

# Sustainable Forestry Initiative®

## Summary Report

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### Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

### Certificate # SCS-SFI/FM-00088N

SFI 2015-2019 Standards and Rules® (Extended through December 2021): SFI Section 2

Re-Certification Audit

*SCS Contact:*

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# 1. AUDIT REPORT

## Program Participant

Program Participant	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	
Certificate Number	SCS-SFI/FM-00088N	
Contact Information (Name, Title, Phone, Email)	Tim Beyer, Forest Certification Consultant 500 Lafayette Road St. Paul, MN 55155-4040 USA (651) 259-5256 Tim.Beyer@state.mn.us	
Certificate Type	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Single	<input type="checkbox"/> Multi-site
	<input type="checkbox"/> Group # Group members in group certificate:	

## Scope of Certification

The scope of the certificate includes forest management on Minnesota DNR managed forestry lands, fisheries lands in Lake County, Land Utilization Project (LUP) lands, and wildlife lands except for the Prairie Province, including SFI 2015-2019 Forest Management Standard Objectives 1-15. Scientific and Natural Areas (SNAs) and State Parks are excluded. The SFI Forest Management number is SCS-SFI/FM-00088N.

## Objectives Audited

### Objective 1 Forest Management Planning

To ensure forest management plans include long-term sustainable harvest levels and measures to avoid forest conversion.

**Summary of Evidence:**

*The forest management plan and supporting documentation, and the associated FIS, GIS, and growth models were key evidence of conformance.*

### Objective 2 Forest Health and Productivity

To ensure long-term forest productivity, carbon storage and conservation of forest resources through prompt reforestation, afforestation, minimized chemical use, soil conservation, and protecting forests from damaging agents.

**Summary of Evidence:**

*Field observations and associated records were used to confirm practices. Programs for reforestation, for protection against insects and diseases and wildfire, and for careful management of activities which could potentially impact and long-term productivity, were all observed. Site visits included final harvests, thinnings, chemical and mechanical prep, and plantings.*

## Objective 3 Protection and Maintenance of Water Resources

To protect the water quality of rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands and other water bodies through meeting or exceeding best management practices.

### **Summary of Evidence:**

*Field observations of a range of sites were the key evidence. Auditors visited portions of selected field sites that were close to water resources. MFRC Site-Level Forest Management Guidelines (BMPs) are also an important part of the program to protect water resources. Selected Permit Activity Reports were reviewed, and Timber Sale Administration Foresters were interviewed.*

## Objective 4 Conservation of Biological Diversity

To manage the quality and distribution of wildlife habitats and contribute to the conservation of biological diversity by developing and implementing stand- and landscape-level measures that promote a diversity of types of habitat and successional stages, and the conservation of forest plants and animals, including aquatic species, as well as threatened and endangered species, Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value, old-growth forests and ecologically important sites.

### **Summary of Evidence:**

*Field observations, written plans and policies, use of college-trained field biologists, availability of specialists, and regular staff involvement in conferences and workshops that cover scientific advances were the evidence used to assess the requirements involved biodiversity conservation. The Interdisciplinary Forest Management Coordination Framework ensures that biodiversity issues are considered in forest management planning. Minnesota also has developed a comprehensive system of Representative Sample Areas (RSAs) and High Conservation Value Forests (HCVFs) which are protected and managed to provide for sensitive species and communities.*

## Objective 5 Management of Visual Quality and Recreational Benefits

To manage the visual impact of forest operations and provide recreational opportunities for the public.

### **Summary of Evidence:**

*Field observations of completed operations and policies/procedures for visual quality were assessed during the evaluation. Maps of recreation sites, combined with field visits and interviews, confirmed a strong recreation prog*

## Objective 6 Protection of Special Sites

To manage lands that are geologically or culturally important in a manner that takes into account their unique qualities.

### **Summary of Evidence:**

*Identification of special sites in the database and interviews with stakeholders, review of written plans for protection management, marking of sites in the field, and training for protection and management were witnessed.*

## Objective 7 Efficient Use of Fiber Resources

To minimize waste and ensure the efficient use of fiber resources.

**Summary of Evidence:**

*Field observations and monitoring results of completed operations, contract clauses, and discussions with supervising foresters provided the key evidence.*

## **Objective 8 Recognize and Respect Indigenous Peoples' Rights**

To recognize and respect Indigenous Peoples' rights and traditional knowledge.

**Summary of Evidence:**

*Interviews, review of Executive Orders and Operational Orders, documented training program, and review of tracking system provided evidence of conformance.*

## **Objective 9 Legal and Regulatory Compliance**

To comply with applicable federal, provincial, state and local laws and regulations.

**Summary of Evidence:**

*Field reviews of ongoing and completed operations were the most critical evidence. Regulatory compliance has been very strong.*

## **Objective 10 Forestry Research, Science and Technology**

To invest in forestry research, science and technology, upon which sustainable forest management decisions are based and broaden the awareness of climate change impacts on forests, wildlife and biological diversity.

**Summary of Evidence:**

*Confirmed by cooperation with various associations for forestry research and use of the data for analysis in the development of management strategies.*

## **Objective 11 Training and Education**

To improve the implementation of sustainable forestry practices through appropriate training and education programs.

**Summary of Evidence:**

*Confirmed by financial and physical support of the State SIC and its development of education and logger training programs. Training is also conducted by participation in various classes and webinars.*

## **Objective 12 Community Involvement and Landowner Outreach**

To broaden the practice of sustainable forestry through public outreach, education, and involvement, and to support the efforts of SFI Implementation Committees.

**Summary of Evidence:**

*Confirmed by interviews and documentation of the programs and assistance DNR provides to private landowner and the general public on forest management, sustainability, and the wide range of state and federal cost-share and incentive programs.*

## Objective 13 Public Land Management Responsibilities

To participate and implement sustainable forest management on public lands.

### **Summary of Evidence:**

*Interviews and review of documents and correspondence as well as the Minnesota DNR website were used to confirm the requirements. The Department invites stakeholders and agencies to many of its planning and operational activities efforts, such as Section Forest Resource Management Planning. The Division of Forestry invites stakeholders and agencies to comment on pesticide application projects, forest road construction projects, and harvesting timber from state lands. The DNR also has multiple ways that the people can voice their concerns. It has roundtable sessions, public input sessions, surveys, and websites where people can share their views. Lastly the department maintains a seat on the Minnesota Forest Resources Council.*

## Objective 14 Communications and Public Reporting

To increase transparency and to annually report progress on conformance with the SFI Forest Management Standard.

### **Summary of Evidence:**

*Interviews, copies of Public Summary and Annual Progress Reports filed with SFI Inc. and the SFI Inc. website provided evidence of conformance.*

## Objective 15 Management Review and Continual Improvement

To promote continual improvement in the practice of sustainable forestry by conducting a management review and monitoring performance.

### **Summary of Evidence:**

Records of program reviews, agendas and notes from management review meetings, and interviews with personnel from all involved levels in the organization were assessed. Follow-up actions for internal audit findings were also reviewed.

Defined Forest Area/ Number of Sites in Scope of Certificate (if applicable)	
N/A	
<b>Audit Team</b>	Tucker Watts – SFI Lead Auditor Brendon Grady – FSC Lead Auditor Beth Jacqmain – Team Auditor Stefan Bergman – Team Auditor
<b>Audit Dates</b>	September 28 – October 1, 2021
<b>Significant Changes to Operations or Standard</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No changes <input type="checkbox"/> Changes as described below:

<b>Certification Recommendation by Audit Team to SCS</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Initial or continued certification is recommended, subject to the Organization meeting deadlines for response any findings issued.	<input type="checkbox"/> Initial or continued certification is not recommended ( <i>explain</i> ):
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## Audit Results

New Findings Summary	<input type="checkbox"/> No nonconformities or Opportunities for Improvement identified <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Identified [Opportunity for Improvement, Minor nonconformity, Major nonconformity]. Logo on the website for loggers does not include the current SFI code. (Rules for use of SFI On-Product Labels & Off-Product Marks – Part 3: Rules for use of SFI Off-Product Marks, 3.4.)
Existing Findings Summary	No nonconformities or Opportunities for Improvement identified
Logos/labels	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Logo checked and No nonconformities <input type="checkbox"/> Logo checked, and Nonconformities issued Note: Use of the <i>SFI</i> on-product labels and claims shall follow Section 5 - Rules for Use of <i>SFI</i> On-Product Labels and Off-Product Marks as well as ISO 14020:2000. Logo on the website for loggers does not include the current SFI code. (Rules for use of SFI On-Product Labels & Off-Product Marks – Part 3: Rules for use of SFI Off-Product Marks, 3.4.)
<b>Audit Program</b>	
<b>Statement on the conformity and effectiveness of the management system together with a summary of the evidence</b>	
Audit reports and management review records were reviewed for <i>2020-2021</i> which demonstrate the organization's performance and conformance to the SFI 2015-2019 standard requirements for the central office and all the regions in the scope of the audit. One Minor CAR was identified. The conclusion determined by SCS auditor is that the SFI system continues to be fully effective.	

## 2. APPENDICES

[Appendix 1 – Audit Notification Memo and Audit Agenda](#)

[Appendix 2 – SFI Forest Management Public Summary Report](#)

[Appendix 3 – SFI Standard Detailed Observations Conformity Table](#)

[Appendix 4 – Site Notes and Interviewees](#)

[Appendix 5 – Meeting Attendance](#)



## Appendix 1 – Audit Notification Memo and Audit Agenda

### Remote Audit Plan: FSC/SFI Forest Management

Please review the information below regarding your upcoming audit and alert your audit team leader to any errors or omissions. All proprietary information sent to your auditors in preparation for your assessment will be kept confidential.

This plan includes Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for a remote audit as approved by SCS and in accordance with accreditation requirements.

### Name and Contact Information

Organization name	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, SCS-FM/COC-00088N		
Contact person	Tim Beyer, Forest Certification Consultant		
Address	500 Lafayette Road St. Paul, MN 55155-4040 USA	Telephone	(651) 259-5256
		Fax	
		e-mail	Tim.Beyer@state.mn.us
		Website	<a href="http://dnr.state.mn.us">http://dnr.state.mn.us</a>

### Evaluation Team

Audit team leader name	Brendan Grady (Team leader, FSC Lead)
Auditor phone & email	<a href="mailto:bgrady@scsglobalservices.com">bgrady@scsglobalservices.com</a>
Team member's name and role	Tucker Watts (SFI Lead)
Auditor phone & email	<a href="mailto:jtwatts1@gmail.com">jtwatts1@gmail.com</a>
Team member's name and role	Stefan Bergmann (team auditor)
Auditor phone & email	<a href="mailto:sbergmann@scsglobalservices.com">sbergmann@scsglobalservices.com</a>
Team member's name and role	Beth Jacqmain (team auditor)
Auditor phone & email	<a href="mailto:BJacqmain@scsglobalservices.com">BJacqmain@scsglobalservices.com</a>

### Evaluation Scope

Certificate code	SCS-FM/COC-00088N; SCS-SFI/FM-00088N	
Certificate type	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Single FMU	<input type="checkbox"/> Multiple FMU
	<input type="checkbox"/> Group	
SLIMF (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/> Small SLIMF certificate	<input type="checkbox"/> Low intensity SLIMF certificate
	<input type="checkbox"/> Group SLIMF certificate	
Standards used	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forest Stewardship Standard(s), including version FSC-US Forest Management Standard v1.0	

NOTE: Please include the full standard name and version number and check all that apply.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SCS COC indicators for FMEs, V8-0
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FSC Trademark Standard (FSC-STD-50-001 V2-0)
	<input type="checkbox"/> FSC standard for group entities in forest management groups (FSC-STD-30-005), V2-0
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>SFI 2015-2019 Forest Management Standards and Rules® (Extended through December 2021), Section 2</b>
Type of Evaluation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Full certification/re-certification (all Principles and Criteria of the applicable standard will be reviewed) <input type="checkbox"/> Annual surveillance evaluation (a portion of the applicable standard will be reviewed)
Key Staff	Certification Coordinator, forestry staff responsible for each site reviewed, representatives from Fish and Wildlife and Ecological and Water Resources divisions, staff responsible for tribal outreach, other staff as needed.

### Evaluation Itinerary and Activities

Evaluation dates	Sept 24, Sept 27-Oct 1
Evaluation logistics	Travel: Auditors will plan to fly into and out of MSP on Sept 27 <sup>th</sup> /Oct 1 <sup>st</sup> .
	Lodging: to be determined
	Meals: Plans should be made to have lunch onsite or another acceptable location to ensure timeliness.

### Date: Friday Sept 24 (Date & Time flexible, all times Central)

1:00-3:00	Opening Meeting: Introductions, client update, review scope of evaluation, audit plan, intro/update to FSC and SCS standards, confidentiality and public summary, conformance evaluation methods and tools, review of open CARs/OBS, emergency and security procedures for evaluation team, final site selection.
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### Date: Monday Sept 27

	Auditor Travel Day – Audit team arrives in Little Falls
	Break
12:00-3:00	Documentation and record review, review of field sites recordings, interviews with DNR staff, exact schedule to be determined

3:00-3:30	Prepare for daily briefing, document inventory, additional doc requests, receive site-records
3:30-4:00	Give daily debriefing on audit day progress and next day plans/requests

### **Date: Tuesday Sept 28 Little Falls Field Day**

Park Rapids Audit Team 8:00 AM	Abbreviated open meeting, Audit route review
8:30 AM	Site visits
4:30 PM	Daily wrap-up
Little Falls Audit Team 8:30 AM	Abbreviated open meeting, Audit route review
8:30 AM	Site visits
4:30 PM	Daily wrap-up

### **Date: Wednesday Sept 29 – Interviews**

8:00-3:30 (Remote from auditor hotels or DNR office)	Documentation and record review, FME Interviews, topics to be scheduled: Stakeholder consultation Tribal Relations Community impact Hiring Practices Forest Management Planning Protected Species Management HCVF Management
4:00 – 4:30	Daily wrap-up
4:30	Audit team depart for Bemidji and Thief River Falls

### **Date: Thursday Sept 30 – Warroad/Bemidji Field Day**

Warroad Audit Team 8:00 AM	Abbreviated open meeting, Audit route review
8:30 AM	Site visits
4:30 PM	Daily wrap-up
Bemidji Audit Team 8:00 AM	Abbreviated open meeting, Audit route review
8:30 AM	Site visits
4:30 PM	Daily wrap-up

### **Date: Friday Oct 1 – Wrap-up Day**

8:00 AM	Closing Meeting Preparation: Auditor(s) take time to consolidate notes and confirm evaluation findings
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10:00 AM-11:00 AM	Closing Meeting: Brief summary of audit activities, present preliminary findings, confidentiality, SCS/FSC dispute policy, timeline for report, and discuss next steps.
11:00	Auditors depart for travel home (back to MSP)

## Document and record review:

These may be loaded at any time but should be available prior to the audit, by November 16:

- Training records (e.g., workshops, conferences, safety courses, etc.);
- Recently complete or active timber harvest planning and monitoring documentation;
- Complaints received records;
- Controversial issues records (stakeholder input);
- Accident records;
- Operational plan(s) for the next 12 months;
- Inventory records summary/review;
- Chemical use records (including quantitative data on the use of pesticides, any chemical use forms, target pests);
- Records of sales of certified products; this includes copies of invoices, bills, shipping documents, as well as log load/trip tickets, timber sale contracts, and relevant bill payment documents; and
- Records of logo use approvals by SCS given in any prior year.
- Internal Audit and Management Review records

## Appendix 2 – SCS Summary Report

### SFI® 2015-2019 Public Summary Report for Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

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#### Executive Summary

The Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI) Program of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has achieved continuing conformance with the SFI 2015-2019 Standards and Rules (extended through December 2021), Section 2 Forest Management Standard, and Section 5, Rules for Use of SFI On-Product Labels and Off-Product Marks according to the SCS audit system. The information that follows provides information about the organization, process and results of the evaluation.

#### Introduction and Company Profile

Minnesota DNR manages 5 million acres of state lands throughout Minnesota, following an interdisciplinary approach designed to integrate the harvesting of forest products, management of wildlife habitat, the protection of special sites, and the provision of extensive recreational opportunities. These lands encompass a variety of forest types, including aspen, white, red, and jack pine, mixed lowland conifers, oak-hickory, and northern hardwoods. Forest products produced include timber, pulpwood, firewood, cabin logs, poles, and other specialty products. Nearly 5 million acres are within the scope of the SFI 2015-2019 Forest Management Standard certificate.

Background: “The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR) sought and obtained dual forest management certificates on December 31, 2005, under two internationally recognized, independent, credible forest management certification systems: The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI). MN DNR’s certificates have since grown to almost 5 million acres. MN DNR is one of the largest single certificate holders in the country. Along with its counterparts in Wisconsin and Michigan, MN DNR has been a leader in forest certification. Currently, there are over 15 million acres of forestland in these states certified under FSC and/or the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) program.

Forest management certification is consistent with MN DNR’s mission and responsibility ‘to work with citizens to conserve and manage the state's natural resources, to provide outdoor recreation opportunities, and to provide for commercial uses of natural resources in a way that creates a sustainable quality of life.’ Therefore, MN DNR is looking to continue with its forest management certification efforts.” Source: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources certification system is managed by Tim Beyer, Forest Certification Consultant.

