

Sand Dunes State Forest Stakeholder Advisory Group – Meeting 4

Meeting Summary and Notes

Date: September 26, 2016, 6pm-9m

Location: Holiday Inn – Elk River; 9200 Quaday Ave NE; Otsego, MN 55330

The meeting agenda can be found in Appendix A.

Attendees included:

- 23 stakeholder advisory group (SAG) members, which included one DNR staff member assigned to the group; additionally, one State Representative – Representative Newberger – joined the meeting and participated with the advisory group.
- 9 audience members, including one State Senator (Sen. Mary Kiffmeyer)
- 11 other DNR staff, 1 facilitator from MN Management & Budget

The main topic of this meeting was wildlife and native plant management in Sand Dunes State Forest. After introductions, participants reflected individually on their enjoyment and concerns related to wildlife and native plants in the Sand Dunes (Appendix C). SAG member Misi Stine of the MN Herpetological Society gave an overview of the reptiles and amphibians in the Sand Dunes and how ‘herpers’ use and enjoy the Sand Dunes for recreation. SAG member Mark Burley of the MN Deer Hunters Association also gave an overview of how deer hunters utilize the State Forest.

DNR planner Amanda Kueper provided a midpoint check-in on the public engagement process and an overview of DNR’s vision for the Sand Dunes, and how it intersected with stakeholder goals. Liz Harper from DNR Division of Ecological and Water Resources and Nicholas Snavely from the Division of Fish and Wildlife gave presentations on the management changes in the operational plan, discussing the details of oak savanna and what it looks like, as well as management techniques such as prescribed burns and invasive species management.

The majority of the rest of the meeting was spent in large group question/answer and discussion about the topic, specifically focusing on suggestions to DNR regarding wildlife and native plant community management (Appendix B). John Korzeniowski also provided some feedback on suggestions from the previous meeting’s discussion, highlighting DNR’s change to allow for slower removal of pine from the campsite areas of Ann Lake Campground in response to stakeholder comments. The meeting concluded with comments from Director of the Division of Ecological and Water Resources, Luke Skinner.

Summary of Participant Responses and Small Group Ideas

Individuals and the small groups offered a wide range of ideas in response to the discussion questions. Their detailed responses are compiled in Appendices B and C. What follows here is a summary of all the responses:

Wildlife in the Sand Dunes that participants enjoy, and concerns they have about wildlife:

- Wildlife enjoyed included:

- Reptiles and amphibians such as Blanding's turtle, hog-nosed snake, bull snake, red belly snake, garter snake, 13-lined prairie skink
- Birds such as turkey, eagles, pileated woodpeckers, raptors, all song birds, sandhill crane
- Mammals such as deer, fox, coyote, bear, small mammals
- Insects such as Uncas and Leonard's skipper and other native butterflies, Barrens tiger beetles, bees/pollinators
- Concerns included:
 - Will habitat change negatively impact number of species?
 - Will user-groups be kept out of Sand Dunes due to species management changes?
 - Will changes in the plan (reduction in 'rare features management') negatively impact rare species?
 - Will clearcutting negatively impact the deer herd?
 - Will species such as snake, turtles, and skinks suffer from management actions (pesticides, fire, etc.)?
 - Concerned that lack of management for rare species will jeopardize their survival
 - Concerned that funding constraints will limit management ability
 - Concerned about wildlife living in monoculture forests
 - Loss of conifer habitat for SGCN species
 - Too much public land being used for rare species management over time
 - Labeling species "endangered" in Minnesota when they are just on the edge of their native national range.
 - Is the DNR managing for individual species instead of diverse habitats?
 - Plan ignores values of the White Pine Initiative.
 - Loss of native habitat for wildlife
 - What impacts will clearcuts have on wildlife? Will wildlife go elsewhere if forest goes away?
 - Is white pine blister rust a problem in Sand Dunes forest?
 - Will timber harvest scare off deer? Can harvest be avoided near deer opener?

