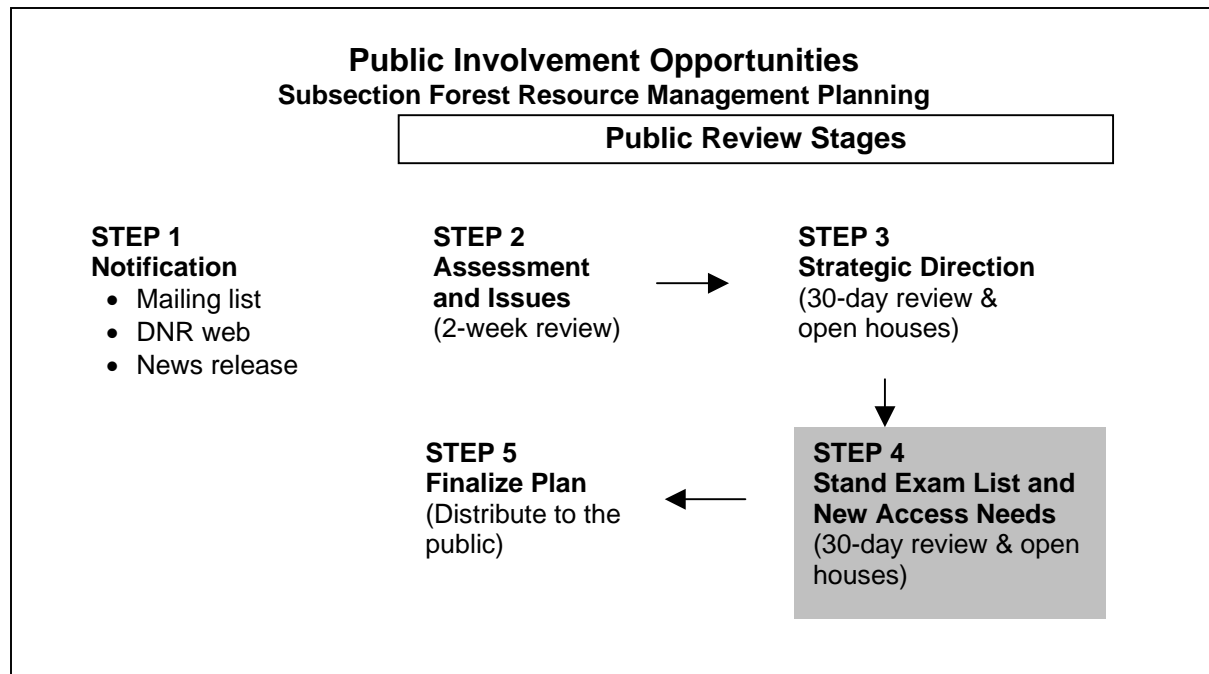
The recommended desired outcomes, goals, and strategies developed for the Northeast Landscape Region by the Northeast Regional Landscape Committee under the direction of the Minnesota Forest Resources Council (MFRC) Landscape Program were considered in developing this SFRMP. Some members of the North Shore SFRMP Team are members of the Northeast Regional Landscape Committee. By considering the recommendations from the Northeast Landscape Region Plan, the decisions for management of DNR-administered lands incorporate recommendations from a broader landscape perspective across all ownerships and contribute to cooperation across ownerships in this larger landscape area.

1.5 SFRMP Process Overview

Table 1.3 outlines the steps in the SFRMP development process. This North Shore SFRMP is currently in the fourth step. Figure 1.2 shows the opportunities for public involvement during the planning process.

Table 1.3: SFRMP Process Overview

Step 1	Initiating the Planning Process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DNR forms an interdisciplinary team for the subsection(s). • DNR staff assembles base assessment information. • DNR establishes a page for the subsection on the DNR Web site. • DNR develops a mailing list of public/stakeholders. • DNR informs the public that the process is beginning, the estimated schedule, and how and when they can be involved.
Step 2	Assessment and Issue Identification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subsection team adjusts and supplements the base resource assessment information for the subsection. • Team identifies the preliminary issues to be addressed in the plan. • DNR distributes assessment information and the preliminary issues for public review and input.
Step 3	Strategies, DFFC, and Stand Selection Criteria <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DNR finalizes the list of issues to be addressed based on public input from Step 2. • Team develops general direction statements (GDSs) in response to the final list of issues. • Team and work groups develop strategies and DFFC goals consistent with the general direction. • Team develops stand selection criteria to help identify DNR forest stands for treatment over the 10-year planning period to move toward the goals. • DNR distributes GDSs, DFFC goals, strategies, and stand selection criteria for public review and comment.
Step 4 <i>Current Step</i>	Draft List of Stands to be Treated and New Access Needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team finalizes DFFC goals, strategies, and stand selection criteria based on public input from Step 3. • DNR staff identifies state forest land stands to be considered for treatment over the 10-year planning period. • DNR staff identifies new access needs associated with the list of stands proposed to be treated. • DNR distributes a draft list of stands to be treated and new access needs for public review and comment.
Step 5	Final Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team summarizes public comments and develops responses. • Team presents a summary of comments, responses, and plan revisions to the DNR for the commissioner’s approval. • Commissioner approves the final plan. • DNR distributes the final plan, including a summary of public comments and DNR responses.

Figure 1.2: Public Involvement Opportunities

1.6 Contents of Document and Focus of Current Review

This document contains products developed by the SFRMP team for public review as part of Step 4 in the planning process. It summarizes the results of stand selection, summarizes new access needs resulting from stand selection, identifies substantive changes that have been made to the Strategic Direction Document resulting from the Step 3 review, provides DNR responses to public comments generated in Step 3, and provides the list of stands to be examined for treatment over the 10-year planning period.

Public Review Focus

Public review at this point is only for the draft 10-year stand examination list and new access needs. Other sections of the draft plan have already gone through a public review and comment period and the DNR has developed responses and made plan revisions based on the input (see Chapter 5).

1.7 Public Review Period and How to Provide Input

The summary of the draft 10-year stand examination list and new access needs contained in this document will be available for a 30-day public review and comment period. Comments on individual stands selected for possible treatment can be submitted via the DNR's ForestView Web site at <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/maps/forestview/index.html>. This document is available on the DNR Web site at <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/forestry/subsection/northshorearea> or upon request in hard copy or on a CD. Submit public comments or requests for a copy of the plan via this Web site or to:

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Open houses will be held during the comment period. Locations and dates will be posted on the DNR Web site, distributed to stakeholders on this SFRMP's mailing list, and published in a DNR news release.

1.8 The Next Step

The SFRMP team will use the comments received during this public review to finalize the 10-year stand selections and new access needs. Then the revised plan will go through a final DNR review. The final plan, including a summary of public comments and DNR responses from Step 4, will be posted on the DNR's SFRMP Web site and will be available upon request. An official notice regarding the completion of the final plan will be posted in the *Minnesota State Register* (http://www.comm.media.state.mn.us/bookstore/state_register.asp).

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