## Evaluation Process, Scope and Objectives

The SCS Audit Plan process guides the evaluation process for SFI *Forest management*

Minnesota DNR qualifies for multi-site sampling as provided within the Requirements for the SFI 2015-2019 Program: Standards, Rules for Label Use, Procedures, and Guidance, Section 9 Auditing Requirements. The program has 15 forestry work areas that are considered sites. (Note: Lands administered by the Division of Fish and Wildlife, fish and wildlife activities, and fish and wildlife work areas within the certified portion of the state are also within the scope of the audit; because these generally overlap geographically with forestry work areas sampling is based on the Forestry Division's work areas.)

The 2021 audit included 4 forestry work areas. The audit included a review the centralized management of the organization. The entire audit was conducted remotely using videos of selected sites and Skype for document review.

The following Areas are included in the 2021 audit sample:

- Little Falls Area
- Park Rapids Area
- Bemidji Area
- Warroad Area

A spreadsheet of (since 1/1/2018) currently established but unsold, currently sold and active, and closed timber sales for areas involved in the 2021 Audit was used for the selection of remote site visits. The identified sample included a total of 22 harvesting sites, 12 areas managed for wildlife habitat, 4 regeneration sites, and 3 sites for discussing silvicultural operations.

No substitute indicators were used.

This evaluation was conducted by a SCS Lead Auditor, Tucker Watts, Brendan Grady, FSC Lead Auditor, Beth Jacqmain, and Stefan Bergman, Team auditors.

Mr. Watts is a partner in Watts Consulting LLC. His primary focus is forest certification through auditing. Since 2008, Watts has been involved with SFI Forest Management, Fiber Sourcing, Certified Sourcing, and Chain of Custody auditing, FSC Forest Management and Chain of Custody auditing, Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Chain of Custody auditing, auditing of the American Tree Farm System's Group certification, auditing of the Responsible Procurement Program of the National Wood Flooring Association and auditing of the Sustainable Biomass Partnership. Watts has 30-year experience in forest management with a large forest products corporation involved in the manufacturing of paper, lumber, and plywood. For 10 years Watts was a system manager for the forest certification system.

Mr. Grady is the Director, Forest Management Certification for SCS. In that role, he provides daily management and quality control for the program. He participated as a team member and lead auditor

in forest certification audits throughout the United States, Europe, and Southeast Asia. Brendan has a B.S. in Forestry from the University of California, Berkeley, and a Juris Doctorate from the University of Washington School of Law. Brendan is a member of the State Bar of California and was an attorney in private practice focusing on environmental law before returning to SCS.

Mrs. Jacqumain is a Senior Certification Forester at SCS Global Services, Forest Ecologist and Certified Forester (SAFCF#1467). Beth has 20+ years' experience in forestry including public land management, private consulting, and private corporate forest management working with landowners and harvest crews. Qualified ANSI RAB accredited ISO 14001 EMS Lead Auditor and FSC®, SFI®, and RW® Lead Auditor for Forest Management/Chain of Custody. Audited and led FSC evaluations, harvest and logging operations certification audits; and joint/combined PEFC® FM (AFS®, RW, SFI, ATFS®). An 11-year member of the Forest Guild, 21-year adjunct-Faculty with Itasca Community College, NR Department. Member 20+ years Society of American Foresters. Served SAF MN State Chair 2010 and multiple committees, state and national, throughout. Past and current member on committee revising the SAF CF certification exam. Original lead instructor of UMN "Ecosystem Silviculture" certificate course for professional foresters. BS Forest Management from Michigan State University and MS Forest Biology/Ecology from Auburn University. Beth's experience is in forest management and ecology; ecosystem silviculture; the use of silviculture towards meeting strategic and tactical goals; nursery/tree regeneration; forest timber quality improvement (sawmill/veneer), CSA/FIA Phase II Forest inventory; conifer thinning operations, pine restoration, wildfire fighting, and fire ecology in conifer dominated systems. Beth has conducted evaluations of forest management, procurement, and supply chains throughout the forested regions of the US, WA/Victoria/Tasmania Australia, New Zealand, Fiji Islands (Viti levu), and Slovakia.

Mr. Bergmann has been in the forestry and wood products field for nearly 20 years, working across the US on forest policy, landowner extension, and forest certification. He also has senior staff executive experience with two forestry non-profits in the Midwest. Prior to joining SCS in 2017, he worked for Rainforest Alliance, overseeing the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) Forest Management auditing program in the US. He has successfully completed FSC Forest Management Lead Auditor training, ISO 9001 Lead Auditor training, and is qualified to be an SFI team auditor. He has served as lead and team auditors on numerous FSC FM audits around the country. He holds a BS in Wildlife Science and an MS in Forest Resources, both from Oregon State University, and recently completed an MBA at the University of California Davis.

The audit was conducted and completed by remote auditing during November 30 – December 3, 2020. Prior to the audit, sites had been selected and videos made of the operation on the sites. Videos of the sites were reviewed by the auditors prior to the audit. During the audit, the videos, as well as the operations, and documentation were discussed and reviewed. A total of 12 auditor days were used for the audit. Audit time was allocated between the SFI Forest Management Audit and the FSC Forest Management Audit. During the audit, remote site visits included a total of 30 harvesting sites, 3 areas managed for wildlife habitat, 2 regeneration sites, and 2 sites for discussing silvicultural operations.

Several of the SFI Section 2 requirements were outside of the scope of the Company's SFI program and were excluded from the scope of the SFI Certification Audit as follows:

- Indicator 2.1.4 involving planting exotic species
- Performance Measure 8.3 relating to private lands
- Indicator 10.1.2 because there is no research on genetically engineered trees via forest tree biotechnology

## Monitoring Program

The DNR contracted with Mason, Bruce & Girard (MB&G) to complete a new sustainable timber harvest analysis.

*"In March 2018, DNR set a new 10-year sustainable timber target of 870,000 cords (does not include reoffered volume) offered for sale annually from DNR-managed forest lands. The decision came after more than a year of rigorous scientific analysis, discussions with key partners, including conservation organizations and forest industry, and public input. Under the sustainable timber harvest target of 870,000 cords offered annually, DNR-managed forest lands will continue to sustain Minnesota's rich biodiversity, provide healthy, thriving wildlife habitat, support the state economy, contribute to clean air through carbon storage, and keep water clean."*

Beyond the 870,000 cords, DNR also launched a special five-year initiative that could offer up to 30,000 additional cords of ash and tamarack annually in response to the threat posed by emerald ash borer and eastern larch beetle, two invasive species that kill ash and tamarack trees.

## Evaluation Summary of Findings

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources was found to be in basic conformance with the standard.

The number and types of findings are summarized below:

Finding	Number
Major	0
Minor	0
Opportunity for Improvement	1
Exceeds	0

The descriptions of findings are below:

## Previous Findings

*There were no new findings resulting from the 2020 evaluation.*

## New Findings

### Opportunity for Improvement

Logo on the website for loggers does not include the current SFI code. This is graded an opportunity for improvement on the basis of it being an internal guidance document, and not an attempt to pass on the certificate code. (Rules for use of SFI On-Product Labels & Off-Product Marks – Part 3: Rules for use of SFI Off-Product Marks, 3.4.)



## General Description of Evidence of Conformity

Objectives, Performance Measures and Indicators for evaluation were selected prior to the audit. Evidence of conformity was evaluated to the indicator level and a summary of those findings are presented below, organized by Objectives.

### Objective 1 Forest Management Planning

---

To ensure forest management plans include long-term sustainable harvest levels and measures to avoid forest conversion.

**Summary of Evidence:**

*The forest management plan and supporting documentation, and the associated FIS, GIS, and growth models were the key evidence of conformance.*

### Objective 2 Forest Health and Productivity

---

To ensure long-term forest productivity, carbon storage and conservation of forest resources through prompt reforestation, afforestation, minimized chemical use, soil conservation, and protecting forests from damaging agents.

**Summary of Evidence:**

*Field observations and associated records were used to confirm practices. Programs for reforestation, for protection against insects and diseases and wildfire, and for careful management of activities which could potentially impact soil and long-term productivity, were all observed. Site visits included final harvests, thinnings, chemical and mechanical site prep, and plantings.*

### Objective 3 Protection and Maintenance of Water Resources

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To protect the water quality of rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands and other water bodies through meeting or exceeding best management practices.

**Summary of Evidence:**

*Field observations of a range of sites were the key evidence. Auditors visited portions of selected field sites that were close to water resources. MFRC Site-Level Forest Management Guidelines (BMPs) are also an important part of the program to protect water resources. Selected Permit Activity Reports were reviewed, and Timber Sale Administration Foresters were interviewed.*

### Objective 4 Conservation of Biological Diversity

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To manage the quality and distribution of wildlife habitats and contribute to the conservation of biological diversity by developing and implementing stand- and landscape-level measures that promote a diversity of types of habitat and successional stages, and the conservation of forest plants and animals, including aquatic species, as well as threatened and endangered species, Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value, old-growth forests and ecologically important sites.

**Summary of Evidence:**

*Field observations, written plans and policies, use of college-trained field biologists, availability of specialists, and regular staff involvement in conferences and workshops that cover scientific advances were the evidence used to assess the requirements involved biodiversity conservation. The Interdisciplinary Forest Management Coordination Framework ensures that biodiversity issues are considered in forest management planning. Minnesota also has developed a comprehensive system of Representative Sample Areas (RSAs) and High Conservation Value Forests (HCVFs) which are protected and managed to provide for sensitive species and communities.*

## **Objective 5    Management of Visual Quality and Recreational Benefits**

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To manage the visual impact of forest operations and provide recreational opportunities for the public.

**Summary of Evidence:**

*Field observations of completed operations and policies/procedures for visual quality were assessed during the evaluation. Maps of recreation sites, combined with field visits and interviews, confirmed a strong recreation program.*

## **Objective 6    Protection of Special Sites**

---

To manage lands that are geologically or culturally important in a manner that takes into account their unique qualities.

**Summary of Evidence:**

*Identification of special sites in the database and interviews with stakeholders, review of written plans for protection and management, marking of sites in the field, and training for protection and management were witnessed.*

## **Objective 7    Efficient Use of Fiber Resources**

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To minimize waste and ensure the efficient use of fiber resources.

**Summary of Evidence:**

*Field observations and monitoring results of completed operations, contract clauses, and discussions with supervising foresters provided the key evidence.*

## **Objective 8    Recognize and Respect Indigenous Peoples' Rights**

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To recognize and respect Indigenous Peoples' rights and traditional knowledge.

**Summary of Evidence:**

*Interviews, review of Executive Orders and Operational Orders, documented training program, and review of tracking system provided evidence of conformance.*

## **Objective 9    Legal and Regulatory Compliance**

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To comply with applicable federal, provincial, state and local laws and regulations.

**Summary of Evidence:**

*Field reviews of ongoing and completed operations were the most critical evidence. Regulatory compliance has been very strong.*

## **Objective 10    Forestry Research, Science and Technology**

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To invest in forestry research, science and technology, upon which sustainable forest management decisions are based and broaden the awareness of climate change impacts on forests, wildlife and biological diversity.

**Summary of Evidence:**

*Confirmed by cooperation with various associations for forestry research and use of the data for analysis in the development of management strategies.*

## **Objective 11    Training and Education**

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To improve the implementation of sustainable forestry practices through appropriate training and education programs.

**Summary of Evidence:**

*Confirmed by financial and physical support of the State SIC and its development of education and logger training programs. Training is also conducted by participation in various classes and webinars.*

## Objective 12 Community Involvement and Landowner Outreach

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To broaden the practice of sustainable forestry through public outreach, education, and involvement, and to support the efforts of SFI Implementation Committees.

### **Summary of Evidence:**

*Confirmed by interviews and documentation of the programs and assistance DNR provides to private landowner and to the general public on forest management, sustainability, and the wide range of state and federal cost-share and incentive programs.*

## Objective 13 Public Land Management Responsibilities

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To participate and implement sustainable forest management on public lands.

### **Summary of Evidence:**

*Interviews and review of documents and correspondence as well as the Minnesota DNR website were used to confirm the requirements. The Department invites stakeholders and agencies to many of its planning and operational activities efforts, such as Section Forest Resource Management Planning. The Division of Forestry invites stakeholders and agencies to comment on pesticide application projects, forest road construction projects, and harvesting timber from state lands. The DNR also has multiple ways that the people can voice their concerns. It has roundtable sessions, public input sessions, surveys, and websites where people can share their views. Lastly the department maintains a seat on the Minnesota Forest Resources Council.*

## Objective 14 Communications and Public Reporting

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To increase transparency and to annually report progress on conformance with the SFI Forest Management Standard.

### **Summary of Evidence:**

*Interviews, copies of Public Summary and Annual Progress Reports filed with SFI Inc. and the SFI Inc. website provided evidence of conformance.*

## Objective 15 Management Review and Continual Improvement

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To promote continual improvement in the practice of sustainable forestry by conducting a management review and monitoring performance.

### **Summary of Evidence:**

*Records of program reviews, agendas and notes from management review meetings, and interviews with personnel from all involved levels in the organization were assessed. Follow-up actions for internal audit findings were also reviewed.*

## Multi-Site/Group Evaluation

Not applicable.

## Substitute Indicators

No substitute indicators were used.

## Logo/Label Use

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources uses the SFI logo on their website. Logo on the website for internal forestry staff does not include the current SFI code. (Rules for use of SFI On-Product Labels & Off-Product Marks – Part 3: Rules for use of SFI Off-Product Marks, 3.4.) Company understands approvals remain in effect for one year. Logo Use was reviewed and approved by SFI on 9/14/2021. Company does not use the SCS logo.

## Appendix 3 – Standard Conformity Checklist

### SCS Checklist for Forest Management Sustainable Forestry Initiative® Standard

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This checklist includes the general requirements, criteria and associated indicators, guidance notes, interpretations, and directives for SFI 2015-2019, Section 2. Group certification requirements are covered in a separate checklist.

### Additional Requirements

*SFI Program Participants with fiber sourcing programs* (acquisition of roundwood and field-manufactured or primary-mill residual chips, pulp and veneer to support a forest products facility), must also conform to the *SFI 2015-2019 Fiber Sourcing Standard*.

Use of the *SFI* on-product labels and claims shall follow Section 5 - Rules for Use of *SFI* On-Product Labels and Off-Product Marks as well as ISO 14020:2000.

<input type="checkbox"/> NA	<input type="checkbox"/> Conformance	<input type="checkbox"/> Exceeds	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> O.F.I.	<input type="checkbox"/> Major NC	<input type="checkbox"/> Minor NC
Audit Notes:	SFI on-product label is not used. SFI logo is used on website. Witnessed email approval dated 9/14/21. No issues.				
	Minnesota DNR does not use on-product labels and claims. Load tickets reviewed and the training document “Chain of Custody Load Tickets” have the appropriate use of logo and claim “SFI Certified Forest Content”.				
	Use of Off-Product Marks was reviewed; record of approval was provided: From: SFI Inc. sent September 14, 2021.				
	Website does not include the current SFI code.				

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### Objective 1. Forest Management Planning

To ensure forest management plans include *long-term* sustainable harvest levels and measures to avoid forest conversion.

**Performance Measure 1.1. *Program Participants* shall ensure that forest management plans include *long-term* harvest levels that are sustainable and consistent with appropriate *growth-and-yield models*.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicator below.

**1.1.1. Forest management planning at a level appropriate to the size and scale of the operation, including:**

- a. a *long-term* resources analysis;
- b. a periodic or ongoing *forest inventory*;
- c. a land classification system;
- d. biodiversity at *landscape* scales;
- e. soils inventory and maps, where available;
- f. access to *growth-and-yield modeling* capabilities;
- g. up-to-date maps or a geographic information system (GIS);
- h. recommended sustainable harvest levels for areas available for harvest; and
- i. a review of non-timber issues (e.g., recreation, tourism, pilot projects and economic incentive programs to promote water protection, carbon storage, *bioenergy feedstock* production, or *biological diversity conservation*, or to address climate-induced ecosystem change).

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes:

- a. Long-term resource analysis is based to 50 to 150 years.
- b. Forest inventory is collected on an on-going basis. Area staff and biometrician identify stands that need inventory based on age and need. Approximately 125,000 plots are taken annually. Inventory is being transitioned to lidar for the production of a 3D map.
- c. Data types in 4Trees includes Data types for health, landscape, ecological system, forest type, land type.
- d. Data types in 4Trees includes Data types for health, landscape, ecological system, forest type, land type.
- e. Soils layer is included in 4Trees.
- f. Woodstock with Stanley Analysis is used to develop growth-and-yield modeling.
- g. GIS is used to produce maps.
- h. AAC is calculated using Sustainable Timber Harvest Analysis. Volumes are reviewed and commented on by stakeholder, contractors, and interdisciplinary. Woodstock with Stanley Analysis is used to develop AAC.
- i. Non-timber issues are included in 4Trees.

**1.1.2. Documented current harvest trends fall within long-term sustainable levels identified in the forest management plan.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Long range planning varies from 50 to 150 years. DNR Timber Sales 10 Year History graph documents harvest trend for last 10 years. Harvest is trending below AAC. No issues identified.

**1.1.3. A forest inventory system and a method to calculate growth and yield.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Currently, forest inventory is collected on an on-going basis. Area staff and biometrician identify stands that need inventory based on age and need. Approximately 125,000 plots are taken annually.

Audit Notes: Inventory is being transitioned to lidar for the production of a 3D map. Change will reduce the number of stands sampled for survey.

AAC is calculated using Sustainable Timber Harvest Analysis. Volumes are reviewed and commented on by stakeholder, contractors, and interdisciplinary. Woodstock with Stanley Analysis is used to develop AAC.

**1.1.4. Periodic updates of forest inventory and recalculation of planned harvests to account for changes in growth due to productivity increases or decreases, including but not limited to: improved data, long-term drought, fertilization, climate change, changes in forest land ownership and tenure, or forest health.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Currently, forest inventory is collected on an on-going basis. Area staff and biometrician identify stands that need inventory based on age and need. Approximately 125,000 plots are taken annually.