Native plants and native plant communities in the Sand Dunes that participants enjoy, and concerns they have about native plants:

- Things they enjoy included:
 - A wide variety of native plants that support a healthy ecosystem
 - Rare species generally
 - Specific species: Big and little bluestem, hairy gamma grass, Indian switchgrass, needle grass, creeping juniper, beach heather
 - Native wildflowers generally
 - Trees generally
 - Ecosystems: Sand prairie, dry barrens and mesic oak savanna, wetlands, native oak/hardwood stands
 - White pine stands and mixed pine/oak forests
 - Beauty of pine in backyard – snow-covered
- Concerns included:
 - Will tree removal result in blowing sands/snow?
 - Many non-native and invasive species are present – what is plan for addressing invasive species?

- Concern for rare species - want to see that the plan/management address their continued existence and expansion
- Burning poison ivy/oak – health concern for residents
- How will DNR prevent damage to fragile dune ecosystems during management work?
- How will residents be notified about scheduled burns and chemical application?
- Biomass harvesting could replace fire to reduce fuel loads on the ground
- Concern about the bias against white pine – not being treated as a Sand Dunes native
- Loss of functional diversity if conifers are removed from South unit of Sand Dunes
- DNR is not being objective about rare species management concerns
- Cost of rare features management
- The operational plan is too vague about the details of rare species management
- We might not be able to recreate pre-settlement landscapes with today's factors (e.g. no bison, new forest health problems)
- Tree harvest; potential wildlife habitat loss
- Protect rare species and encourage more diversity of all native species
- Clear cutting is unacceptable – selective cut only
- FDA approval of chemicals isn't enough – not trustworthy; concern about herbicide impact on well water
- How will oak savanna management pay back tax payers?

Suggestions to DNR for managing wildlife and native plants in the Sand Dunes:

- Oak savanna may be better suited in State Parks.
- Opinions are important, but management practices should be based on science; use science-based adaptive management tools to restore, protect, and manage rare plants and wildlife
- Educate and involve the public to achieve buy-in for management plans.
- Collaborate with local residents to form plan.
- Determine economic impacts (local and statewide) of management plan.
- Make sure to finish projects that are started – concerns that this will be difficult in a political climate
- Protect wildlife from disturbance during management activity – especially reptiles and amphibians that do not travel freely
- Focus more on rare species than common species in management plan
- Manage to increase rare wildlife species numbers; manage for declining species, especially if they are largely restricted to the Sand Dunes (e.g. Leonard's skipper)
- Better show how practices will impact all wildlife
- Amount of white pine on Anoka Sand Plain is very limited: white pine should be considered native to Sand Dunes
- Don't remove pines from the Sand Dunes
- Preserve some pines for future old growth (100-200 years) as example to the public of what could be elsewhere.
- Maintain pine mixed with oak to retain biological, structural, and functional diversity
- Use pearl drop harvest method and plant white pine afterwards
- Acquire additional farms and pastures, outside the forest, equivalent to what you want to convert.
- Manage slash after harvest so that animals can move through forest.
- Keep doing what you have been doing for last 50 years.

