

Section Forest Resource Management Plan Monitoring

Updated: 2/10/2022 by the Forest Resources Planning Team

This document describes the DNR's approach to monitoring section forest resource management plans (SFRMPs). It is updated as needed to reflect current Department policies and processes. Sustainable timber harvest (STH) decision monitoring now addresses many questions formerly addressed through SFRMP monitoring. However, many of the same monitoring principles described for SFRMP below apply to monitoring the STH decisions. SFRMP monitoring will continue to evolve, depending partially on how the DNR monitors STH decisions and their implementation.

Monitoring Purpose

SFRMP monitoring brings DNR staff together to learn about how work under a plan is going and, when applicable, revisit plan goals. In doing this, we address the following broad questions with respect to the multiple values embedded in DNR forest resources planning and management:

- **Implementation monitoring:** Are management actions and documented management intent consistent with the plan? (Are we doing what we said we would?)
- **Effectiveness monitoring:** Are management actions moving DNR forestlands towards the goals outlined in the plan? (Is our plan having the intended effect?)

Monitoring Approach

We could ask hundreds of possible questions about the implementation and effectiveness of management actions on state forestland. In some cases, data are insufficient to answer a question through monitoring. Other questions are confounded, making it difficult to distinguish one cause or effect from another. Time is a critical factor. It can take years to execute a planned treatment and decades for the DNR forest inventory to reflect a change such as a cover type conversion. Given these limitations, SFRMP monitoring attempts to identify and focus on the most important questions that we can reasonably address.

We execute implementation and effectiveness monitoring depending on data availability and where we are in the plan period. For example, it is difficult to monitor plan effectiveness (i.e., on-the-ground effects) earlier in the plan period. Monitoring metrics or indicators are developed at the beginning of the monitoring process accounting for these factors. In general, though, we use several long-standing data sources for monitoring, including:

- Forest inventory data, historical and contemporary
- Planning datasets, which include planned stand exams and a snapshot of resource conditions at the time of planning
- Annual stand exam list and annual plan addition datasets
- Stand exam list accomplishments, including whether stands were appraised, altered, or deferred; prescriptions and prescription comments; documented management objectives; etc.
- Timber sales data, including volume offered, sold, and scaled

- DNR Geodatabase Data Resource Site (GDRS) data
- Forest inventory and analysis (FIA) data

Other data sources may become available over time or may be available for specific geographies. The SFRMP monitoring process is adaptive and evaluates available data and monitoring approaches during each monitoring project.

Communicating Results

Written reports summarizing monitoring results are prepared approximately every five years (i.e., at plan midpoint and plan end). Final reports are accessible via the DNR website.

Monitoring results are also communicated to internal audiences through a monitoring meeting at the end of each SFRMP monitoring project.

Audience

SFRMP monitoring reports have both internal and external audiences. Internal audiences include DNR field staff, Forest Resource Issue Teams (FRITs), and other DNR decision-makers. External audiences include tribes, forest certification auditors, adjacent landowners, the MN Forest Resources Council, loggers, recreational forest users, the forest products industry, members of environmental organizations, etc.

Roles and Responsibilities

Successful implementation and monitoring of the SFRMP process depend on many people's work. Following is an explanation of general roles and responsibilities associated with plan monitoring.

Policy and Planning Supervisor: Oversee forest resources planners and ensure that monitoring projects are conducted appropriately within the planning system.

Forest Resources Planners: Manage monitoring projects, gather and analyze monitoring data, and write monitoring reports. Incorporate monitoring in SFRMP training for field staff. Communicate the nature and importance of SFRMP monitoring to field staff.

Forestry Field Staff: Accurately record the results of on-site visits (i.e., stand examinations), completing required and additional data as necessary to document decisions regarding site objectives and planned management actions.

Timber Sales, Silviculture, and Inventory Program Foresters: Accurately and promptly record data into the appropriate database.

Forest Resource Issues Teams: Assign resources and support monitoring projects as needed.

Interdisciplinary Field Staff: Participate in SFRMP monitoring projects as assigned.