Audit Notes: Inventory is being transitioned to lidar for the production of a 3D map. Change will reduce the number of stands sampled for survey.

AAC is calculated using Sustainable Timber Harvest Analysis. Volumes are reviewed and commented on by stakeholder, contractors, and interdisciplinary. Woodstock with Stanley Analysis is used to develop AAC.

**1.1.5. Documentation of forest practices (e.g., planting, fertilization and thinning) consistent with assumptions in harvest plans.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Timbered and non-timbered resource are an attribute in inventory – “timber access”.

Audit Notes: History of stand is being added to 4Trees (Modules for tracing stand activities). Forest practices for sites visited documented in SEL Stand Data Summary.

**Performance Measure 1.2. Program Participants shall not convert one forest cover type to another forest cover type, unless in justified circumstances.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicators below.

**1.2.1. Program Participants shall not convert one forest cover type to another forest cover type, unless the conversion:**

- a. Is in compliance with relevant national and regional policy and legislation related to land use and forest management; and
- b. Would not convert *native* forest types that are rare and ecologically significant at the *landscape* level or put any *native* forest types at risk of becoming rare; and
- c. Does not create significant long-term adverse impacts on Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value, old-growth forests, forests critical to threatened and endangered species, and special sites.

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC  
 Audit Notes: Conversion is not identified. Confirmed by interview and review of 2020 SFI Progress Report.

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**1.2.2. Where a *Program Participant* intends to convert another *forest cover type*, an assessment considers:**

- a. *Productivity* and *stand* quality conditions and impacts which may include social and economic values;
- b. Specific ecosystem issues related to the site such as invasive species, insect or disease issues, riparian *protection* needs and others as appropriate to site including regeneration challenges; and
- c. Ecological impacts of the conversion including a review at the site and *landscape* scale as well as consideration for any appropriate mitigation measures.

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC  
 Audit Notes: Conversion is not identified. Confirmed by interview and review of 2020 SFI Progress Report.

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**Performance Measure 1.3. *Program Participants* shall not have within the scope of their certification to this *SFI Standard*, forest lands that have been converted to non-forest land use. Indicator:**

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☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC  
 Audit Notes: Conversion is not identified. Confirmed by interview and review of 2020 SFI Progress Report.

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**1.3.1. Forest lands converted to other land uses shall not be certified to this *SFI Standard*. This does not apply to forest lands used for forest and *wildlife* management such as *wildlife* food plots or infrastructure such as forest roads, log processing areas, trails etc.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC  
 Audit Notes: Conversion is not identified. Confirmed by interview and review of 2020 SFI Progress Report.

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## Objective 2. Forest Health and Productivity

To ensure *long-term* forest *productivity*, carbon storage and *conservation* of forest resources through prompt *reforestation*, *afforestation*, *minimized* chemical use, soil *conservation*, and protecting forests from damaging agents.

**Performance Measure 2.1. *Program Participants* shall promptly reforest after final harvest.**

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☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC  
 Audit Notes: See Indicators below.

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**2.1.1. Documented *reforestation* plans, including designation of all harvest areas for either natural, planted or direct seeded regeneration and prompt *reforestation*, unless delayed for site-specific**

**environmental or forest health considerations or legal requirements, through *planting* within two years or two *planting* seasons, or by planned *natural regeneration* methods within five years.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: SEL Stand Data Summary includes reforestation plans. Witnessed for sites visited.

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**2.1.2. Clear criteria to judge adequate regeneration and appropriate actions to correct understocked areas and achieve acceptable species composition and stocking rates for *planting*, *direct seeding* and *natural regeneration*.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Method of sampling and criteria to judge adequate regeneration are provided in the

Audit Notes: Regeneration Monitoring – Procedures and Standards document of Minnesota DNR. Document was made available to the auditor. Discussed during site visits.

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**2.1.3. Plantings of exotic tree species should minimize risk to native ecosystems.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Native species confirmed during interview with Tim and list of species ordered for 2022

Audit Notes: planting.

Observed during site visits.

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**2.1.4. Protection of desirable or planned advanced *natural regeneration* during harvest.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: On site visits it was observed that natural regeneration is protected during harvest. No issues observed.

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**2.1.5. Afforestation programs that consider potential ecological impacts of the selection and *planting* of tree species in non-forested *landscapes*.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Interviews and 2020 SFI Progress Report confirm no afforestation.

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**Performance Measure 2.2. Program Participants shall *minimize* chemical use required to achieve management *objectives* while protecting employees, neighbors, the public and the environment, including *wildlife* and *aquatic habitats*.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicator below.

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**2.2.1. *Minimized* chemical use required to achieve management *objectives*.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Minnesota DNR's vegetation management approaches are consistent with minimized chemical use. "[Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry Pesticide Use Guidelines](#)" was updated in 2014.

Audit Notes:

DNR chemical use policies and practices are also outlined in Operational Order 59, which states "*Pest control practices on DNR administered lands and in public waters will employ integrated pest management techniques. Managers making pest management decisions*

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*will base all decisions on the safety of employees and the public, statutes, rules and regulations, ecological impacts, impacts to natural resources, economics and DNR management goals”.*

### **2.2.2. Use of least-toxic and narrowest-spectrum pesticides necessary to achieve management objectives.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Minnesota DNR’s vegetation management approaches are consistent with minimized chemical use. “[Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry Pesticide Use Guidelines](#)” was updated in 2014.

Audit Notes: DNR chemical use policies and practices are also outlined in Operational Order 59, which states “*Pest control practices on DNR administered lands and in public waters will employ integrated pest management techniques. Managers making pest management decisions will base all decisions on the safety of employees and the public, statutes, rules and regulations, ecological impacts, impacts to natural resources, economics and DNR management goals*”.

### **2.2.3. Use of pesticides registered for the intended use and applied in accordance with label requirements.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Written prescriptions for control of vegetation and pests are guided by Operational Order 59, which states “preference (is) given to non-pesticide management alternatives” and the “choice and methods of application will be those that will effectively control the pest species and minimize damage to non-target organisms and the environment.”

Audit Notes: In addition to the Operation Order, DNR details written strategies in the Site-level Guidelines, Forest Health Protection Guidelines, the SFRMP, and stand level prescriptions. Insect and disease assessments and strategies are developed for each subsection plan. Chemical listed as used were used for labeled purpose.

### **2.2.4. The World Health Organization (WHO) type 1A and 1B pesticides shall be prohibited, except where no other viable alternative is available.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

MN DNR submitted a list of pesticides used in the past year.

Audit Notes: Prescriptions are proposed by the prescription writer, reviewed by Silviculture Program Area Leads, and by the Regional Program Specialist.  
A CAS number search for the above products indicates that none are on the WHO list.

### **2.2.5. Use of pesticides banned under the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (2001) shall be prohibited.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

MN DNR submitted a list of pesticides used in the past year.

Audit Notes: Prescriptions are proposed by the prescription writer, reviewed by the Silviculture Program Area Leads, and by the Regional Program Specialist.

A CAS number search for the above products indicates that none are on the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (2001) list.

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**2.2.6. Use of *integrated pest management* where feasible.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Integrated pest management is required by law and by policy, with a focus on use of proper silviculture to maintain healthy, vigorous stands. Stands are generally properly

Audit Notes: stocked; assessments of forest health incidents determine causes before treatments are selected; salvage harvests are employed to minimize the spread of insect pests. Site visits to harvest did not identify any issues.

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**2.2.7. Supervision of forest chemical applications by state- or provincial-trained or certified applicators.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Interviews and document review confirm that Area and Regional Timber Program or Silviculture Specialists have training in pesticide use and effectiveness.

Audit Notes: For control of invasive plants, the applicators are either contractors with an applicator's license, or staff who have training but who are not necessarily certified. Witnessed license for Brad Maas, DNR Conservation Officer & Pilot.

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**2.2.8. Use of management practices appropriate to the situation, for example:**

- a. notification of adjoining landowners or nearby residents concerning applications and chemicals used;
- b. appropriate multilingual signs or oral warnings;
- c. control of public road access during and immediately after applications;
- d. designation of streamside and other needed buffer strips;
- e. use of positive shutoff and minimal-drift spray valves;
- f. aerial application of forest chemicals parallel to buffer zones to *minimize* drift;
- g. monitoring of water quality or safeguards to ensure proper equipment use and *protection* of streams, lakes and other water bodies;
- h. appropriate transportation and storage of chemicals;
- i. filing of required state or provincial reports; and/or
- j. use of methods to ensure *protection of threatened and endangered* species.

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Confirmed by interviews of Silviculture Program Foresters and by review of documents that most of these provisions are routinely applied. Discussed Herbicide Site Preparation and Release Treatments with personnel responsible for treatments, confirming

Audit Notes: requirements for training, following laws and labels, requirements for completing "Pesticide Application Record" form, and specific prescriptions (chemicals, target, and methods) and maps. No issues identified.

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**Performance Measure 2.3. *Program Participants* shall implement forest management practices to protect and maintain forest and soil *productivity*.**

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☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicators below.

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**2.3.1. Process to identify soils vulnerable to compaction, and use of appropriate methods, including the use of soil maps where available, to avoid excessive soil disturbance.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Soils are identified in the GIS layer. GIS layer is used for determining the season for harvesting or working conditions for silviculture operations.

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**2.3.2. Use of erosion control measures to *minimize* the loss of soil and site *productivity*.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Scattering of debris, water bars, and road turn outs are used to control erosion. Observed removal of crossings and stabilization following use. Gravel, rip rap, seeding, and hay was used to stabilize culverts. Observed during site visits.

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**2.3.3. Post-harvest conditions conducive to maintaining site *productivity* (e.g., limited rutting, retained down woody debris, *minimized* skid trails).**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Soil compaction, rutting, and erosion are controlled through sale supervision. Contracts and harvesting permits specify best management practices required to be followed. Sales are routinely limited to frozen ground harvesting in order to protect soil resources. Debris scattered on skid trails to stabilize. Snags retained during harvesting. No issues observed.

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**2.3.4. Retention of vigorous trees during partial harvesting, consistent with scientific silvicultural standards for the area.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Harvest units observed during audit demonstrated good tree selection and no significant damage to residual trees.

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**2.3.5. Criteria that address harvesting and site preparation to protect soil *productivity*.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Soil compaction, rutting, and erosion are controlled through sale supervision. Contracts and harvesting permits specify best management practices required to be followed. Sales are routinely limited to frozen ground harvesting in order to protect soil resources.

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**2.3.6. Road construction and skidding layout to *minimize* impacts to soil *productivity*.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: MN Site Level Guidelines address transportation system issues, and compliance is monitored throughout the state. Roads on state lands received high marks in the most recent BMP monitoring report (2012). There are two types of State Forest Roads: System Forest Roads and Minimum Maintenance Roads. Temporary use roads are often pushed in by a logger, and the timber buyer will bear the costs of building, maintaining the road during harvest, and closing out after harvest. Activities on system roads are assigned to a forester who tracks these roads, records repair and maintenance needs into a computer database, and then develops a work plan. In the Aitkin Area, 102 miles of state forest roads are maintained. Roads inspected were in good to excellent condition, and temporary use roads were properly closed out, with water bars and barriers to block unauthorized access.

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**Performance Measure 2.4. *Program Participants shall manage so as to protect forests from damaging agents, such as environmentally or economically undesirable wildfire, pests, diseases and *invasive exotic plants and animals*, to maintain and improve *long-term forest health, productivity and economic viability*.***

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicators below.

**2.4.1. *Program to protect forests from damaging agents.***

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Interviews confirm that foresters are trained in forest health and receive regular updates on forest pest issues and/or attend conferences and meetings on the subject.

Audit Notes: Stand health and site conditions are assessed during planning to develop prescriptions intended to promote forest health. Timber sales in areas with oak wilt are timed so that the disease won't be an issue. Stand prescriptions were reviewed for selected stands by reading the "SEL STAND DATA SUMMARY".

**2.4.2. *Management to promote healthy and productive forest conditions to *minimize susceptibility to damaging agents*.***

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Site visits confirm the forest management practices are developing and maintaining healthy forests. Stands observed were properly stocked to slightly over-stocked; overstocked stands are prioritized when developing stand exam lists.

Audit Notes: Bark beetles, Oak wilt, gypsy moth, and emerald ash borer are current key concerns, with measures in place to deal with each of these and other forest pests. These measures include monitoring and pest impact evaluation, preventative actions (sanitation cuttings) and salvage work.

**2.4.3. *Participation in, and support of, fire and pest prevention and control *programs*.***

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Minnesota DNR continues to provide leadership in fire control; fire programs are

Audit Notes: coordinated with local (rural) fire departments. Specialized fire-fighting equipment was seen in all units visited.

**Performance Measure 2.5. *Program Participants that deploy improved planting stock, including varietal seedlings, shall use best scientific methods.***

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicator below.

**2.5.1. *Program for appropriate research, testing, evaluation and deployment of *improved planting stock, including varietal seedlings*.***

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Reproductive materials used on state forest land are native Minnesota materials.

Audit Notes: Materials are collected and deployed based on seed zones described in Division of Forestry Policy 5 – Nursery Seed Source Control [nursery-seed-source-control-2016.pdf](#) In

the event a match between seed source and planting site is unavailable, the SFNP deploys seedlings from an adjacent seed zone. In some instances, the SFNP will purchase seedlings from other public or private nurseries because the SFNP cannot supply either the number of seedlings requested, or the species of seedlings requested. When this is the case, purchased seedlings are from the seed source of the planting site or from an adjacent source. Adjacency may cross statutory boundaries. For example, some plantings and sowings in southern Minnesota may be from a northern Iowa seed source. Interviews confirm only native species are used for regeneration on state forest land. Witnessed listing of species ordered for 2022. Checked the web to confirm that MNDNR is a member of the University of Minnesota, Minnesota Tree Improvement Cooperative (MTIC) which uses traditional selection and breeding techniques.

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### Objective 3. *Protection and Maintenance of Water Resources*

To protect the water quality of rivers, streams, lakes, *wetlands* and other water bodies through meeting or exceeding *best management practices*.

**Performance Measure 3.1. *Program Participants shall meet or exceed all applicable federal, provincial, state and local water quality laws, and meet or exceed best management practices developed under Canadian or U.S. Environmental Protection Agency–approved water quality programs.***

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☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicators below.

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**3.1.1. *Program to implement federal, state or provincial water quality best management practices during all phases of management activities.***

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

DNR has been committed to implementing the “Forestry Water Quality BMPs in Minnesota” since 1987, which are currently included with the MFRC Site-Level Forest Management Guidelines.

Audit Notes: The Division of Forestry maintains a BMP/Guideline Implementation Monitoring program which monitors and reports on the level of implementation of water quality BMPs as well as the MFRC Site-Level Forest Management guidelines. Statewide monitoring is completed over a 5-year period, with interim reports produced every other year. Site visits did not identify any BMP or water quality issues.

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**3.1.2. *Contract provisions that specify conformance to best management practices.***

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

The basic reference is Permit Condition #20 on DNR permit documents. Those conditions read as follows:

Audit Notes:

**#20. SITE-LEVEL FOREST MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES** - The persons affected by this permit shall comply with specific site-level forest management guidelines, biomass

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harvest guidelines and invasive species guidelines, as indicated on the permit form under special conditions, as indicated on supplemental page(s) titled Permit To Cut Timber Supplemental Terms and Conditions, if any, and as indicated on the attached Timber Appraisal Report. [M.S. § 89A.05, 103G.2212, 103G.2241(7)]

Witnessed a permit for sites visited.

### 3.1.3. Monitoring of overall *best management practices* implementation.

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Interviews confirm monitoring consists of 3 levels:

- Audit Notes:
- 1) The Sustainable Forest Resources Act requires the DNR to monitor the implementation of the site-level forest management guidelines (which include water quality BMPs) on all forest ownerships in Minnesota. The results of this monitoring are reported to the MFRC and the legislature. Copies of past monitoring reports are available on the MFRC Website. Confirmed by review of the *Timber Harvesting and Forest Management Guidelines on Public and Private Forest Land in Various Watersheds in Minnesota: 2016 and 2017 Monitoring Implementation Results* February 2018.
  - 2) DNR's timber sale program uses an inspection form to evaluate application of guidelines. Individual areas are responsible for inspecting 10% of sales per year or one inspection for each appraiser (whichever is higher), regions are to inspect two sales per area per year, and St. Paul is to inspect two sites (different areas) per region per year. Confirmed by review of the Timber Sale Inspection report for permit #B014220.
  - 3) 3) The "Permit Supervision Record" (NA-02136C) form allows a forester to track activities and communication with the operator on the timber sale site. The forester can document conditions and conversation with the operator about activities that would cause the timber sale to fail a BMP inspection.

### Performance Measure 3.2. *Program Participants shall implement water, wetland and riparian protection measures based on soil type, terrain, vegetation, ecological function, harvesting system, state best management practices (BMPs), provincial guidelines and other applicable factors.*

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicators below.

### 3.2.1. *Program addressing management and protection of rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands, other water bodies and riparian areas during all phases of management, including the layout and construction of roads and skid trails to maintain water reach, flow and quality.*

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Minnesota DNR has a detailed program for the protection of wetlands and watercourses. Foresters plan all harvests and treatments. These plans are reviewed by various specialists. Such protections are a priority during planning and implementation of operations. All foresters are trained to follow Minnesota's Site Level Guidelines. Specialists are available for consultation as needed. All activities are subject to interdisciplinary review.