- Continue to allow hunting in the Sand Dunes and consider adding food plots where trees have been cut
- Prairie is not the cover wildlife need, and the amount in the Sherburne NWR is already sufficient.
- No hunting or trapping unless species are spoiling the ecosystem
- You can and should stop harvesting timber during deer season opener.
- Do what is affordable – oak savanna cannot pay for itself
- Go for maximum biodiversity in plants and wildlife, and expansion of habitat
- Reestablish prairies/savannas to extent possible
- Protect rare and endangered plant species
- Identify locations of fragile species and STAY AWAY, especially hairy gamma grass on exposed dunes
- Accelerate removal of pine plantation and encroaching forest and shrub expansion into native prairie land oak savanna
- DNR needs to prioritize oak savanna/prairie projects in Outdoor Heritage and other funding requests
- Do not remove all non-native species, such as red-cedar, as these have become key habitat for bull snakes
- Continuing to manage monoculture pine plantations seems to conflict with wildlife goals
- Plan with local fire, sheriff, hospital first before burn season
- Stop the use of burning and chemical use in the clear cutting process.
- Leave Sand Dunes as is – plants are doing fine just the way they are.
- Do not let a vocal few stall the great restoration work underway and planned
- Work closely with Sherburne NWR when conducting burns
- Work closely with Sherburne NWR to plan management through the best available research
- Use fewer chemicals; provide information on soil infiltration rate and half-life of chemicals used; provide info on application methods
- There must be a balance with managing native plants and species with the Forest.
- What are you going to do about the plants, trees, etc. that citizens plant on their property? Won't they spread into your plan?
- Have a moratorium on converting to oak savanna to observe what happens in the Sherburne NWR
- Control horse and ATVs, they can spread exotics; no horses or ATVs in SNAs
- Endemic berry bearing shrubs should be introduced for local and migrating birds and pollinators
- Timbering should be a secondary interest in the Sand Dunes
- Control exotic plant species if possible
- Control non-approved uses of Sand Dunes
- Manage with climate change in mind.
- I don't believe there is an accurate model to predict the supposed global warming issue you think will change the pines. If so please reference that study.
- DNR should identify and explain the assumptions used to inform decision-making (e.g. historic land cover)

Appendix A: Meeting Agenda

SAND DUNES STATE FOREST – STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY GROUP MEETING AGENDA

September 26, 2016

Holiday Inn
9200 Quaday Ave NE
Otsego, MN 55330

- 5:30 Doors Open
- 6:00 Welcome and Introductions
- 6:10 Main Discussion Topic: Wildlife and Native Plant Management in SDFS
- 7:30 Break
- 7:45 Resume Discussion Topic
- 8:30 DNR Report Back – What we heard at last meeting
- 8:50 Re-cap of meeting, closing remarks
- 9:00 Adjourn

- 9:30 Doors Close

Appendix B: Compilation of large group responses to discussion questions

This is a summary of stakeholder and audience verbal comments to the following questions: *What advice and suggestions do you have for the DNR about managing wildlife and native plant and native plant communities in the Sand Dunes State Forest?*

- Need something better than FDA-approved herbicides; not trusting of FDA approval on the chemicals.
- Expand to the maximum the native species in the Sand Dunes State Forest
- Accelerate pine plantation removal; enhance rare or endangered species; the cost of recovery from pine damage is greater than managing for native plants and wildlife now.
- Be judicious in bring back native plants, be selective
- Statement that white pine were native to the Sand Dunes area; that statement was disputed and discussed
- Create a functional bio-diverse plant and wildlife population; determines what function is performed on the land; allows for white pine to be in Sand Dunes
- Use only evidence and science-based information for decisions
- Identify DNR assumptions and what decisions are made from those assumptions
- Determine location and scale of what was there in the Sand Dunes; determine rare species and manage these rare species in context with goals for the area.
- When DNR says it wants to replicate the historical environment, that environment no longer exists to sufficiently replicate it (e.g. no more roaming bison); fire dependent plant communities; carbon sequestration
- Design the forest management with climate change in mind. With climate change, the area is getting warmer. Comment in response: climate change is more complex than that. It is difficult to understand let alone manage for climate change
- Need to have more cooperation and communication between DNR and Federal Fish and Game over the Oak Savanna; township needs to have input into the process and decisions.
- If the Blandings Turtle gets on the endangered species list, it will impact private landowners and roads among other entities on how they manage their areas.
- There are multiple native plant communities in the Sand Dunes forest; FDs37, FDs27, UPs14 to mention a few, and each have to be managed differently
- The state (DNR) needs to maintain and enhance the “UP” (upland prairie) systems in the Sand Dunes forest
- If you put fire into the Sand Dunes forest it will change the community (plant and wildlife). Of the native plant communities, let’s identify the ones we want.
- What happens if white pines are planted without management? This is a value decision.
- Plants depend on soils and the soils should determine which plants/native plants to manage towards.
- The management of the forest is dependent on what happens with the school lands trust
- Manage species and plants in the public trust; use scientific data to make decisions; biotic and a-biotic
- Conservation should be the focus
- People come first; 3000 people in the area and 800 families impacted by the Sand Dunes forest
 - Property values may decrease if not managed well
 - The people live in the forest

