

Criteria for Selecting High Conservation Value Forests (HCVFs)

Intent: To help prioritize and guide the HCVF Regional Teams during their work to select HCVFs.

Guidance for Application: Most HCVFs (with the exception of DNR's designated old-growth stands, which by FSC's definition are automatically HCVFs) are likely to be selected from Sites of High or Outstanding Biodiversity Significance, as identified by Minnesota County Biological Survey (MCBS). The Criteria outlined below should be considered when reviewing recommendations from the Division of Ecological & Water Resources regarding which MCBS Sites warrant the HCVF Approach. Nominations of other unique areas that may warrant the HCVF Approach, such as Old Forest Management Complexes (OFMCs) or areas with concentrations of rare species, should be submitted to the appropriate Regional HCVF Team for consideration. All nominated areas should be evaluated against the criteria outlined below. In order to qualify for selection as a HCVF, sites/areas must meet both criteria outlined below.

Context: This guidance document was developed to be used in conjunction with the document titled "Minnesota DNR's High Conservation Values (HCVs): Categories 1-3," finalized and approved by MN DNR's Statewide HCVF Workgroup on December 6, 2010.

Necessary Criteria for Selection as HCVF:

- 1) **Combination / Concentration of HCVs:** Site contains multiple HCVs or Site contains some of the best known examples of an identified HCV or combinations of HCVs in the ESC Section.
Exceptions: Multiple HCVs are not necessary for Sites where one or more of the following are the primary HCVs:
 - *Designated Old-Growth Stand*
 - *Roadlessⁱ areas >500 acres with unique features*
 - *Intact, large landscape features (forests or peatlands)*
- 2) **DNR Ownership:** DNR ownership (including SNAs and State Parks) within the Site is adequate to maintain/enhance the identified HCVs or HCVs on other ownership within the Site have a high probability of being maintained or enhanced because either:
 - a. The other landowner(s) are FSC-certified and are managing or likely to manage their holdings as HCVFs. (*Note: Determining if this is true for adjacent landowners implies prior consultation has already occurred.*)
 - b. The other landowner(s) are governed by policy or statute that requires protection of the HCVs.

Additional Guidance:

- **Risk Assessment:** "If there is a concentration of HCVs and additional conservation is warranted to ensure that the integrity of the area as a whole is maintained, then HCVF designation is warranted." (FSC HCVF Assessment Framework)
- Not all MCBS High or Outstanding Sites need be selected as HCVF when:
 - The identified HCV(s) exist in a small proportion of the Site (e.g., locations of RTE plants, small calcareous fens, etc.) or
 - The identified HCV(s) are already protected by existing DNR policy or statute.

ⁱ See definition of Roadless in MNDNR's final list of HCVs Categories 1-3.