The DNR is committed to the implementation of MFRC site-level forest management guidelines as the basis for protecting wetlands, lakes, streams and other water bodies as well as riparian areas during all phases of management.

The DNR is required to comply with all state, federal and local water quality regulations including but not limited to: MN DNR Protected Waters program, US Army Corps of Engineers 404 permit program, MN Wetlands Conservation Act (WCA), and MN PCA Storm Water Permit program. These regulations are implemented through any program that is sponsoring an activity potentially affecting these wetlands or waterbodies.

No issues were identified during site visits.

**3.2.2. Mapping of rivers, streams, lakes, *wetlands* and other water bodies as specified in state or provincial *best management practices* and, where appropriate, identification on the ground.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Identification & mapping of streams, lakes wetlands and other water bodies is conducted as needed on timber harvest or project maps as part of timber permits or project contracts. On the ground identification of these features is conducted during the pre-harvest review or pre-contract review on an as needed basis. Various sources of GIS data are used to identify the location of these features including: DNR public waters, National Wetlands Inventory, MN Trout streams layer etc. GIS data for these themes is readily available to all offices on DNR Quicklayers.

The DNR uses the Forest Resources Council's FRC's site-level guidelines as the basis for protecting and managing lands in and around these wetlands and waterbodies including riparian zones.

Confirmed mapping of rivers, streams, lakes, and other water bodies in GIS databases and for timber sale maps for sites visited.

**3.2.3. Document and implement plans to manage and protect rivers, streams, lakes, *wetlands*, other water bodies and *riparian areas*.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: The DNR is committed to the implementation of MFRC site-level forest management guidelines as the basis for protecting wetlands, lakes, streams, and other water bodies as well as riparian areas during all phases of management.

The DNR is required to comply with all state, federal and local water quality regulations including but not limited to: MN DNR Protected Waters program, US Army Corps of Engineers 404 permit program, MN Wetlands Conservation Act (WCA), and MN PCA Storm Water Permit program. These regulations are implemented through any program that is sponsoring an activity potentially affecting these wetlands or waterbodies.

Documentation of the implementation of these plans witnessed in timber sale documents including project maps, timber sale regulations, the FRC Guidelines tab in TSM, as well as formal permit documents when water quality regulation permits are acquired. The Guideline Monitoring Program completes representative statewide monitoring of timber harvests occurring on all ownerships on a watershed unit basis over a 5-year period, with interim reports produced every other year. No issues identified during site visits.

**3.2.4. Plans that address wet-weather events in order to maintain water quality (e.g., *forest inventory* systems, *wet-weather tracts*, definitions of acceptable operating conditions).**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

The Site –Level Forest Management Guideline outline what to do during wet weather events. It does recommend including the guidelines appropriate for each site as the operating standards for each project.

The Forest Information System (FORIST) program includes a menu of standardized statements that can be inserted in timber permits or project contracts. The project manager can also enter statements to address unique site-specific situations the standardized items do not fit. Ultimately, it's up to the forester to determine when and where harvesting can take place so as to remain within the forest management guidelines. The "Timber Appraisal Report" (S121) form is where foresters are allowed to add harvesting restrictions relating to wetness, steep slopes, and a host of other topics. Provided to auditor for sites remotely visited during remote site visits.

It is the responsibility of timber sale administrator to monitor site conditions on timber sales. Ongoing, frequent sale supervision is a key requirement for all DNR timber sales. If conditions occur during the course of the sale that result, or may result, in damage to the site that exceeds guidelines, the appraiser has the authority to shut down all activity on the sale until conditions improve. Confirmed during remote site visits that appraiser's utilize authority as necessary.

To minimize possible economic hardship to loggers as a result of enforcing these regulations, provisions exist within state statutes 90.041 and 90.193 to extend the length of the timber sale to accommodate such weather events. Discussed during remote site visits.

Timber Permits also include language related to a rutting policy to protect soil and water quality. #21. RUTTING METRIC - All harvest operations, including skidding and forwarding trails, will comply with the DNR Forest Land Rutting Guidelines - Posted at <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/forestry/timbersales/notices.html>

Confirmed during site visits and interviews. Rutting issues were not identified during site visits.

## Objective 4. Conservation of Biological Diversity

To manage the quality and distribution of *wildlife habitats* and contribute to the *conservation of biological diversity* by developing and implementing *stand-* and *landscape-*level measures that promote a diversity of types of *habitat* and successional stages, and the *conservation* of forest plants and animals, including *aquatic species, as well as threatened and endangered species, Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value, old-growth forests* and ecologically important sites.

### Performance Measure 4.1. Program Participants shall conserve biological diversity.

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicators below.

#### 4.1.1. Program to incorporate the *conservation of native biological diversity, including species, wildlife habitats* and ecological community types at *stand* and *landscape* levels.

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC



Audit Notes: Required information is included in the GIS. Diversity is reviewed during operation planning.

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**4.1.2. Development of criteria and implementation of practices, as guided by regionally based *best scientific information*, to retain *stand-level wildlife habitat* elements such as snags, stumps, mast trees, down woody debris, den trees and nest trees.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Stand level wildlife habitat elements were observed on field sites visited. Harvesting prescriptions contain requirement. Witnessed for sites visited.

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**4.1.3. Document diversity of *forest cover types* and age or size classes at the individual ownership or forest tenure level, and where credible data are available, at the *landscape* scale. Working individually or collaboratively to support diversity of *native forest cover types* and age or size classes that enhance *biological diversity* at the *landscape* scale.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Forest cover type is included in the GIS. Diversity of native forest cover types are reviewed during Sustainable Timber Harvest Analysis and Implementation and operation planning.

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**4.1.4. *Program Participants* shall participate in or incorporate the results of state, provincial, or regional *conservation* planning and priority-setting efforts to conserve biological diversity and consider these efforts in forest management planning. Examples of credible priority-setting efforts include state *wildlife* action plans, state forest action plans, relevant *habitat conservation* plans or provincial *wildlife* recovery plans.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Minnesota DNR has led the development of the Forest Action Plan and Wildlife Action Plans. Input was received from division and external stakeholders. Approval was received from the USFS and US Fish and Wildlife Service.

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**4.1.5. *Program* to address *conservation* of known sites with viable occurrences of significant species of concern.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: The Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS) conducts surveys, county-by-county, to search for rare plants, animals, and communities. Heritage databases are checked prior to harvests and land altering treatments. Confirmed during interviews, site visits, and review of GIS.

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**4.1.6. Identification and *protection* of *non-forested wetlands*, including bogs, fens and marshes, and *vernal pools* of ecological significance.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Minnesota DNR has a detailed program for the protection of wetlands and watercourses. Foresters plan all harvests and treatments. These plans are reviewed by various specialists. Such protections are a priority during planning and implementation of operations. All foresters are trained to follow Minnesota's Site Level Guidelines. Specialists are available for consultation as needed. All activities are subject to interdisciplinary review.

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The DNR is committed to the implementation of MFRC site-level forest management guidelines as the basis for protecting wetlands, lakes, streams and other water bodies as well as riparian areas during all phases of management.

The DNR is required to comply with all state, federal and local water quality regulations including but not limited to: MN DNR Protected Waters program, US Army Corps of Engineers 404 permit program, MN Wetlands Conservation Act (WCA), and MN PCA Storm Water Permit program. These regulations are implemented through any program that is sponsoring an activity potentially affecting these wetlands or waterbodies.

No issues were identified during site visits.

**4.1.7. Participation in *programs* and demonstration of activities as appropriate to limit the introduction, spread and impact of *invasive exotic plants and animals* that directly threaten or are likely to threaten *native* plant and animal communities.**

☐ NA      ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

DNR has a well-developed program for identifying, controlling, and monitoring invasive species. Responsibility is shared with the state Department of Agriculture and US Forest Service. DOA's [Plant Protection Division](#) is responsible for risk assessments related to invasive plants. The State [Invasive Species Strategy](#) categorizes risks. The department has an [Invasive Species Control Program](#). Operational Order 113 (9/21/2017) outlines invasive species control and prevention measures that occur on an annual basis. Buckthorn, barberry, and Oriental bittersweet are of most concern. Specific acres of treatment with herbicides have been reported to SCS Global.

The MNDNR program includes three Regional Forest Health Specialists. Area foresters call on health specialists as needed. The program conducts training and outreach in part through Forest Health Newsletters issued 4-6 times per year. Forest health issues of current concern include eastern larch beetle, spruce budworm, oak wilt, Heterobasidium Root Disease and Diplodia in red pine.

Audit Notes: Site visits included examples of invasive plant control. "Op. Order 113 [Invasive Species] is applicable to timber sales planning and management activities. Indeed, during the audit, the daily safety briefing in Area offices included special precautions about inadvertent transfer of seeds from one site to another.

FME reported the following figures for 2020:

- The Fish and Wildlife Division reported 4,119 acres of noxious weed control on 328 sites in FY20 on all lands, but this does not differentiate certified and non-certified lands.
- The Forestry Division reports that for FY2020, TIS survey acres statewide was: 41,883. TIS treatment acres statewide was 881.
- The TIS program accomplishments for FY20 were above the TIS targets in both survey and treatment acres. The FY20 target for survey acres was 31,989, and the target for TIS treatment acres was 640.

The Fish and Wildlife Division reported 3,349 acres of noxious weed control on 429 sites in FY21 on all lands; but this does not differentiate between certified and non-certified lands.

**4.1.8. Consider the role of natural disturbances, including the use of prescribed or natural fire where appropriate, and forest health threats in relation to *biological diversity* when developing forest management plans.**

☒ NA    ☐ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Fire was not used in 2020 for silviculture operations. Confirmed during interview.

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**Performance Measure 4.2. *Program Participants* shall protect threatened and endangered species, Forests with Exceptional Conservation Values (FECV) and old-growth forests.**

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☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicators below.

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**4.2.1. Program to protect threatened and endangered species.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Ecosystem Management and Protection Services Section in EWR includes the Endangered Species Coordinator, Nongame Wildlife Program, Regional Ecologists (guidance), and statewide Forest Ecologist.

EWR Strategic Information Service Section maintains the Natural Heritage Information System, with significant guidance from supervisors of the MBS Program and Conservation Management and Rare Resources Unit. Natural Heritage information is available to all DNR staff involved in forest management who receive and maintain training.

All field staff who appraise and administer timber sales and who submit silvicultural projects for contract work receive this training.

MN DNR is working with MI DNR and WI DNR to develop a Forest Bat Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) to provide ESA coverage for take of listed bats from forestry practices. The plan covers all three states. The Bat HCP will cover three species in

Audit Notes: Minnesota (northern long-eared bat, little brown bat, and tri-colored bat). Northern Long Eared Bat has federal guidance for foresters in Section 4D of the Endangered Species Act, but could be uplisted to endangered without a 4D rule. The other species are not listed at this time but are under status review by USFWS. HCP will include a landowner enrollment program to allow non-DNR landowners to gain coverage if they meet eligibility requirements, such as owning over 10,000 acres or land with known bat features. Consultants are coordinating the development and drafting of the plan. Stakeholders were given an opportunity to review and comment on the chapters of the HCP as they were being developed over the past few years. There will be a final public comment period when USFWS publishes the plan in the federal register (anticipated to occur in early 2022). The resulting Incidental Take Permit will be issued to each state DNR.

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**4.2.2. Program to locate and protect known sites of flora and fauna associated with viable occurrences of *critically imperiled* and *imperiled* species and communities also known as *Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value*. Plans for *protection* may be developed independently or collaboratively, and may include *Program Participant* management, cooperation with other stakeholders, or use of easements, *conservation* land sales, exchanges, or other *conservation* strategies.**



**4.3.1. Use of information such as existing natural heritage data or expert advice in identifying or selecting ecologically important sites for *protection*.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Interviews confirm that heritage databases are checked prior to harvests and land altering treatments. When there are “hits” foresters check with the Regional Forest Ecologist who often provides advice or obtains information from expert specialists and then helps foresters determine appropriate protection or management prescriptions.

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**4.3.2. Appropriate mapping, cataloging and management of identified ecologically important sites.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

The Minnesota Biological Survey program within the Ecological and Water Resources Division conducts surveys across the entire state.  
Confirmed that special sites are located on maps, listed in databases available to all staff  
Audit Notes: involved in planning and implementation of harvests, vegetation treatments, projects, etc., and when they are close to harvests, they are shown on the harvest plan maps provided to the buyers. Confirmed by review of sale documents and by field observations that special sites marked off (buffered out) of nearby timber harvests.

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**Performance Measure 4.4. *Program Participants* shall apply knowledge gained through research, science, technology and field experience to manage *wildlife habitat* and contribute to the *conservation of biological diversity*.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicators below.

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**4.4.1. Collection of information on *Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value* and other *biodiversity*-related data through *forest inventory* processes, mapping or participation in external *programs*, such as NatureServe, state or provincial heritage *programs*, or other credible systems. Such participation may include providing non-proprietary scientific information, time and assistance by staff, or in-kind or direct financial support.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

The Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS) conducts surveys, county-by-county, to search for rare plants, animals, and communities.  
Audit Notes: Heritage databases are checked prior to harvests and land altering treatments.  
Confirmed during interviews, site visits, and review of GIS.

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**4.4.2. A methodology to incorporate research results and field applications of *biodiversity* and ecosystem research into forest management decisions.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Methodology is included in operational planning. Plans are reviewed internally and externally.

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**Objective 5. *Management of Visual Quality* and Recreational Benefits**

To manage the visual impact of forest operations and provide recreational opportunities for the public.

**Performance Measure 5.1. *Program Participants shall manage the impact of harvesting on visual quality.***

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☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicators below.

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**5.1.1. Program to address visual quality management.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Aesthetic management is used around recreational trails and designated use areas, and

Audit Notes: along high use travel corridors. Aesthetics are discussed during the planning and approval process.

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**5.1.2. Incorporation of aesthetic considerations in harvesting, road, landing design and management, and other management activities where visual impacts are a concern.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

On site visits aesthetics were incorporated with recreation, and other uses of the

Audit Notes: property. Buffer strips and locating deck away from roads were some of the aesthetic tools incorporated. No issues identified.

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**Performance Measure 5.2. *Program Participants shall manage the size, shape and placement of clearcut harvests.***

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☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicators below.

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**5.2.1. Average size of clearcut harvest areas does not exceed 120 acres (50 hectares), except when necessary to meet regulatory requirements, achieve ecological *objectives* or to respond to *forest health* emergencies or other natural catastrophes.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Average clearcut harvest area as stated in the 2020 SFI Progress Report is 23 acres.

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**5.2.2. Documentation through internal records of clearcut size and the process for calculating average size.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Internal records documented in GIS Inventory. No issues identified.

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**Performance Measure 5.3. *Program Participants shall adopt a green-up requirement or alternative methods that provide for visual quality.***

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☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicator below.

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**5.3.1. Program implementing the *green-up requirement* or alternative methods.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Foresters use GPS unit for sale planning and for records. Included is recent imagery, harvest unit boundaries, and links to data regarding sale size and treatment. This information assists in managing visual issues including green-up. Confirmed during interviews and site visits.

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**5.3.2. Harvest area tracking system to demonstrate conformance with the *green-up requirement* or alternative methods.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Foresters use GPS unit for sale planning and for records. Included is recent imagery, harvest unit boundaries, and links to data regarding sale size and treatment. Confirmed during interviews and site visits.

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**5.3.3. Trees in clearcut harvest areas are at least 3 years old or 5 feet (1.5 meters) high at the desired level of stocking before adjacent areas are clearcut, or as appropriate to address operational and economic considerations, alternative methods to reach the *performance measure* are utilized by the Program Participant.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Confirmed by site visits and interviews. No issues identified.

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**Performance Measure 5.4. Program Participants shall support and promote recreational opportunities for the public.**

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☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicators below.

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**5.4.1. Provide recreational opportunities for the public, where consistent with forest management objectives.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Minnesota DNR promotes recreational use of the forests and regularly modifies timber management to better accommodate such use. Confirmed during interview and site visits.

Lands in the scope of the certificate are used for a range of recreation, with wildlife viewing, hunting and fishing the most common. Site visits confirmed signed and maintained trails of various types. Parking areas contained signboards. Minnesota State Forest Recreation Guide provides information on recreation opportunities in the state forests, including a list of all of the forests and the recreation available in each. The web site of the Minnesota DNR also provides accessible and useful information for citizens seeking to find recreational opportunities on these lands.

Minnesota DNR has conducted an economic assessment of the contribution of hunting and fishing to the MN economy. Witnessed documents.

## Objective 6. Protection of Special Sites

To manage lands that are geologically or *culturally important* in a manner that takes into account their unique qualities.

**Performance Measure 6.1. *Program Participants* shall identify *special sites* and manage them in a manner appropriate for their unique features.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicators below.

**6.1.1. Use of information such as existing natural heritage data, expert advice or stakeholder consultation in identifying or selecting *special sites* for protection.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

The Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS) conducts surveys, county-by-county, to search for rare plants, animals, and communities.

Audit Notes: Heritage databases are checked prior to harvests and land altering treatments.  
Confirmed during interviews, site visits, and review of GIS.

**6.1.2. Appropriate mapping, cataloging and management of identified *special sites*.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Special site status is identified and recorded for each stand where appropriate, as confirmed in printouts of sale planning or spray planning documents provided for all sites visited.

Audit Notes: Confirmed through review of procedures supported by interviews that special sites are located on maps, listed in databases available to all staff involved in planning and implementation of harvests, vegetation treatments and other projects.

Confirmed by review of sale documents and by field observations that special sites marked off (buffered out) of nearby timber harvests in cases where that was appropriate (some sites are managed in part with appropriate types of harvests).