SDSF Public Involvement: Meeting 4, September 26, 2016

- Support the way it is/community
- Funding for the future
- There are a variety of interests; focus on facts and get economic data

Appendix C: Discussion Questions and Individual Responses - Full Version

DNR asked individual advisors and audience members to respond in writing to discussion questions provided on a handout. What follows is a transcription of all the responses we received.

Q1: What wildlife in the Sand Dunes State Forest do you enjoy and appreciate, and what are your wildlife concerns?

Stakeholder Advisory Group:

Comment 1:

- Enjoying most plants and wildlife in SDSF. I have several concerns about habitat change and impact on a number of species. The Sand Dunes is a man-made environment adjusted by natural events.
- Will user groups be detoured or shut-out because “change” for species will dominate management.

Comment 2:

- All wildlife – especially reptiles and amphibians.
- My concerns area rare species of wildlife that could be negatively impacted by changes to the plan, especially reduction in “rare features management”.

Comment 3:

- I enjoy the deer population and am concerned about the effect clearcutting will have on the current herd.

Comment 4:

- We have ~1300 feet of common border in south Sand Dunes, south of 233rd. Border is on east and south. We regularly see deer, fox, coyote, turkey, eagles, pileated woodpeckers. Also see Blandings turtles, 13 lined and prairie skink, *lots* of bull snakes, some hog-nosed, and occasional red belly and garter snakes. I have also spotted (and captured and released) Unca’s skippers around my garage. My property and the SF to the south has lots of pristine untilled soils, with some exposed dunes and is ~40% trees, 60% savanna. We love the diversity of wildlife in the area, and work actively to maintain a habitat for the local life. I am concerned some species like bull snakes, turtles, skinks, etc. may suffer from renovations, pesticides, fires, etc.

Comment 5:

- Blanding’s Turtle, skinks, raptors, all song birds, deer, bear, all snake species present, small mammals, native butterfly and other native insects.
- Lack of management for native species jeopardizes their long-term survival, removal of pine plantations and encroaching trees and shrubs will [unreadable] rare species habitat. Funding constraints will also deter from the ability to manage.

Comment 6:

- How will wildlife be affected with monoculture forests seems like 2 different opposing policies.

Comment 7:

- With the implementation of the plan I have a concern of:
 - Loss of biodiversity of habitat.
 - The loss of species of greatest conservation needs (SGCN) that use upland conifers for their habitat.
 - The incremental “taking” of public lands for rare feature management and the potential for future taking of private lands (blandings turtle discussion). The gradualness of this taking hides the cumulative effect of it.
 - The labeling of species “endangered” in Minnesota when they are simply at the edge of their range here and their range is quite extensive in other parts of the country. The endangered label triggers management decisions.
 - Managing for individual species as opposed to diverse habitats, contrary to the emphasis of the new Wildlife Action Plan (again blandings turtle discussion of road restructuring to mitigate taking of turtles).
 - Lack of acknowledgement of the values, many coming from the wildlife community, that the DNR and citizenry passionately promoted while seeking legislative support for the White Pine Initiative.

Comment 8:

- Deer, fox, sandhill cranes, wild turkey, geese, like the sounds of the coyotes, and even have bear in our yard
- Wildlife concerns: if areas are clearcut for endangered species, what will happen to our wildlife?

