DNR's Forest Management Plan

As part of Forest Certification, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) must provide and maintain a management plan to meet various requirements established under both the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) - US National Forest Management Certification Standards. For large land management organizations, such as the DNR, multiple documents often comprise the management plan.

The management plan for the lands managed by DNR is comprised of a compendium of databases and documents, including various statutes, plans, policies, procedures, guidelines, and informational resources. These databases and documents operate at various levels of scope and scale (e.g., statewide, landscape-level, site-level, strategic, operational, comprehensive, species, or topic-specific). The following sections and subsequent visual representation describe the broad categories into which the various documents can be classified and how these categories generally relate to one another. The following list of documents in each section is not comprehensive in all sections – this list is intended to provide examples of documents in each section.

Statewide Direction

These are components of the DNRs management plan that provide broad statewide direction to DNR staff, operations, and lands within their respective scopes across the entire state. They can generally be either strategic and/or operational in nature. Strategic direction is usually expressed in terms of mission, vision, goals, objectives, and strategies. Operational direction is usually in the form of policies, procedures, guidelines, and standards. Both provide the broad umbrella under which more specific (e.g., geographic or topical) management guidance is developed. Examples include:

- **Strategic Direction**
  - Internal Plans
    - DNR Strategic Conservation Agenda
    - Division-specific strategic plans
    - State Wildlife Action Plan
    - State Forest Action Plan
  - External Plans
    - Minnesota Forest Resources Council (MFRC) Vision and Goals
    - Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) 25-Year Framework
    - Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan
  - Statutory Policies
    - Forest Resource Management (MS §89.002, subd. 1)
    - Reforestation (MS§ 89.002, subd. 2)
    - Forest Roads (MS§ 89.002, subd. 3)
    - Sustainable Forest Resource Management (MS§ 89A.02)
    - School Trust Lands (MS 84.027, subd. 18)

- **Operational Direction**
  - DNR Internal Policy System
    - Operational Orders related to forest management. Examples include Op Order 47: Prescribed Burn Guidelines, Op Order 119: Ash Management on DNR Administered Lands, Op Order 121: Management of School Trust Lands.
  - Interdisciplinary Forest Management Policy System
    - A full list of policies, guidelines, short term direction can be found in the Directional Document Matrix.
    - Examples include High Conservation Value Forest Policy, Interdisciplinary Forest Management Coordination Framework Policy, MFRC Site Level Guidelines Adoption Policy, Old Growth Forest Policy, and Sustainable Timber Harvest Decision Policy.
  - Division Guidance and Procedures
    - Division of Forestry Internal Policy Framework
    - Division of Fish & Wildlife Policies & Guidelines
    - Division of Ecological & Water Resources Policies & Procedures

Landscape-Level Direction

These are components of the DNRs management plan that provide strategic and/or operational direction for sub-state landscape units containing, but not always exclusively applying to, DNR- administered lands within the scope of the management plan. Landscapes can be of varying sizes and defined by either natural features (e.g., Ecological Classification System sections) or administrative boundaries (e.g., Forestry Areas, WMAs, and State Forests). Compared to statewide direction, landscape direction rarely takes the form of policies or procedures, and usually is provided in some sort of plan and occasionally as landscape-specific guidelines. Examples include:

- **Landscape Plans** (mostly located on the DNR intranet for staff unless links are provided)
  - Forest Resource Management Plans
    - Management Opportunity Area (examples OFMC, RGMA, etc.)
  - MFRC Landscape Plans
- **Unit Plans**
  - Wildlife management area master plans
- **Special Management Area Plans** (locations of these documents vary)
  - High Conservation Value Forest plans
  - Representative Sample Area plans
  - OHV trail designations

Site-Level Management Guidance

These are components of the DNRs management plan that provide guidance for managing individual or small groups of forest stands in a specific location. Site-level decisions are made primarily by field staff who are most familiar with the specific sites and have an understanding of the complex combination of statewide and landscape-level directions that apply. At any given site, it usually is not appropriate, reasonable or feasible to expect to be able to apply or accomplish all statewide or landscape-level direction. Staff uses their expertise and

professional judgment to determine the best mix of management across all sites within their purview that best carries out and accomplishes this complex management direction. Examples of site-level direction/decisions include:

- **Site-level guidance**
    - Native Plant Community (NPC) Field Guides and Silvicultural Interpretations
    - Silvicultural Case Studies
- **Site-level management**
    - Stand treatment decisions
    - Silvicultural prescription worksheets

Databases

While databases in and of themselves do not provide management direction, they are an important component of the DNR's overall management plan. Databases are an important source of information for staff in developing plans and making site-level management decisions, monitoring progress towards landscape and statewide goals, and tracking the history of management activities at the site-, landscape- and statewide-levels. Examples of databases include:

- **Databases** (located on the DNR intranet, external DNR internet site, and/or Geospatial Data Resource Site (GDRS) for staff)
    - Natural Heritage Information System
    - Forestry Information System (FORIST)
        - Silviculture and Roads Module (SRM)
        - Roads Inventory (Wheels)
        - Timber Sales Module (TSM)
        - Stand Exam Layer (SEL)
    - 4trees
        - Inventory Module
        - Mobile Observation Recorder (MOR)
    - Land Records System (LRS)
    - Native Plant Community classification and maps

DNR's Forest Management Plan Key Components

Statewide Strategic Direction

- **Internal Plans**
  - DNR Strategic Conservation Agenda
  - Division-specific strategic plans
  - State Wildlife Action Plan
  - State Forest Action Plan
- **External Plans**
  - Minnesota Forest Resources Council (MFRC) Vision and Goals
  - Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) 25-Year Framework
  - Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan
- **Statutory Policies**
  - Forest Resource Management (MS §89.002, subd. 1)
  - Reforestation (MS§ 89.002, subd. 2)
  - Forest Roads (MS§ 89.002, subd. 3)
  - Sustainable Forest Resource Management (MS§ 89A.02)
  - School Trust Lands (MS 84.027, subd. 18)

Landscape-Level Direction

- **Landscape Plans**
  - Forest Resource Management Plans
    - Management Opportunity Area
  - MFRC Landscape Plans
- **Unit Plans**
  - Wildlife management area master plans
- **Special Management Area Plans**
  - High Conservation Value Forest plans
  - Representative Sample Area plans
  - OHV trail designations

Site-Level Guidance

- **Site-level guidance**
  - Native Plant Community (NPC) Field Guides and Silvicultural Interpretations
  - Silvicultural Case Studies
- **Site-level management**
  - Stand treatment decisions
  - Silvicultural prescription worksheets

Operational Direction

- DNR Internal Policy System
  - Operational Orders related to forest management
- Interdisciplinary Forest Management Policy System
  - e.g. Old Growth Forest Policy, High Conservation Value Forests, Sustainable Timber Harvest Implementation
- Division Guidance and Procedures
  - Forestry Internal Policy Framework
  - Fish & Wildlife Policies & Guidelines
  - Ecological & Water Resources Policies & Procedures

Databases

- Natural Heritage Information System
- Forestry Information System (FORIST)
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