## Objective 7. Efficient Use of Fiber Resources

To *minimize* waste and ensure the efficient use of fiber resources.

**Performance Measure 7.1. *Program Participants* shall employ appropriate forest harvesting technology and in-woods manufacturing processes and practices to *minimize* waste and ensure efficient utilization of harvested trees, where consistent with other *SFI Standard objectives*.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicator below.

**7.1.1. *Program* or monitoring system to ensure efficient utilization, which may include provisions to ensure:**

- a. management of harvest residue (e.g., slash, limbs, tops) considers economic, social and environmental factors (e.g., organic and nutrient value to future forests and the potential of increased fuels build-up) and other utilization needs;
- b. training or incentives to encourage loggers to enhance utilization;



- c. exploration of markets for underutilized species and low-grade wood and alternative markets (e.g., bioenergy markets); or
- d. periodic inspections and reports noting utilization and product separation.

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Loss and waste of forest products is minimized through sale supervision, and contract penalties if necessary. Minnesota DNR has a comprehensive system to address forest utilization which functions well to promote full use of harvested trees consistent with constraints designed to ensure sustainability. Practices and initiatives within each sub-indicator a. through d. are described below, based on information supplied by the department, interviews, and observations.

- Audit Notes:
- a. Guidelines for the management of harvest residue with additional requirements when harvesting biomass are incorporated into timber sale prescriptions. Foresters inspect sites regularly and enforce permit requirements for thorough utilization. There are provisions to charge fees when standards are not met. Some permits for commercial harvests are followed by firewood sales.
  - b. The department's annual timber sale inspection program includes a timber utilization category.
  - c. The Minnesota Logger Education Program includes biomass guideline training. Many DNR timber sales include biomass volumes available for purchase, and documents from several sales were reviewed and some sites were inspected. Other provisions to enhance utilization of biomass include:
    - Biomass volumes sold as appraised
    - Non-bid product, available for \$1.00 per ton (all sales)
    - Scaling option to combine biomass with roundwood products into one price.

Other information provided by the Minnesota DNR supports this requirement: Product separation is promoted and reported in various timber sale program systems including base price guidelines, Timber sale appraisals, and TSM reports by consumer, Area and by unit of measure, cords, MBF, pounds, pieces, acres, etc.

## Objective 8. Recognize and Respect *Indigenous Peoples'* Rights

To recognize and respect *Indigenous Peoples'* rights and traditional knowledge.

### Performance Measure 8.1. *Program Participants* shall recognize and respect *Indigenous Peoples'* rights.

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicator below.

#### 8.1.1. *Program Participants* will provide a written *policy* acknowledging a commitment to recognize and respect the rights of *Indigenous Peoples*.

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: The Department has two written policies in place that recognize and respect the rights of *Indigenous Peoples*:

- Executive Order 19-24 Affirms the Government-to-Government relationship between the State of Minnesota and the Minnesota Tribal Nations; Providing for Consultation, Coordination, and Cooperation.
- DNR Operational Order 129 Tribal Nations, provides for procedures for communication, coordination, and documentation of work between the DNR and Minnesota's 11 federally recognized Tribal Nations on coordinated conservation, resource protection, and land management activities.

Policies are discussed during Tribal Cultural Landscape & Natural Resource Management Training.

**Performance Measure 8.2. Program Participants with forest management responsibilities on public lands shall confer with affected Indigenous Peoples with respect to sustainable forest management practices.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicators below.

**8.2.1. Program that includes communicating with affected Indigenous Peoples to enable Program Participants to:**

- understand and respect traditional forest-related knowledge;
- identify and protect spiritually, historically, or culturally important sites;
- address the use of non-timber forest products of value to Indigenous Peoples in areas where Program Participants have management responsibilities on public lands; and
- respond to Indigenous Peoples' inquiries and concerns received.

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

DNR strategic plan includes working with tribes.

Tribal outreach goes outside of existing stakeholder contact. A specific program has been developed that exceeds stakeholders and public comments.

DNR began involving the tribes with planning in 1980 by state statute. Tribal relations staff was created from government staff down to state agencies. DNR has a tribal relations team composed of members from all divisions. Liaisons are required by statute. During 2020 the position of Tribal Liaison was created, and the Tribal Resource Team formed. Annual meetings are scheduled. Virtual meetings have been held. Covid has restricted the working of this team. Interviewed Bradley Harrington, MN DNR Tribal Liaison.

Audit Notes: Four Regional Directors and Tribal Liaison work with tribes.

Local contacts have been provided to tribes to work on local issues. DNR staff works with tribal staff on local issues. Discussed specific issues that have occurred demonstrating commitment to improving communication and working relationship with tribes.

The Department, through Operational Order 129, sets forth annual coordination frameworks for the various divisions that identifies the action or product, the expected meeting participants, and who the primary contacts are for both the state and the tribes.

The Department has required all program managers to attend Tribal State Relations Training which is developed by Minnesota Indian Affairs Council.

The Divisions of Forestry and Fish and Wildlife contracts with the Minnesota Historical Society for one FTE archaeologist meeting the Secretary of Interior's professional qualification standards. The DNR archaeologist ensures that the DNR is in compliance with the Minnesota Statute 138.40, which requires state agencies to consider cultural resources in their operations and development planning.

The Department works with tribes on a local level for the permitting of collection of non-timber products such as ash and birch bark and lodge poles.

The Department employs a Tribal Contact Tracking system to record contacts with tribes and to document emerging tribal issues, questions, or concerns.

**Performance Measure 8.3. *Program Participants* are encouraged to communicate with and shall respond to local *Indigenous Peoples* with respect to sustainable forest management practices on their private lands.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes:

**8.3.1. *Program Participants* are aware of traditional forest-related knowledge, such as known cultural heritage sites, the use of wood in traditional buildings and crafts, and flora that may be used in cultural practices for food, ceremonies or medicine.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Regional ecologist for rare resources works with tribes on small projects. Identification of sites is proprietary information. If sites are identified during the planning of silviculture activities, the location is identified but the type of site is not shared. Confirmed during interviews.

**8.3.2. Respond to *Indigenous Peoples'* inquiries and concerns received.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Informal working relationship is maintained with tribes. Most inquiries are around silviculture, access, and ecological work. There is a strong relationship for fire protection.

## Objective 9. Legal and Regulatory Compliance

To comply with applicable federal, provincial, state and local laws and regulations.

**Performance Measure 9.1. *Program Participants* shall comply with applicable federal, provincial, state and local forestry and related social and environmental laws and regulations.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicators below.

**9.1.1. Access to relevant laws and regulations in appropriate locations.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Observations confirm that the foresters carry the Minnesota Site Level Guidelines (SLG) Field Book.

Interviews confirm:

Forest management on Minnesota's state forests and wildlife management areas is founded in numerous state and federal statutes and rules. Different statutes and rules can apply differently to different land classifications. State statutes and rules governing the DNR are readily accessible to all employees on the agency's internal and external websites at [http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/aboutdnr/laws\\_treaties/index.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/aboutdnr/laws_treaties/index.html)

About half of the forest land certified under DNR's certificate is School Trust land. School trust land is established and given direction in the state constitution. Additional guidance is provided in 84.027, Subd. 18(a)(4) which was amended in 2012 to strengthen the fiduciary guidance for the trust.

Policies are maintained on-line, through emails, webinars, and newsletters.

### 9.1.2. System to achieve compliance with applicable federal, provincial, state, or local laws and regulations.

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Many aspects of compliance relate to the Minnesota Site Level Guidelines (SLG). All foresters are trained in the SLGs and copies of the full guidelines or the "Quick Reference Field Guide" are found in forester's trucks.

The Department is also responsible for many aspects of law enforcement on its lands and many foresters have credentials in law enforcement, including Area Foresters and Area

Audit Notes: Timber Program Foresters.

An interdisciplinary process exists for setting up all timber harvests and significant projects, reviewing them internally, and documenting their approval. This process includes the involvement of the most experienced personnel in projects, helping to ensure compliance.

For challenging issues, the department has legal staff.

### 9.1.3. Demonstration of commitment to legal compliance through *available regulatory action information*.

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Interviews and website search confirm there have been no regulatory or other

Audit Notes: enforcement actions against the DNR alleging non-compliance by the agency with applicable, federal, state, or local forestry or social and environmental laws.

### Performance Measure 9.2. *Program Participants shall take appropriate steps to comply with all applicable social laws at the federal, provincial, state and local levels in the country in which the Program Participant operates.*

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicators below.

### 9.2.1. Written *policy* demonstrating commitment to comply with social laws, such as those covering civil rights, equal employment opportunities, anti-discrimination and anti-harassment measures, workers' compensation, *Indigenous Peoples'* rights, workers' and communities' right to know, prevailing wages, workers' right to organize, and occupational health and safety.

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Witnessed on-line Human Resources Policies (July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2021).

Reviewed and discussed that Minnesota DNR has adopted the following written policy statements addressing these issues, based on a list provided in response to a request:

- Audit Notes:
- a. MNDNR Commissioner's and Deputy Commissioners Statement of Commitment.
  - b. MNDNR Policy prohibiting discrimination and harassment.
  - c. MNDNR Reasonable Accommodation Policy
  - d. MNDNR Workplace Behaviors Policy.
  - e. MNDNR Equal Opportunity, Equal Employment Opportunity, and Alternative Format Policy Statements for MNDNR publications.
  - f. MNDNR Public Notice of Non-Discrimination and Complaint/Request Procedures under Title VI, Title IX, Section 504 of the Rehabilitations Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title II of the ADA, and the Minnesota Human Rights Act.
  - g. State of Minnesota Zero Tolerance for Sexual Harassment Policy.
  - h. Operational Order 96 – DNR Safety program
  - i. DNR Safety Manual covers the rules and regulations of the DNR Safety Program (it is currently being revised to include internal controls of the procedures)
  - j. Workers Compensation is carried out by the direction of the Department of Administration.

Minnesota DNR is also subject to state-wide human resources and labor relations policies addressing the identified topics.

New employees receive training on these policies immediately upon starting employment.

Reviewed and discussed operation of the safety program and safety training for employees, and contractors.

Commitment for compliance with social laws is demonstrated on Minnesota DNR website – Careers.

**9.2.2. Forestry enterprises will respect the rights of workers and labor representatives in a manner that encompasses the intent of the International Labor Organization (ILO) core conventions.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Minnesota DNR Response to request for evidence: "The DNR has not received information from outside stakeholders with regards to concerns or conformance pertaining to their

Audit Notes: employee relations with regards to ILO Core conventions 87, 98, and 111. Public employee labor relations are governed by the Public Employee Labor Relations Act ("PELRA"), Minn. Stat. §§ 179A.01-.25."

## **Objective 10. Forestry Research, Science and Technology**

To invest in *forestry* research, science and technology, upon which sustainable forest management decisions are based and broaden the awareness of *climate change* impacts on forests, *wildlife* and *biological diversity*.

**Performance Measure 10.1. *Program Participants* shall individually and/or through cooperative efforts involving *SFI Implementation Committees*, associations or other partners provide in-kind support or funding for forest research to improve *forest health, productivity* and sustainable management of forest resources, and the environmental benefits and performance of forest products.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicators below.

**10.1.1. Financial or in-kind support of research to address questions of relevance in the region of operations. Examples could include, but are not limited to, areas of forest *productivity*, water quality, biodiversity, community issues, or similar areas which build broader understanding of the benefits and impacts of forest management.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Minnesota DNR is involved in a number of research projects both internally and through outside groups. Several projects have been a partnership with the University of Minnesota – Experimental Forest. Projects include specific species and management for healthy forest, carbon, drought, wildfire, and climate change.

Projects listed in the 2020 SFI Progress Report include the following:

- **Project Name** : Informing Winter Habitat Management Prescriptions and Population Vital Rate Estimates for White-tailed Deer in Northcentral and Northeastern Minnesota  
Academic Organizations : University of Minnesota  
Research Organizations : Forest Wildlife Research Group
- **Project Name** : Spruce Grouse - Sentinels for Boreal Connectivity  
Academic Organizations : University of MN  
Research Organizations : The Raptor Center
- **Project Name** : What's Alive? Understanding the relationship between eastern larch beetle and tamarack regeneration  
Academic Organizations : University of Minnesota  
Government Organizations : USDA Forest Service
- **Project Name** : Extent and Recent Changes (2003-2018) of Minnesota's Old Forests  
Academic Organizations : University of Minnesota
- **Project Name** : Behavioral responses of American black bears to reduced natural foods: home range size and seasonal migrations  
Academic Organizations : University of Minnesota

Audit Notes:

**10.1.2. Research on genetically engineered trees via *forest tree biotechnology* shall adhere to all applicable federal, state, and provincial regulations and international protocols ratified by the United States and/or Canada depending on jurisdiction of management.**

☒ NA ☐ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Confirmed during interview.

**Performance Measure 10.2. *Program Participants* shall individually and/or through cooperative efforts involving *SFI Implementation Committees*, associations or other partners develop or use state, provincial or regional analyses in support of their *sustainable forestry programs*.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicators below.

**10.2.1. Participation, individually and/or through cooperative efforts involving *SFI Implementation Committees* and/or associations at the national, state, provincial or regional level, in the development or use of some of the following:**

- a. regeneration assessments;
- b. growth and drain assessments;
- c. *best management practices* implementation and conformance;
- d. *biodiversity conservation* information for family forest owners; and
- e. social, cultural or economic benefit assessments.

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Minnesota DNR conducts and participates in surveys for regeneration, growth & drain,

Audit Notes: BMPs, and biodiversity conservation to landowners. Confirmed during interviews and on Minnesota DNR website.

**Performance Measure 10.3. *Program Participants* shall individually and/or through cooperative efforts involving *SFI Implementation Committees*, associations or other partners broaden the awareness of *climate change* impacts on forests, *wildlife* and *biological diversity*.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicators below.

**10.3.1. Where available, monitor information generated from regional climate models on *long-term forest health, productivity and economic viability*.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Governor of Minnesota has recently implemented an interagency climate change initiative charged by the Climate Change Subcabinet to develop a Climate Action Framework to help guide and accelerate action on climate mitigation, adaptation and resiliency in Minnesota.

Audit Notes: Part of that effort involves the public engagement that is underway via topic-specific meetings with stakeholder groups and more general engagement via the Our Minnesota Climate web site. Another element involves collaboration and government-to-government consultation with Tribal Nations in Minnesota. Also included is work with the Governor's Advisory Council on Climate Change

**10.3.2. *Program Participants* are knowledgeable about *climate change* impacts on *wildlife*, *wildlife habitats* and *conservation of biological diversity* through international, national, regional or local programs.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

## Audit Notes:

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## Objective 11. Training and Education

To improve the implementation of *sustainable forestry* practices through appropriate training and education *programs*.

**Performance Measure 11.1. Program Participants shall require appropriate training of personnel and contractors so that they are competent to fulfill their responsibilities under the SFI 2015-2019 Forest Management Standard.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicators below.

**11.1.1. Written statement of commitment to the SFI 2015-2019 Forest Management Standard communicated throughout the organization, particularly to facility and woodland managers, and field foresters.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Statement of commitment witnessed on Minnesota DNR website, Forest Certification-

Audit Notes: DNR's Commitment to Forest Certification. Commitment is available to all employees and outside parties.

**11.1.2. Assignment and understanding of roles and responsibilities for achieving SFI 2015-2019 Forest Management Standard objectives.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Interviews and site visits confirm employees are very knowledgeable and understand roles and responsibilities for silviculture operations and SFI requirements.

**11.1.3. Staff education and training sufficient to their roles and responsibilities.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Witnessed and discussed various trainings for certification, silviculture, and other forest related

Audit Notes: topics. Witnessed training records of selected personnel. Interviews and site visits. confirm staff is very knowledgeable for roles and responsibilities.

**11.1.4. Contractor education and training sufficient to their roles and responsibilities.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC



Audit Notes: Logging contractors visited during site visits were verified on MLEP website. Other contractor education and training was verified during interviews and/or certification cards.

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**11.1.5. Program Participants shall have written agreements for the use of *qualified logging professionals* and/or *certified logging professionals* (where available) and/or *wood producers* that have completed training programs and are recognized as *qualified logging professionals*.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Loggers must be registered with the DNR to purchase timber. Registration is verified prior to buying timber. Confirmed during interviews for sites visited. Interviews with logging contractors confirm that they are trained. Per interviews with FME staff, loggers must submit evidence of training and qualification that they meet Qualified Logger Professional status via an online system so that the FME can verify trainings, insurance, and other required records before loggers can begin work.

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**Performance Measure 11.2. Program Participants shall work individually and/or with *SFI Implementation Committees*, logging or forestry associations, or appropriate agencies or others in the forestry community to foster improvement in the professionalism of *wood producers*.**

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☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicators below.

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**11.2.1. Participation in or support of *SFI Implementation Committees* to establish criteria and identify delivery mechanisms for *wood producer* training courses and periodic continuing education that address:**

- a. awareness of sustainable forestry principles and the SFI program;
- b. best management practices, including streamside management and road construction, maintenance and retirement;
- c. reforestation, invasive exotic plants and animals, forest resource conservation, aesthetics and special sites;
- d. awareness of responsibilities under the U.S. Endangered Species Act, the Canadian Species at Risk Act, and other measures to protect wildlife habitat (e.g., Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value);
- e. awareness of rare forested natural communities as identified by provincial or state agencies, or by credible organizations such as NatureServe, The Nature Conservancy, etc.
- f. logging safety;
- g. U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) regulations, wage and hour rules, and other provincial, state and local employment laws;
- h. transportation issues;
- i. business management;
- j. public policy and outreach; and
- k. awareness of emerging technologies.