Comment 9:

- Turkey, bear, deer, sandhill cranes, fox, and many others

Comment 10:

- Amphibians and reptiles
- Insects – e.g. butterflies, beetles, bees
- Hunting – small game, deer

Comment 11:

- All wildlife but some more than others. Blanding’s turtles, plains hognosed snakes, Barrens tiger beetles, leonard’s skippers, Uncas skippers all are species that have an opportunity to thrive at Sand Dunes despite widespread loss of native habitat. Although I enjoy hunting, hiking, camping, and other recreation, I believe this can be an opportunity for both.

Comment 12:

- Whitetail deer/habitat

Comment 13:

- Birds, deer, turkeys, sand hill cranes, their habitat being taken away.

Comment 14:

- Deer, small birds at the feeder, sand hill cranes, and sightings of bear
- I’m concerned these critters might want to live elsewhere if their “forest” goes away.

Comment 15:

- Deer, birds, etc.
- No concerns

Comment 16:

- Deer, bear, birds – my concern is the cutting of forest, where the deer, bear, and birds have cover and also the return of blowing sands due to removal of trees.
- Also the trees are beautiful, especially in the winter, the trees also keep the wind and snow from blowing.

Comment 17:

- Deer, fox, rabbit, turkeys
- Concerns that their habitat will be taken away

Audience:

Comment 1:

- SNAs: butterflies, birds, pollinators, savanna species
- Is white pine blister rust a problem in Sand Dunes forest?
- (Nick Snavelly was our first grant recipient)

Comment 2:

- Like it all but especially the pollinators and bugs.
- Especially like the beauty of the wildlife.

Comment 3:

- I'd like to see that ANY rare species are continued to be protected
- Need diversity in the plant community to ensure diversity of all wildlife.

Comment 4:

- Proposed changes will bring the deer population to its knees – bears will leave, turkeys etc. Little lives on the savanna that's huntable. I have no interest in taking a walk through grass with my day, summer or winter. There is a simple contract solution for deer opener. Small game doesn't travel as far when disturbed. Deer will go miles, change all their land habits once timber vehicles mow down trees.

Q2: What native plants and native plant communities in the Sand Dunes State Forest do you enjoy and appreciate, and what are your concerns?

Stakeholder Advisory Group:

Comment 1:

- Most plants are of human impact. There are several interesting native species. However again very little can be called "native".

Comment 2:

- Biodiversity in both plants and animals are important. I enjoy and appreciate a wide variety of natives that support a healthy ecosystem. I am again concerned about rare species and wanted to see that the plan addresses their continued existence.

Comment 3:

- Native plants – stop DNR burning of poison ivy and poison oak for clear cutting – health concerns for residents.

Comment 4:

- Big and little bluestem are prevalent both on my property and on the dunes to the south. I have spotted a large area of hairy gamma grass (important for Uncas skipper) on the dune on my south border. Also have Indian switchgrass, and lots of native wildflowers in the area.
- A LARGE concern is how DNR will prevent damage to these fragile areas while doing their work.

Comment 5:

- Sand prairie, oak savanna and wetlands native oak/hardwood stands
- All native plants especially rare species, native prairie
- My concern is that lack of management of habitat will deter from their optimal expansions

Comment 6:

- What plans for invasive species?
- How will be notified when actions are taken?
 - i.e. burning – poison ivy, use of chemicals, effect on ground water tables
- I live on fence with DNR (section 28 – NE ¼) and have never been visited for a burn
- Instead of fire to reduce “loading” use more or replace with biomass harvesting.

Comment 7:

- Appreciate:
 - Mixed conifer oak forests
 - Large pure white pine stands (along CO Rd 10)
- Concerns:
 - The bias against white pine in the SDSF by those who promote open landscape management.
 - The loss of functional diversity in the removal of the conifers from the south SDSF.
 - The passion for rare feature management is clouding the objectivity in considering the concerns about this management.
 - The non-transparency of the cost of the management of rare features. Liz failed to mention that the cost of the biomass project alone on the south Uncas SNA was \$1200/acre.
 - The lack of specificity in management of the SDSF as spelled out in the ops plan. The devil is in the details
 - Inability to recreate what was here in the 1850's - the lack of detail on how will you manage for oak woodlands with oak wilt, bur oak blight, two line chestnut borer now part of the landscape and gypsy moth just around the corner.