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Interviews and MLEP website confirm requirements are in training program.

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**11.2.2. The SIC-approved wood producer training programs shall have a continuing education component with coursework that supports the current training programs, safety and the principles of sustainable forestry.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Interviews and MLEP website confirm requirements are in training program.

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**11.2.3. Participation in or support of SFI Implementation Committees to establish criteria for recognition of logger certification programs, where they exist, that include:**

- a. completion of *SFI Implementation Committee* recognized logger training programs and meeting continuing education requirements of the training program;
- b. independent in-the-forest verification of conformance with the logger certification program standards;
- c. compliance with all applicable laws and regulations including responsibilities under the U.S. Endangered Species Act, the Canadian Species at Risk Act and other measures to protect wildlife habitat;
- d. use of *best management practices* to protect water quality;
- e. logging safety;
- f. compliance with acceptable *silviculture* and utilization standards;
- g. aesthetic management techniques employed where applicable; and
- h. adherence to a management or harvest plan that is site specific and agreed to by the forest landowner.

☒ NA ☐ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Minnesota DNR is involved on the SFI Implementation Committee and is an active participant and board member of the Minnesota Loggers Education Program (MLEP). There is no logger certification program in Minnesota.

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## Objective 12. Community Involvement and Landowner Outreach

To broaden the practice of *sustainable forestry* through public outreach, education, and involvement, and to support the efforts of *SFI Implementation Committees*.

**Performance Measure 12.1. Program Participants shall support and promote efforts by consulting foresters, state, provincial and federal agencies, state or local groups, professional societies, conservation organizations, Indigenous Peoples and governments, community groups, sporting organizations, labor, universities, extension agencies, the American Tree Farm System® and/or other landowner cooperative programs to apply principles of sustainable forest management.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicators below.

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**12.1.1. Support, including financial, for efforts of SFI Implementation Committees.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Review of accounting edger data confirm that DNR has paid the 2021 SIC dues.

Audit Notes: Email from Rick Horton, Vice President of Forest Policy, Minnesota Forest Industries confirms the Minnesota DNR is actively involved in the Minnesota SFI State Implementation Committee, represented both by Certification Consultant Tim Beyer and by Project Learning Tree coordinator Laura Duffey. Duffy's work on incorporating indigenous culture, language and ways of learning into 6 PLT lesson plans was instrumental in the group winning the SFI SIC of the Year award for 2020. Like all SFI certificate holders DNR contributes \$1,000 annually to the SIC budget to fund outreach activities.

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**12.1.2. Support, individually or collaboratively, education and outreach to forest landowners describing the importance and providing implementation guidance on:**

- a. best management practices;
- b. reforestation and afforestation;
- c. visual quality management;
- d. conservation objectives, such as critical wildlife habitat elements, biodiversity, threatened and endangered species, and Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value;
- e. management of harvest residue (e.g., slash, limbs, tops) considers economic, social, environmental factors (e.g., organic and nutrient value to future forests) and other utilization needs;
- f. control of invasive exotic plants and animals;
- g. characteristics of *special sites*; and
- h. reduction of wildfire risk.

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

MN DNR participates in numerous programs with outside agencies and associations:

- Tree City USA for Community through AFF
- Grant programs are available for education and administration of EAB programs. Grants funded by legislature. All forms of media are used - billboards, radio.
- Arbor Day Celebration with urban forest management and carbon
- School forest programs – stewardship plans, planting, bud capping, all aspects of forestry. All age groups are involved. Programs include FFA.
- SFIA rebate program - Easement programs through Forest Legacy, Forest for Future Easements
- Partner with MN Forestry Association – “Boots in the Woods” help in management through Extension Service.

Audit Notes:

The Minnesota DNR implements numerous programs directed at private forest landowners. Interviews and review of web sites showed strong conformance, including substantial ongoing support for the Sustainable Forests Education Cooperative where field days and workshops frequently involve visits to DNR Forestry harvest sites. Example given was for Aiken County.

Confirmed during interviews:

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The DNR has a well-established **Cooperative Forest Management Program** that has directly assisted thousands of private woodland owners with forest management planning and technical forestry assistance. Through its public outreach programs, including **Project Learning Tree** and **School Forest Programs**, and ongoing public information efforts at county fairs, local field days, and state level events, the DNR actively promotes the value and benefits of landowners seeking and using the services of qualified resource professionals.

In addition, the DNR seeks and continues to receive state funding to pay Soil and Water Conservation District, private consulting, and other contract foresters who meet strict professional criteria to provide forest stewardship management plans to interested landowners.

The Cooperative Forest Management (CFM) Unit within the Division of Forestry is where much of the outreach and education work to landowners occurs. The CFM Unit is comprised of the following programs: Private Forest Management (PFM), Urban & Community Forestry (U&CF), Guideline Monitoring and Forest Legacy.

The PFM program assists private forest landowners with the management of their forests. The program uses the Forest Stewardship program and the standards and guidelines set by the USFS. When a landowner requests assistance and receives a forest management plan, all the areas listed in a-h are considered by the plan writer, as well as several other elements including rare or endangered natural and cultural features. The PFM program then uses federal and state cost incentive programs to assist the landowner in implementing forestry practices that are recommended in the forest management plan. Annually, the PFM program uses federal core fund dollars for outreach and educational grants to various partners. Through these grants, which are guided by the Forest Stewardship Committee, we are able to develop workshops, training and other outreach tools and documents for private landowners and practitioners. The Forest Stewardship Committee provides sidebars with the funding when there is a need to address specific issues such as new invasive species threats.

The U&CF program within the Division is where we attempt to educate urban area landowners and communities with urban forest issues. This is also where we take the opportunity to address urban sprawl and its' effect on the transition zone from urban to rural areas of the State. The U&CF and PFM programs work closely together and utilize the same field forestry staff so that a good understanding of how they link together is not lost.

The Forest Legacy program (FLP) utilizes state and federal funding to identify high priority private forest lands and apply perpetual easements. This program also works closely with the PFM program and staff. The PFM program can use FLP as one of the many tools in the toolbox to assist landowners and the conservation needs of the Department.

The Guideline Monitoring (GM) program has established best management practices that are used by PFM staff when assisting private landowners with timber harvest or other forestry activities. The GM program also conducts annual assessments of timber harvest operations and the implementation of best management practices across the state and across all land ownerships. The GM program then takes the

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information gained in the monitoring and conducts outreach and education to loggers as well as forest landowners to ensure better implementation where trends suggest they are needed.”

**12.1.3. Participation in efforts to support or promote *conservation* of managed forests through voluntary market-based incentive *programs* such as current-use taxation *programs*, *Forest Legacy Program* or *conservation* easements.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Interview confirms that DNR uses a wide range of state and federal cost-share and incentive programs to meet the goal of assuring services for family forest landowners which encourage sustainable forest management and diverse and healthy forests for generations to come. The program uses several cost share and easement programs when assisting landowners. The program is also heavily involved in two programs associated with tax relief or payments based on property taxes. The 2C Managed Forest Land Classification provides up to 35% property tax relief. The Sustainable Forestry Incentives Act (SFIA) provides annual incentive payments. Both programs require a forest management plan approved by the Division of Forestry. Both programs require that the landowner follow the plan recommendations. The Forest Legacy Program has protected over 350,000 acres of private forest lands through purchasing and monitoring of conservation easements.

**Performance Measure 12.2. *Program Participants* shall support and promote, at the state, provincial or other appropriate levels, mechanisms for public outreach, education and involvement related to sustainable forest management.**

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicators below.

**12.2.1. Periodic educational opportunities promoting *sustainable forestry*, such as**

- a. field tours, seminars, websites, webinars or workshops;
- b. educational trips;
- c. self-guided forest management trails;
- d. publication of articles, educational pamphlets or newsletters; or
- e. support for state, provincial, and local *forestry* organizations and soil and water *conservation* districts.

☐ NA ☒ Conformance ☐ Exceeds ☐ O.F.I. ☐ Major NC ☐ Minor NC

The Minnesota DNR implements numerous programs directed at private forest landowners. Interviews and review of web sites showed strong conformance, including substantial ongoing support for the Sustainable Forests Education Cooperative where field days and workshops frequently involve visits to DNR Forestry harvest sites.

Audit Notes: Confirmed during interviews:

The DNR has a well-established **Cooperative Forest Management Program** that has directly assisted thousands of private woodland owners with forest management planning and technical forestry assistance. Through its public outreach programs, including **Project Learning Tree** and **School Forest Programs**, and ongoing public

information efforts at county fairs, local field days, and state level events, the DNR actively promotes the value and benefits of landowners seeking and using the services of qualified resource professionals.

In addition, the DNR seeks and continues to receive state funding to pay Soil and Water Conservation District, private consulting, and other contract foresters who meet strict professional criteria to provide forest stewardship management plans to interested landowners.

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The Forest Legacy program (FLP) utilizes state and federal funding to identify high priority private forest lands and apply perpetual easements. This program also works closely with the PFM program and staff. The PFM program can use FLP as one of the many tools in the toolbox to assist landowners and the conservation needs of the Department.

The Guideline Monitoring (GM) program has established best management practices that are used by PFM staff when assisting private landowners with timber harvest or other forestry activities. The GM program also conducts annual assessments of timber harvest operations and the implementation of best management practices across the state and across all land ownerships. The GM program then takes the information gained in the monitoring and conducts outreach and education to loggers as well as forest landowners to ensure better implementation where trends suggest they are needed."

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**Performance Measure 12.3. *Program Participants* shall establish, at the state, provincial, or other appropriate levels, procedures to address concerns raised by loggers, consulting foresters, employees, unions, the public or other *Program Participants* regarding practices that appear inconsistent with the *SFI Standard principles and objectives*. Indicators:**

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**12.3.1. Support for *SFI Implementation Committees* (e.g., toll-free numbers and other efforts) to address concerns about apparent nonconforming practices.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: The Department supports the SFI-SIC efforts to provide an opportunity for the public, industry, or other program participants to voice concerns over practices that may be inconsistent with the SFI 2015-2019 Forest Management Standard. There is a complaint page housed on the Minnesota Forest Resources Council website.

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**12.3.2. Process to receive and respond to public inquiries. *SFI Implementation Committees* shall submit data annually to *SFI Inc.* regarding concerns received and responses.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Interview confirms that DNR is a large public agency, and its mission, policies, and statutes require input from stakeholders, tribes, other agencies, and customers. The Department invites stakeholders and agencies to many of its planning and operational activities efforts, such as Section Forest Resource Management Planning. The Division of Forestry invites stakeholders and agencies to comment on pesticide application projects, forest road construction projects, and harvesting timber from state lands. The DNR also has multiple ways that the people can voice their concerns.

Interviews confirm roundtable sessions, public input sessions, surveys, and websites where people can share their views.

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## **Objective 13. *Public Land Management Responsibilities***

To participate and implement sustainable forest management on *public lands*.

**Performance Measure 13.1. *Program Participants* with forest management responsibilities on *public lands* shall participate in the development of *public land* planning and management processes.**

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☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicators below.

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**13.1.1. Involvement in *public land* planning and management activities with appropriate governmental entities and the public.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Interview confirms that DNR is a large public agency, and its mission, policies, and statutes require input from stakeholders, tribes, other agencies, and customers. The Department invites stakeholders and agencies to many of its planning and operational activities efforts, such as Section Forest Resource Management Planning. The Division of Forestry

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invites stakeholders and agencies to comment on pesticide application projects, forest road construction projects, and harvesting timber from state lands. The DNR also has multiple ways that the people can voice their concerns.

Interviews confirm roundtable sessions, public input sessions, surveys, and websites where people can share their views. DNR website is used for receiving comments on a number of plans.

- Sustainable Timber Harvest Plan receives many comments from public. Stakeholders have shown interest in the implementation. Plans are for review of accomplishments after year 5.
- Annual harvest plans by stand are posted on the DNR website for comments. Comments are forwarded to the Area to respond directly to the comments. Neighbors ask about plans for adjacent stands. Local persons ask about property they use for recreation. Witnessed example of receipt of comment and response.
- Forest View portal is used to guide the public to comment on individual stands.
- Major policy development has a 30-day stakeholder review period. Examples include HCVF guideline management and old growth designation and management.
- Minnesota DNR has a stakeholder advisory group composed of representatives from all user groups and major stakeholders. Meetings to discuss and analyze Forest Management Plan, projects of public significance, leadership to design stakeholder approach to gain optimal comments, and HCV for bats.
- GovDelivery Platform is used for communication and stakeholder engagement. Communication is based on a list of subscribers.

**13.1.2. Appropriate contact with local stakeholders over forest management issues through state, provincial, federal or independent collaboration.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Interviews confirm that the DNR participates in a number of collaborative efforts such as the Minnesota Forest Resources Council, Minnesota Forest Resources Partnership, Great Lakes Fire Compact (which includes the Canadian Province of Ontario), National Association of State Foresters, Midwest-Northeastern Area Alliance of State Foresters, Minnesota Logger Education Program, Minnesota Master Logger Program, Natural Resources Conservation Service State Technical Team, just to name a few. The DNR also meets with customer and user groups like Minnesota Forest Industries, Minnesota Soil and Water Conservation District Forestry Association, Forest Stewardship Committee, Grand Rapids and Bemidji Forestry Affairs Councils, Minnesota Association of County Land Commissioners, Minnesota Shade Tree Advisory Committee, environmental groups, and many others. The DNR also works closely with the University of Minnesota and the Extension Service. DNR has also taken opportunities when available to provide technical review and input to County and USFS forest management plans. DNR also participates with a number of non-timber groups such as the National Wild Turkey Federation, and Ruffed Grouse Society. Specific programs are in place for tribal outreach. Confirmed and discussed during Focus Group Sessions.



## Objective 14. Communications and Public Reporting

To increase transparency and to annually report progress on conformance with the *SFI Forest Management Standard*.

**Performance Measure 14.1. A *Program Participant* shall provide a summary audit report, prepared by the *certification body*, to *SFI Inc.* after the successful completion of a certification, recertification or surveillance audit to the *SFI 2015-2019 Forest Management Standard*.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicator below.

**14.1.1. The summary audit report submitted by the *Program Participant* (one copy must be in English), shall include, at a minimum,**

- a. a description of the audit process, *objectives* and scope;
- b. a description of substitute *indicators*, if any, used in the audit and a rationale for each;
- c. the name of *Program Participant* that was audited, including its *SFI* representative;
- d. a general description of the *Program Participant's* forestland included in the audit;
- e. the name of the *certification body* and *lead auditor* (names of the *audit team* members, including *technical experts* may be included at the discretion of the *audit team* and *Program Participant*);
- f. the dates the audit was conducted and completed;
- g. a summary of the findings, including general descriptions of evidence of conformity and any nonconformities and corrective action plans to address them, opportunities for improvement, and exceptional practices; and
- h. the certification decision.

The summary audit report will be posted on the *SFI Inc.* website ([www.sfiprogram.org](http://www.sfiprogram.org)) for public review.

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Witnessed 2015 Recertification and 2020 Surveillance Audits Public Summary Reports on SFI, Inc. website and contain required information.

**Performance Measure 14.2. *Program Participants* shall report annually to *SFI Inc.* on their conformance with the *SFI 2015-2019 Forest Management Standard*.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicators below.

**14.2.1. Prompt response to the *SFI* annual progress report survey.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Witnessed 2020 Annual Progress Report. Verified that report was promptly submitted on 3/25/21.

**14.2.2. Record keeping for all the categories of information needed for SFI annual progress report surveys.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Review of the 2020 Annual Progress Report confirms record keeping is adequate and the data is correctly entered.

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**14.2.3. Maintenance of copies of past survey reports to document progress and improvements to demonstrate conformance to the SFI 2015-2019 Forest Management Standard.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: Interview and document review confirm that the Department maintains digital copies of past survey reports to document progress and improvements.

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**Objective 15. Management Review and Continual Improvement**

To promote continual improvement in the practice of *sustainable forestry* by conducting a management review and monitoring performance.

**Performance Measure 15.1. *Program Participants* shall establish a management review system to examine findings and progress in implementing the SFI 2015-2019 Forest Management Standard, to make appropriate improvements in programs, and to inform their employees of changes.**

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☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Audit Notes: See Indicators below.

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**15.1.1. System to review commitments, programs and procedures to evaluate effectiveness.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Systems to review commitments, programs, and procedures include:

- Continuation of a Forest Certification Implementation Team (FCIT) to review commitments to the SFI Standard and Department Policies and respond to audits.
- An Internal Program Review team to assess conformance to the SFI and FSC Standards.
- A Forest Resources Issues Team (FRIT).
- Division Management Teams, including program, policy and procedure reviews.
- DNR Conservation Agenda and Governor's Department Results Performance Indicators.

Audit Notes:

- Annual or periodic program workshops (Timber Sales, Forest Development, Timber Appraisal, CFM, Wildlife Training Session and Meeting, etc.).
  - Area and regional field, and central office program reviews.
  - A DNR process (via Statewide Interdisciplinary Review Service) to review and update operational orders.
  - A Division of Forestry process to review and update division circular letters and manuals.
  - A Forestry/Wildlife/Ecological Services coordination policy.
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**15.1.2. System for collecting, reviewing, and reporting information to management regarding progress in achieving *SFI 2015-2019 Forest Management Standard objectives and performance measures*.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Systems for collecting, reviewing, and reporting information include:

- Audit Notes:
- The Internal Program Review team annually presents findings from its internal audits to departments leadership.
  - Division of Forestry annual work planning and accomplishment reporting process
  - The monitoring program under M.S.§89A.07, subd.1. Forest resource trends and conditions (FIA, FIM, pest surveys, etc.)
  - The monitoring program under M.S.§89A.07, subd.2 and 3. Practices, compliance and effectiveness monitoring (i.e., FRC site-level guidelines implementation monitoring, including field audit reports)
  - FORIST development and implementation (FIM, SRM, site management documentation and objective reporting, forest development project tracking, forest inventory update tracking)
  - Monitoring SFRMP implementation (progress towards SFRMP goals/targets, using FORIST SRM objectives, SEL, and other means)
  - DNR timber sales reporting system
  - Timber sale inspections, regeneration survival checks, etc.
  - Electronic 121 checkoffs of FRC guideline application
  - Division training records (ECS training, FRC guidelines, timber sale design, etc.).

The Forest Certification Implementation Team (FCIT) also maintains an annual process to evaluate conformance to the SFI Standard, to review commitments, identify strengths, weaknesses, and gaps and to report findings to management.

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**15.1.3. Annual review of progress by management and determination of changes and improvements necessary to continually improve conformance to the *SFI 2015-2019 Forest Management Standard*.**

☐ NA    ☒ Conformance    ☐ Exceeds    ☐ O.F.I.    ☐ Major NC    ☐ Minor NC

Beginning in 2015, FCIT structure was modified to create a FCIT Core Team made up of Section level managers from the Divisions of Forestry, Fish and Wildlife, and Ecological and Water Resources. The assigned staff have a direct connection to their respective Division Management Teams. The Core team is involved in the annual review of compliance to the standard and joins the Certification Consultant in presenting the findings to the Division Directors and Commissioners Office, as well as back to their

Audit Notes: DMT's.

The annual management review consisted of the meetings and activities of the Internal Audit and drafting a memo to upper management that addresses the issues identified and the internal and external audit findings. Topics discussed included 2020 External FSC and SFI Findings and the 2020 Internal Program Review Findings. Witnessed Internal Memo dated 9/20/21 for 2021 Annual Management Review of the DNR Implementation of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Forest Management Standards.

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***END OF CHECKLIST***

FMU / location / sites visited	Activities / notes
Welcome and Introductions	Abbreviated Opening
1 – Native Prairie Pollinator Restoration:	Project was for conversion of grassland hay field to native prairie grass. Project for prairie restoration was done in 2 stages. Goal was to reestablish prairie fields on 185 acres of old agricultural fields on the Mille Lacs WMA to increase plant diversity and pollinator habitat. 100 acres were previously established in 2019 under an LSOHC grant with a contract with Minnesota Native Landscapes (MNL). The sites were prepped and planted in the summer of 2019, mowed by MNL in 2020. Frost seeded in March. Phase 2 remaining 85 acres identified on the map. Funding was provided through a Conservation Partners Legacy Grant to the Minnesota Sharp-tail Grouse Society. They contracted with MNL to complete the project. Fields treated in late October 2020, MNL disked and site prepped November 2020. Sites frost seeded by MNL in March of 2021. Severe drought this summer impacted growth in 2021. Planted red, burr & white oaks, white pine, black walnut. Mowing annually. Regeneration survey will be conducted at 1,3, and 5 years.
2 – Deer Enclosure and Hardwood Planting Site	<p><b>Enclosure:</b></p> <p>This is a cooperative project between MNDNR divisions that was initiated years ago as part of an Adaptive Forest Management Project focusing on oak regeneration techniques. The fence was planned to gauge the impacts of deer on oak regeneration, but the fence wasn't funded in time and access was an issue. Funding</p>

	<p>for the fence was provided by the National Wild Turkey Federation. It was decided to install the fence and plant an old hay field with oak savannah as the desired future condition. Wildlife coordinated the fence install with the contractor and we had MNL disk the site and seed to prairie in combination with the other fields in 2021. The prairie will provide long term wildlife and pollinator habitat while the trees mature. The trees species planted were a mix of red oak, burr oak, white oak, black walnut and white pine. 10 years estimated deer fence retirement.</p>
3 – Permit B014365	<p>Hotsaw with skidder. Discussion: mulch mill, Silva. Waste.</p> <p>Block 1 &amp; 2: Central Mesic Hardwood NPC, Oak type, 12.7 acres and 38 acres, respectively. Cutting block 1 visited.</p> <p>Cutting and Felling Terms: Harvest all trees except butternut, cherry, hickory, conifers and trees marked with "GREEN PAINT" (Cutting Block 1). Multiple cutting block sale, see individual cutting blocks for specifications (Cutting Blocks 1 and 2). Reserved all butternut, cherry, hickory, conifers and trees marked with green paint (Cutting Blocks 1 and 2). Reserve all non-hazardous snags (Cutting Block 1). Damaged reserve trees will be charged according to the liquidated damages schedule. Damage is defined as 10% of stem. Circumference and greater than 30% of live crown (Cutting Blocks 1 and 2). Do not fell timber into water, wetlands, roads, trails or adjoining timber (Cutting Blocks 1 and 2). Stump height must not exceed 12" or half the stumps diameter (Cutting Blocks 1 and 2). Damaged residuals will not be removed (Cutting Blocks 1 and 2).</p> <p>Seasonal considerations: Oak wilt is within 20 miles and poses a threat. No sale operations allowed from April 1st-August 1st due to oak wilt concerns, unless with written permission from State (Cutting Blocks 1 and 2). No weekend sale operation allowed between September 15th and December 15th, without written permission from State (Cutting Blocks 1 and 2). No sale operations allowed during firearms / muzzleloader deer seasons (Cutting Blocks 1 and 2). Frozen, dry soil conditions only, except with written permission from State (Cutting Blocks 1 and 2). Operate during non-rutting soil conditions. Refer to DNR rutting guidelines (Cutting Blocks 1 and 2). Permit includes Slash Disposal; Site, Soil &amp; Water Protections, site access and adjacency information; marketing, merchandising and hauling information; financial incentives/ silviculture payments.</p> <p>Zajac Logging LLC, 9/12/2019. BMPs, Section 20, Page 4 of Permit to Cut Timber. Timber Appraisal Report, Biomass allowed. Minimal skinning observed. Good regeneration. Debris scattered. Snags retained. Winter logging with higher stumps.</p>
4 – Logger Parking Lot Improvement and Trail Repair	<p><b>Trail Repair:</b></p> <p>Trail is used for non-motorized travel. Camping allowed along trail. This trail was the main access point for a number of timber sales the last couple of years. The logger caused some fairly severe rutting and damage on approximately 0.75 miles of road by operating (mainly hauling) beyond spring break breakup in 2019. The timber sale owner spent time with an ATV attempting to do repairs in the spring of 2020 and got it back to close to pre-harvest conditions. A different logger was back in the winter of 2020-2021 to finish the sale and caused trail damage. The worst damage was from the gate north about ¼ mile. Wildlife staff went in this summer with</p>

	<p>equipment to repair the ditches and rutting. We added concrete ramps to a low area at the trail, filter fabric and paid for 250 cubic yards of pit run to be delivered to the site to finish repairs. Gate installed to control access. Native vegetation used for stabilization.</p>
<p>5 – Permit X015713 (Active Sale)</p>	<p>Permit organized into Units and Cutting blocks per images above. Walked from Unit B to Unit A checking debris bridge crossing mostly dry wetland spot. Set up not yet cut, examined and discussed marking and silviculture plan. Unit A RMZ check. Wetland buffer check. Discussions: Site level protection requirements. Unit B, cutting block 3. Unit B inspection, cutting completed Sep 2021. Wetland check and BMP buffer requirements.</p> <p>Unit A, 18 acres, harvested all aspen, maple, birch, ash &amp; orange marked trees, and removed all remaining trees under 12" dbh except butternut, hickory &amp; conifers which were retained. Unit B, 13 acres, harvest aspen, maple, elm, birch &amp; orange marked trees, removed all remaining trees under 10" dbh except butternut, hickory and conifers which were retained. Cutting units C-G, 40 acres, harvested all but green painted and retained all conifers, hickory, cherry or butternut. Standard terms for cutting and felling. Seasonal considerations: Operations frozen, dry soil conditions only, except with written permission from State (Cutting Blocks 1, 2, and 3). Frozen ground access only (Cutting Block 2). Operate during non-rutting soil conditions. Refer to DNR rutting guidelines (Cutting Blocks 1, 2, and 3) Permit includes Slash Disposal; Site, Soil &amp; Water Protections, site access and adjacency information; marketing, merchandising and hauling information; financial incentives/ silviculture payments. No slash w/in 15 feet of snowmobile trails (Cutting block 3 – WHICH UNIT?)</p> <p>Aspen stands clearcut with reserves, 15 acres. Commercial thinning in 80-year-old Oak types. Objectives: Aspen, regenerate to maintain type. with volume loss due to past understory fires, which impacted stand and removed some understory and is also causing mortality in stand from pathogen introduction. Logger interviewed. Observed fire extinguisher, first aid kit, and spill kit. Discussed use of spill kit. Merchandising of products discussed. Logger has completed logger training. Job is a single person job.</p>
<p>6 – Permit 14714 (Active)</p>	<p>Block 2: Orange marked to keep. Harvest all oak, maple, basswood, aspen, ash and paper birch &gt;3" dbh. No felling into wetlands or private adjacent lands. In both retain all bitternut hickory, and American elm, stump heights &lt;12". Reserved all non-hazardous snags. Residual damage specifications and penalties. Seasonal considerations for oak wilt, no harvest April 1- July 15. Dry-frozen ground harvest only. Slash considerations for trails, wetlands, roads, landings. Biomass possible. State set roads and landing with possible changes upon written permission (standard terms). Access and marketing/merchandising considerations in permit. Silviculture price adjustments in permit. March 2021 stopped harvested. Will return in about 2 months. Slash distributed to stabilize skid trails. Aesthetics practiced along road. No green-up issue with clearcut. Snag retention. Habitat will be improved by added diversity. Plans are in-place to underplant with White Pine.</p>

	Neighbor granted access to property to access the timber sale. Adjacent landowner letter. Anytime DNR shares a common property boundary procedure is to send a template letter. Process: Flag the site and then send a letter. In this case, the neighbor then called to offer site access in exchange for some road assistance. Greg Pont 10/1/2020.
7 - Boot Spur Herbicide Prep for Planting - A Case Study Site	White pine was historically a common canopy component in the common NPCs in Mille Lacs County. Forestry has made several attempts over the years to reintroduce white pine in the Rum River State Forest and Mille Lacs WMA by planting pure stands or by interplanting with natural hardwood regeneration. Both methods of reintroduction have faced setbacks with poor recruitment, blister rust, and deer browse. This site is the setting for a case study to determine if small group plantings could prevent some of the difficulties in the other two reintroduction methods. This stand was harvested as a shelterwood cut in the winter of 2012-13. In summer 2020, 10 1/10 <sup>th</sup> acre plots were randomly selected, and the brush cleared with a brush saw and chain saw. In September 2021, herbicide was applied to the cleared areas in preparation of a spring 2022 planting. White pine seedlings will be planted at 1000 trees per acre within the plots. "Clumped" Bud capping and pruning will be implemented as needed. The hope is that by grouping the trees, fewer trees will get missed during pruning and bud capping, and blister rust observations will be easier and more thorough, and therefore treatment can be more rapid.
7 – Boot Spur Herbicide Prep for Planting	Rum River State Forest Road graded and crowned. Ditches shaped. Native vegetation used for stabilization. Road gated to control access.
8 – Boot Spur Water Impoundment Replacement	30-acre open water wetlands. Impoundment, water control structure went in during the 1970's. Replaced with funding from Outdoor Heritage Fund when all failed 5 years ago. Internal engineers. New water control structure. Replaced with concrete box culvert. Seed blanket used for stabilization. Metal sheet piling. Focus is aquatic bird species habitat. Gate installed to control access.



– A Case Study Site BOOT SPUR	white pine in the Rum River State Forest and Mille Lacs WMA by planting pure stands or by interplanting with natural hardwood regeneration. Both methods of reintroduction have faced setbacks with poor recruitment, blister rust, and deer browse. This site is the setting for a case study to determine if small group plantings could prevent some of the difficulties in the other two reintroduction methods. This stand was harvested as a shelterwood cut in the winter of 2012-13. In summer 2020, 10 1/10 <sup>th</sup> acre plots were randomly selected, and the brush cleared with a brush saw and chain saw. In September 2021, herbicide was applied to the cleared areas in preparation of a spring 2022 planting. White pine seedlings will be planted at 1000 trees per acre within the plots. “Clumped” Bud capping and pruning will be implemented as needed. The hope is that by grouping the trees, fewer trees will get missed during pruning and bud capping, and blister rust observations will be easier and more thorough, and therefore treatment can be more rapid. Will plant spring 2022.
Reforestation Project BOOT SPUR	This herbicide treatment is intended to prepare 10 1/10 <sup>th</sup> acre plots for planting in spring 2022 as part of a case study. The study aims to compare scattered group plantings of white pine with the standard inter/underplanting that has historically taken place on mesic hardwood sites where the goal is to reintroduce white pine into the stand composition. Herbicide and labor are intended to be provided by Little Falls area forestry staff. 18 acres.

## Tuesday, September 28, 2021: Park Rapids – Grady & Bergmann

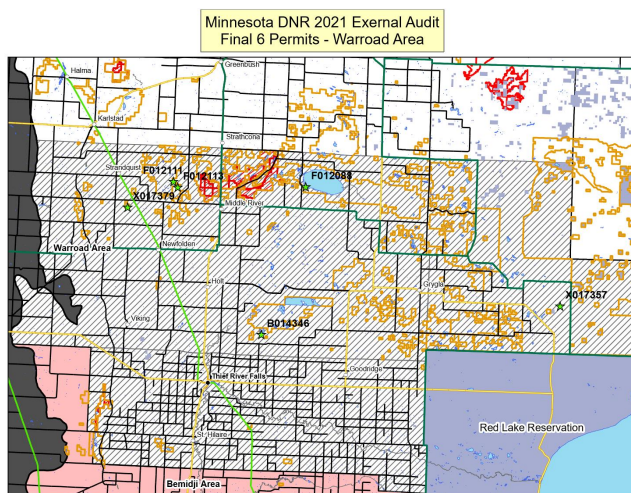
FMU / location / sites visited	Activities / notes
Park Rapids Office, Park Rapids, MN	Welcome and introductions, abbreviated opening meeting.
Permit X016495	<p>65-acre harvest across two stands: pine and spruce. Harvested species were pine, birch, spruce, and aspen. In each stand, removed every 5th row in pine stand. Aspen and birch were only removed in access rows or when in direct competition to the crown on the red pine. DNR required that a representative sample of pre-harvest tree species are left onsite, including leaving natural food sources. Several residual oaks observed.</p> <p>Cut in October and November 2019 using a cut-to-length system, operator select. Forwarded in tops to reduce impact to soil. Net entry will be in 7 to 10 years, with the third thinning to occur 10 years following that. The final harvest will occur in about 60 to 70 years.</p> <p>No rutting observed, although audit team discussed the FME’s standards for rutting. Also discussed process for ensuring chain-of-custody onsite during harvest operations; lockbox at the harvest unit contains load tickets, which the forester picks up for DNR records when completed by the log truck driver.</p>

	<p>At this visit, DNR personnel described a case study examining the effects of herbicide applications on species richness. The study is publicly available on the Silvicultural Library.</p>
Permit B014371	<p>86-acre even age harvest comprised of Norway pine, aspen, jack pine, and birch. Permit is divided into three cutting blocks and included both even and uneven age silviculture. The area is used by OHVs, and care was taken to ensure no slash was left in these recreation trails did. Public kiosk contains information about the site, with a map and regulations; during the harvest, it had also contained information about the logging activities. The DNR had contacted local OHV clubs in advance of the harvesting. Parking lot had been used as the landing; it was clean and showed no sign of heavy use or damage from the logging activities.</p> <p>In cutting units, snags were reserved, and slash was lopped and scattered. Property boundaries were marked, as were the boundaries of each cutting unit, including buffers. These boundaries and the treatments were conveyed to the logger on Avenza maps.</p> <p>One ecologically sensitive area with bristleberry was delineated in advance of the harvesting, and the logger was instructed to avoid the area. The state-required 50-foot equipment exclusion buffer ("filter strip") around the bristleberry wetland area was observed; the exact width of the buffer depends on the steepness of the slope. In this area, trees for an uneven had been marked to cut with yellow paint.</p> <p>At this site, DNR described a case study investigating diplodia shoot blight and canker. The study involved spraying Velpar (hexazinone) in a fire-burned planted red pine stand and a natural stand, which were both infected with diplodia. It was a four-part study to test the effectiveness of the herbicide treatment on seedling growth, as well as the impact on regeneration. The study found that natural regeneration of pine is negatively impacted by both competition and diplodia, and that herbicide use may facilitate natural regeneration.</p> <p>DNR personnel also described the role of Ecological and Water Resources staff in forest harvest planning and implementation. These staff provide technical guidance on rare resource topics and are involved in the annual stand exam list, rare species habitat surveys, old growth guidance, SFRMP planning, and management guideline development.</p>
Permit F011870, Crow Wing Chain WMA	<p>5-acre harvest comprised of red oak, aspen, and birch. Operator select, cut in 2018. A 10-acre stand had been identified on the annual stand exam, but when the plan was prepared, the forester reduced the sale to 5 acres based on local conditions. Because of</p>