Comment 8:

- Wildflowers and trees

Comment 9:

- All wild flowers

Comment 10:

- Rare species
- Native prairie, oak savanna, oak woodland

Comment 11:

- Dry barrens savanna
- Dry prairie
- Mesic oak savanna
- (all 3 – large scale losses)

Comment 12:

- Tree species/Harvest

Comment 13:

- The trees, wild flowers, the forest in general. I love the pine trees in the winter. When they are heavy with snow, my back yard is beautiful. I don't want to see them go.

Comment 14:

- The trees. What is a forest without them?
- If the animal habitat goes – they will too!

Comment 15:

- Trees
- Concerns – white pine is not being treated as a native plant with the proposed plan in the SDSF.

Comment 16:

- I love wildflowers, but I don't know the names of many of them. But many of the residents have native plants in our yards.

Comment 17:

- None

Audience:

Comment 1:

- Wetland, prairie, woodland, savannas, *some* pines.
- Warblers, sparrows, game birds, raptors, woodpeckers
- Wild flowers in each
- Would like to see blanding turtle increase.

Comment 2:

- I like it all and walk it a few times every year. I especially like the needle grass, creeping juniper, beach heather and all flowering species.

Comment 3:

- I'd like to see that the rare species currently there are protected as well as encouraging more diversity of all native species.

Comment 4:

- Pines, oaks, etc. Clear-cutting them is unacceptable. It's reasonable to harvest timber but selective cutting would cover it.
- Use of chemicals sounds nice but being FDA approved means little. FDA approved DDT, neonics that have been the cause of hive collapse. Totally banned in the entire E.U.

Q3: What advice and suggestions do you have for the DNR about managing wildlife in the Sand Dunes State Forest?

Stakeholder Advisory Group:

Comment 1:

- Focus on what a few hundred acres aid. In a statewide issue. Would not oak savanna be better in State Parks? State forests are for partly \$ generation. How will this pay back tax payers of MN?

Comment 2:

- Use good balances practices based on science, folks' opinions are important to hear but at the end of the day the best practice is based on the science. Education of the public and public involvement is key for buy in to the process.

Comment 3:

- Continue to work with the residents to form a collaborative plan, as set forth in the law.

Comment 4:

- If you start a project be *sure* it will be completed. I have big concerns about follow-through in a political climate.
- Wildlife does a pretty good job of managing itself if left undisturbed. If activity must take place, be sure areas with each animal group are identified and protected from disturbances, especially species that do not travel freely like snakes, turtles, lizards, etc.

Comment 5:

- Focus even more on rare species in that common species such as deer etc. will always do OK and if anything they (e.g. deer) pose a problem for habitat and species.

Comment 6:

- Show and tell how all practices will impact all wildlife.

Comment 7:

- Retain in mixed hardwood/conifer forests to maximize the biodiversity including the functional diversity (See new wildlife [plan?])
- Acquire additional farms and pastures, outside the forest, equivalent to what you want to convert.

Comment 8:

- Need to manage the "slash" after the tree thinning so the animals can move through the forest.

Comment 9:

- I hope to see the deer come back after this year's thinning of pines. It is not looking good yet.

Comment 10:

- Use science-based management techniques.
- Manage to recover declining species, especially those for which SDSF represents one of the only sustaining populations (e.g. Leonard's skipper).

Comment 11:

- Monitor your management and cooperate with Sherburne NWR to determine how deer or turkey can move back and forth. Those species can then lead to further studies on non-game species.

Comment 12:

- Need a plan/program

Comment 13:

- The DNR to work together with the people who live around the State Forest. I like my back yard I don't want to see the pine gone.

Comment 14:

- Wildlife need habitat. Prairie is not the cover they need. 30,000 acres in the SNWR is enough already, adding 3000 would not help.

Comment 15:

- Keep doing what you have been doing for last 50 years.

Comment 16:

- Always consider the residents and we will then get along!!! We don't want to breath in smoke especially with poison ivy. Also, we have wells and are concerned about herbicides.

Comment 17:

- Keep the hunting and maybe add some food plots where the trees have been cut.

Audience:

Comment 1:

- No hunting or trapping unless species are spoiling the ecosystem.
- Prairie chicken or sharptails a possibility?
- Would you introduce native bears(?)?

Comment 2:

- To manage it in a way for wildlife numbers to increase especially the more rare ones.

Comment 3:

- You can and should stop harvesting timber opening deer season.

Q4: What advice and suggestions do you have for the DNR about managing native plants and native plant communities in the Sand Dunes State Forest?

Stakeholder Advisory Group:

Comment 1:

- Do what we can afford! The new plans for oak savanna cannot pay for itself. Special interests in only oak savanna seem to totally dominate meetings. Monoculture thinking!

Comment 2:

- Go for maximum biodiversity in plants and wildlife.

Comment 3:

- Stop the use of burning and chemical use in the clear cutting process.

Comment 4:

- Same as above – identify locations of fragile species and STAY AWAY, especially hairy gamma grass on exposed dunes.
- Do not remove all non-native species, such as red-cedar, as these have become key habitat for bull snakes.

Comment 5:

- Accelerate removal of pine plantation and encroaching forest and shrub expansion into native prairie land oak savanna; 50 years is too short [long?] a timeframe: projects to enhance the native prairie community and oak savanna community should be brought to the top of DNR priority requests for Outdoor Heritage Legacy funds or other funding.

Comment 6:

- Seems a contradiction managing wildlife and monoculture plantations.
- Prescribed burns – plan with local fire, sheriff, hospital first before burn season
 - Local fire dept. complains no DNR contact.
 - How do you plan to find sensitive residents, again before first burn
- Want info on herbicides before using them.
 - Soil infiltration rates.
 - Half life of chemicals
 - How long before chemical breaks down naturally.

Comment 7:

- I have questions concerning the management of native species.
- I consider white pine a native plant in the SDSF.
- The questions I raise show the areas where I have concerns.
- The amount of white pine currently on the Anoka Sand Plan is very limited

Comment 8:

- Leave as is!

Comment 9:

- The plants are doing fine just the way they are.

Comment 10:

- Use science-based/adaptive management tools that effectively restore and manage(?) plant communities but also conserve rare intolerant wildlife.
- Do not let a vocal few stall the great restoration work underway and planned.

Comment 11:

- Work with Sherburne when conducting Rx burns and work together to plan management through the best research from both agencies.

Comment 12:

- Need a plan

Comment 13:

- Same thing as question 3 [work with local, don't want to see pine gone]. Expand on the plants that are native.

Comment 14:

- Pearl drop harvest of the pines – with white pine planting follow up.
- Go easy on the chemicals.
- Do not remove the pines!

Comment 15:

- Continue to operate the SDSF as a forest and continue to mix white pine/oak.

Comment 16:

- Same from above. There must be a balance with managing native plants and species with the Forest. What are you going to do about the plants, trees, etc. that citizens plant on their property? Won't they spread into your plan?

Comment 17:

- Please make a note of this: Keep the plants that like the shade of the pines.
- No burning
- Have a moratorium on the change to oak savanna in other words wait say 10 years to see what becomes of the (Sherburne) and areas already converted.