	<p>its relatively small size and proximity to another permit, the timber was sold informally to the permit holder for the nearby sale. DNR personnel described the process for determining the final area for harvest, as well as the requirements for informal sales. Only 65 of the planned 100 cords were cut by the logger due to market conditions. Biomass was offered for sale, but the material was not optimal and did not sell. The site is used by the public, and accommodations had to be made to minimize impacts. For example, the hunter walking trail was signed and flagged during the operation, and all slash was removed from the trail. Being located on a WMA, wildlife objectives were considered; the harvest was intended to increase structural and age diversity, and conifers were left as reserves because of their cover values for wildlife. Boundaries of WMA well marked with permanent signage. Entrance to logging unit blocked with tree roots wads to minimize the change of ATV or other vehicular access.</p> <p>At a nearby site, DNR personnel described the Crow Wing Chain WMA, including its location and significance in the state, history of land use, deed restrictions, The Nature Conservancy forest management audits, development restrictions, timber harvest coordination, and habitat improvement projects. Bud-capping activities to reduce the impact of deer browse on jack pine was also demonstrated.</p>
Permit B014694, HCV area	<p>75-acre harvest of Norway pine, aspen, red oak, basswood, and other northern hardwood. Target was aspen, red oak, birch, sugar maple, and basswood. Reserved white pine, balsam fir, and bur oak, as well as Norway pine not marked with yellow paint. Snags were observed as retained.</p> <p>A 330-foot SMZ buffer was established adjacent to a designated HCV area. The 64-acre HCV was designated for old growth and the presence of a sensitive plant species. The area has been designated as future white pine old growth; it is being maintained as a pool to potentially recruit old growth in the future and will be re-evaluated at 120 years old. The site also contains a sensitive plant species. In the SMZ, the harvest was required to leave at least 90 square feet of basal area; additionally, all oak and pine were left. 25% pf the SMZ was cut, with the rest remaining in protection. In the vicinity, there is also a 145-acre stand that has been designated as northern hardwood old growth; it scored well for continuity.</p> <p>This is a highly used recreation area with ATV and dirt bike trails throughout. A 1.5-mile existing trail was used as an access road for the unit. Four truckloads of chips were brought in and spread across steep sections of the road to enable log trucks to haul without damaging the road surface. The ATV club provided three</p>

	<p>of the loads, and the logger bought the fourth. None of the ATV trails were closed during the operation, although signage was present warning about log truck. There were no reported conflicts between the users and logging operation.</p> <p>Existing landings were used during the harvest. Operation was cut to length. The logger selected aggregate and dispersed reserve trees based on the equipment they chose to use. Herbicide treatment is planned for next summer.</p> <p>6,000 cords were cut between this and an adjacent permit, which were held by the same logger (200 acres in total). DNR personnel explained the benefit of the sealed bid process. Local loggers buy the permits. Harvested material is merchandised such that the highest value is achieved (e.g., saw bolts get highest value). For this particular permit, the wood went to 15 different markets.</p>
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### Thursday, September 30, 2021: Warroad, Watts and Bergman



FMU / location / sites visited	Activities / notes
Thief River Falls Office – 246 125 <sup>th</sup> Ave NE, Thief River Fall, MN	Welcome and Introductions, Abbreviated opening meeting
Stop 1 – Permit B014346	65.7-acre Aspen harvest. Reserve Elm and Ash. Purchased by Lyseng Logging, Inc. Snags retained. Group retention observed. Harvest conducted during frozen ground conditions. Wind throw in residual stand was critical in planning. Some wind throw observed. Debris lopped within 2' of ground and scattered. Practices enhance wildlife benefit. Ditch on North end was not crossed. Access obtained across private land by Lyseng Logging, Inc.

	Timber harvested for adjacent landowner of ROW. No issues. Natural regeneration by sprouting. Good Aspen regeneration. No invasives identified.
Stop 2 - Elm Lake WMA Cattail Control	Impoundment in sedge marsh with peat 3-5 feet in thickness. Colonization of peat by hybrid cattail. Contractor sprayed 875 acres August 2015. August 2020 additional 325 acres. Re-evaluate in 2-3 years. Desired outcome of significant increase in open water habitat for wildlife. During 70's drought needed waterfowl areas. Using dikes, the water was controlled. Peat would plug water control and cattails have few wildlife benefits. Burning was not effective. During August 2015, strip spray of area and allow the peat to rot was best alternative for the creation of open water. Contracted aerial application of Alligare at below maximum rate. Result of 100% kill based on visual observation and vegetative survey. Contracted with Two Rivers. Application report, insurance, applicators license, and application flight lines provided to DNR. No public entry allowed. In August 2020, an additional 325 acres were spray using a DNR helicopter using AquaNeat. Witnessed applicators license. Discussed handling, mixing, application, and disposal of chemicals. No issues identified. Chemical is required for control of peat and cattails. WMA is researching alternatives for control.
Stop 3 – Permit X017379	100-acre Aspen harvest with reserves. Reserve Oak Ash and 3-5 Aspen per acre > 13" DBH. Difficult finding purchaser for sale. Sold 3 times. Purchased by Gerbracht Logging, Inc. Non-hazardous snags retained. Harvest conducted during frozen ground conditions. Debris lopped within 2' of ground and scattered. Invasive Buckthorn on site. Steps taken to limit spread - Keep access routes and landings out of infested area. Equipment cleaned before leaving sale. Buckthorn berries removed with shovel during winter conditions. Natural regeneration by sprouting.
Stop 4 – East Park WMA – Oak Savannah/Nelson Slough Improvement Projects	Water Control Structure Replacement/Redesign and Levee Improvement to meet water needs of agriculture and waterfowl. Cooperative Project with public watershed district, Corp of Engineers, and DNR. Pool is at 70'. Currently higher due to drought conditions. Higher in Spring. Lower for waterfowl nesting. Seven gates in structure. Ditch can raise water 3 feet. Control can reduce flooding of agriculture, town roads, and culverts. Project is managed in conjunction with Permit 12113 for timber and prescribed burn.
Stop 5 – Permit F012111	27-acre Aspen harvest. Reserve Bur Oak. Goal is Oak Savannah with grasses and large Oak. Difficult finding purchaser for sale. Purchased by Gerbracht Logging, Inc. Fell snags within 50' of permit boundary and firebreak. Non-hazardous snags retained. Harvest conducted during frozen ground conditions. Merchandising monitored during operation. Debris lopped within 2' of ground and scattered. Slash buffer of 50' from firebreak boundary. No issues identified during harvest. Natural regeneration by sprouting. Good Aspen and Oak regeneration. Plan to establish burning cycle of 5-7 years for wildlife. Fire will encourage Oak regeneration and

grasses for wildlife food. Fire will assist in controlling Aspen. Slash buffer from firebreak will assist in control of fire intensity. Burn plan developed with smoke management and wind direction. Burn Boss is responsible for burn. Post burn evaluation conducted by visual monitoring.

Bemidji Area Office – 2220 Bemidji Ave N, Bemidji MN	Welcome and Introductions, Abbreviated opening meeting
Stop 1 – Permit B014484	<p>Aspen clearcut in 2 blocks, maintain in aspen, healthy aspen stand with a component of ash, birch, and balsam to be regenerated by coppice. 20 acres. Red pine thinning 7 acres, 50-year-old stands. Aspen with 5% reserve. Historical context considered and interpreted. Used existing roads. Some lowland grass areas protected from equipment and debris. Presale meeting, presale form used to review harvest specifications with logger prior to starting sale.</p> <p>TOPS, Timber operator purchaser system used for communication with logger. Also, logger has to enter their information including qualifications before starting sale for forester review and qualification confirmation. Kept smaller noncommercial timber for retention. BA 120 sq ft of retention. Using ECS for climate change considerations. Plot sites done for ECS. Guidance documents based on NPCs, climate change effects on ECS zones, reference table.</p> <p>Blue paint boundary confirmed. Harvested 2/21/2020.</p>
Stop 2 – HCV Monitoring	Brendan notes
Stop 3 – Permit X017293	<p>Two cutting blocks. Cutting block 1 is a first thinning with good access. Cutting block 2 is a final harvest with quality red pine and good access. Balsam Fir Pulpwood: Average 5" DBH, Red Pine: Average 7" DBH, Jack Pine: Average 7" DBH. School trust. Did 2 ECS plots here. Blowdown event throughout stand. Mississippi River filter/buffer requirements discussed. Consulted with ECR per advisory placed by ECR after their stand exam review based on native plant community. Areas with advanced regen. Blue painted boundary confirmed. Will plant after a spray in some areas. Forester reviewed SEL annual list, looked up info and found the comments made by ECR. Per procedures forester contacted ECR to lose the loop. Features of identified of interest by ECR were rare plant communities. Green tree retention in part based on objective to promote local seed source.</p> <p>RMZ along Mississippi was examined. Some uncertainty about correct buffer width (50' or 120'). Forester described measuring and marking the buffer in an air photo (GIS) prior to establishing buffer onsite. See reference to Page 39 of general guidelines, 2012 full MN Site Level Guidelines.</p>
Stop 4 – Henry Bjoring WMA – Overview and Management	<p>Mowing was done on the trail earlier in the year to avoid invasive flowering. Old fields restored to native warm seasons grasses, along with some Jack pine and crabapple to emulate natural invasive behavior by jack pine and crabapple in prairie conditions. Crabapples in protective cages.</p>

	<p>Waited 3-4 years, then scarified JP in the rows with goal to emulate JP-type savanna conditions. Trees were bud capped to protect against deer browsing of planted seedlings. Discussion: F&amp;W restructuring combined 4 areas in this region. Bemidji &amp; Park Rapids into 1 region. Uncertainties in funding for completion of ensuring planting success (I may be misstating this).</p>
Stop 5 – Regeneration Project	<p>Oct 17/18. One growing season. Herbicide, scarification map/planting prep and planting in 2019 sent landowner letters for herbicide use. See landowner docs. Signs for spraying were posted at common points of entry. 2019 sprayed, disc trenched right after. Seed supplied to PRT, seedling grower. Planted May 2020. Deer browse anticipated so fall 2020 started bud capping to protect against deer browsing. Regen check done in the spring for deer browsing damage. 2021 spring determined 98% survival. Anticipate/planning for 2 more years of bud capping and regular check through 2030. Although DNR regen monitoring is planned for 1,3, 5, and 7 years after planting but forester is planning to do a reconnaissance check annually. Used new project form and finds system useful.</p>



Shannon Lotthammer	Assistant Commissioner		X	X
Bob Meier	Assistant Commissioner		X	X
Jess Richards	Assistant Commissioner		X	X
Theresa Ebbenga	NW Regional Director		X	X
Bradley Harrington	Tribal Liaison		X	X
Forrest Boe	Director – Forestry Division		X	X
Dave Olfelt	Director – Fish and Wildlife Division (FAW)		X	X
Pat Rivers	Deputy Director – FAW		X	X
Ann Pierce	Deputy Director – Ecological and Water Resources (EWR)		X	X
Jan Shaw Wolff	Section Chief – Ecosystem Management and Protection (EWR) & Certification Oversight Team (COT)		X	X
Adam Munstenteiger	NW Region Forestry Manager		X	X
Andrew Arends	Section Chief – State Forest Lands		X	X
Aaron Vandelinde	Director, Office of School Trust Lands (non-DNR staff)		X	X
Amber Ellering	Forest Policy and Planning Supervisor		X	X
Emily Peters	Forest Ecology and Policy Program Consultant (EWR)		X	X
Lacy Levine	Forest Policy Analyst & Forest Certification Implementation Team (FCIT)		X	X

Jon Drimel	Timber Program Supervisor & FCIT		X	X
Tim Quincer	Forest Wildlife Habitat Specialist & FCIT		X	X
Nick Jensen	NW Regional Ecologist & FCIT		X	X
Tim Beyer	Forest Certification Program Consultant & FCIT lead	tim.beyer@state.mn.us	X	X
Doug Tillma	Section Chief – Forestry Planning and Policy & COT		X	X
Nathan Kestner	NW Region EWR Manager		X	X
Ted Dick	Forest Wildlife Habitat Supervisor			X
David Wilson	BMP Monitoring Program Consultant & FCIT		X	X
Grant Wilson	Central Regional Director		X	X
Katie Smith	Wildlife Section Manager (FAW)		X	X
Blaine Klemek	NW Region Assistant Wildlife Manager		X	X
Joel Lemberg	Central Region Forestry Manager		X	X
Gretchen Miller	Acting Central Region Wildlife Manager		X	X
Dan Lais	Central Region EWR Manager		X	X
Lori Knosalla	Timber Sale Administration Coordinator		X	X
Michelle Martin	Central Region ECS Coordinator		X	X
Paul Dubuque	Forestry Silviculture Consultant		X	X

Tavis Westbrook	Resource Program Coordinator (Parks & Trails)		X	X
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## 2021 External Recertification Audit Focus Group Sessions

### Background:

During every 5-year Forest Certification Recertification Audits, the department is assessed at the full standards level. Everything is on the table across both the Forest Stewardship Council and Sustainable Forestry Initiative standards. From how we hire and train a diverse workforce, how we engage communities, tribes, and stakeholder, how we plan, implement and monitor, and how we protect a broad range of forest values. While the field audit portion of the audit provides the auditors some information, there are a number of other topics that require interviews with key staff to assess our conformance. This year the auditors have selected 8 focus topics that they would like to have staff interviews on. These sessions will run two at a time and will likely last 45-50 minutes, starting at 8:00 am on Wednesday, September 29<sup>th</sup>. You have been identified as a key member of one or more of these focus groups. I will be setting up calendar invites in the next couple of days once I confirm the timing with the auditors.

- 8:00 AM: **Stakeholder Consultation** – Doug Tillma, Jan Shaw Wolff, Jon Drimel, Amber Ellering, Kelly Wilder, Adam Landon
- 8:00 AM: **Community Impact** – Randolph Briley, Adam Munstenteiger, Lonnie Lilly, Andrew Arends
- 9:00 AM: **Tribal Relations** – Bradley Harrington, Theresa Ebbenga, Patty Thielen, Grant Wilson
- 9:00 AM: **Forest Management Planning** – Amber Ellering, Ted Dick, Emily Peters, Katie Zlonis, Lacy Levine
- 10:00 AM: **Protected Species Management** – Bridget Henning-Randa, Lacy Levine, Paul Dubuque
- 10:00 AM: **HCVF Management** – Tim Beyer, Ted Dick, Bruce Carlson
- 11:00 AM: **Hiring Practices** – Denise Legato, Bob Milne, Pat Rivers
- 11:00 AM: **Inventory and Monitoring** – Dennis Kepler, Amber Ellering, Bruce Carlson, Emily Peters

Meeting Attendance: Minnesota DNR

Date: September 28-October 1, 2021

**Recertification Audit***Park Rapids and Little Falls (9/28/21) and Bemidji and Warroad (9/30/21)*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position Title</b>	<b>Phone OR Email</b>	<b>Open</b>	<b>Field</b>	<b>Close</b>
<b>Mike Lichter</b>	Area Forestry Leader - Park Rapids (PR)			X	
<b>Kyle Anderson</b>	Area Timber Program Forester (PR)			X	
<b>Brian Hoffmann</b>	Area Silviculture Program Forester (PR)			X	
<b>Dawn Plattner</b>	Park Rapids Assistant Area Wildlife Manager			X	
<b>Nick Jensen</b>	NW Regional Forest Ecologist (EWR)			X	
<b>Amy Westmark</b>	NW Regional Non-Game Specialist (EWR)			X	
<b>Steve Bade</b>	Forestry Technician (PR)			X	
<b>Joel Lemberg</b>	Region 3 Forestry Manager			X	
<b>John Korzeniowski</b>	Area Forestry Leader – Little Falls (LF)			X	
<b>Peter Willis</b>	Assistant Area Forestry Leader (LF)			X	
<b>Ross Meyer</b>	Area Silviculture Program Forester (LF)			X	
<b>Steve Piepgras</b>	Mille Lacs Area Wildlife Supervisor			X	
<b>Tim Stai</b>	Forestry Specialist (LF)			X	
<b>Tom Young</b>	Forestry Technician (LF)			X	
<b>Paul Kedrowski</b>	Forestry Specialist (LF)			X	
<b>Brendan Grady</b>	FSC Lead Auditor			X	
<b>Tucker Watts</b>	SFI Lead Auditor			X	
<b>Stefan Bergmann</b>	Team Auditor			X	
<b>Beth Jacqmain</b>	Team Auditor			X	

Name	Position Title	Phone OR Email	Open	Field	Close
Tim Beyer	Forest Certification Program Consultant & FCIT lead		X	X	X
Ted Dick	Forest Wildlife Habitat Supervisor			X	X
Jon Drimel	Timber Program Supervisor		X	X	X
Emily Peters	Forest Ecology and Policy Program Consultant		X	X	X
Joe Rucinski	Area Forestry Leader - Bemidji (B)			X	
Andy Kernan	Area Timber Program Forester (B)			X	
Nick Severson	Area Silvics Program Forester (B)			X	
Justin Pitt	Assistant Area Wildlife Manager			X	
Lori Barrow	Forester			X	
Adam Munstenteiger	Region 2 Forestry Manager		X	X	X
Douglas Sirrine	Area Forestry Leader – Warroad (W)			X	
Shane Delaney	Assistant Area Forestry Leader (W)			X	
Jon Stelter	Timber Program Forester (W)			X	
Sarah Brown	Silviculture Program Forester (W)			X	
Doug Franke	Thief River Falls Area Wildlife Manager			X	
Jason Wollin	Karlstad Area Wildlife Manager			X	
Kyle Arola	Thief Lake Area Wildlife Manager			X	
Rebecca Rickaby	Forestry Specialist (W)			X	
Tyler Hasbargen	Forestry Technician (W)			X	