Audience:

Comment 1:

- Re-establish prairies – savannas to the extent possible.
- Protect endangered and threatened species.
- Preserve some pines for future old growth (100-200 years) as example to the public of what could be elsewhere.
- Minimize rather than maximizing hunting and trapping, no need to eliminate such
- Control horse and ATVs, they can spread exotics
- No horses or ATVs in SNAs
- Endemic berry bearing shrubs should be introduced for local and migrating birds and pollinators.
- Timbering should be a secondary interest

- Can you control exotics?

Comment 2:

- To manage it in a way for all native plant numbers to increase especially the more rare ones. Also manage it better to control invasives and non-approved uses.
- I want maximum biodiversity and expansion of habitat.

Comment 3:

- They are doing ok without your input.
- I don't believe there is an accurate model to predict the supposed global warming issue you think will change the pines. If so please reference that study.
- Further chemicals proposed in being used need to be listed along with all procedures followed for its application and who is applying it. Many chemicals are new, some old, but its constantly changing. I have little faith that the FDA is on top of that.

Appendix D: DNR Responses to Suggestions from SDSF Stakeholder Advisory Group Meeting 3: Recreation

Suggestions that we can incorporate or already incorporate in our work...

- Keep pines in the campground
 - A: A more defined understanding of the time frame and approach to pine removal within the campground of the Bob Dunn Recreation Area and also within close proximity of the individual campsites is being discussed. DNR has decided to extend the timeline (originally 2022 – p.5 of operational plan) for pine removal immediately surrounding the campsites; these areas would be considered part of the Eventual Rare Features Management Zone. Gradual pine removal will occur over time, being planned and based on public safety, forest health issues, native species, shade benefit, and site location. Pine removal in the campground as a whole is still planned for the Immediate Rare Features Management Zone, but specific plans for making removal a ‘soft transition’ are still being discussed.
- Work with user groups/“friends groups”/other volunteers to clear litter from trails
 - A: The DNR encourages and welcomes volunteer assistance. User groups have assisted with designated projects in the past. Due to liability and safety risks on state property, Volunteer Forms are used to describe the duties or services being provided, identify who is involved, provide information on safety or logistics, and to help coordinate these efforts.
- Work with County trail plan, Big Lake to SNWR; connect north and south units with a bridge over the St. Francis river
 - A: The DNR has identified the need for a safe trail connection between the north and south units of the Sand Dunes in order to enhance and fully utilize the recreational opportunities and use. The Division of Parks and Trails Area level has identified and listed this as a priority project. The DNR has previously sought funding for this through the DOT’s Transportation Enhancement Program and through a local Representative involving the LCMR. A land swap involving the DNR and US Fish and Wildlife was previously completed (in the area where a bridge crossing could occur), to improve the feasibility of a future bridge being constructed. Funding a project of this scope will require multiple partnerships. For County Trail planning, refer to the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Plan/Council – District 4.
- Ask horse riders to dispose of manure
 - A: The DNR currently has manure bins/bunkers placed at the Horse Camp, the North Trailhead, and the South Trailhead. Signage to better encourage the use of those bins could be considered.
- Advertise horse camp as ‘destination location’ for out-of-state users
 - A: This may require a better understanding of the request and involvement from user groups.
- Post the recreational rules and safety guidelines in more areas
 - A: The DNR Division of Parks and Trails has developed a newer version of recreational rules and guidelines intended to be more user friendly and concise. This sign is currently

being used along state trails/parks. Either that sign or a similar version could be considered.

- Post directional and interpretive signs along designated walking trails
 - A: The DNR Division of Parks and Trails signs the designated trails with rules, designated use, and directional arrows. The DNR does not sign trails that are non-designated. Re-signing, replacing missing or damaged signs, and adding new signs can be considered, based partly on funding. “You Are Here” signs/maps were installed along horse trails in recent years.
- Educate people about methods of forest production/replanting
 - A: Current outreach efforts include the School Forest and other Forestry Outreach Unit programs. The operational plan also calls for outreach efforts, such as interpretive signage at trailheads in the SDSF. DNR is open to other suggestions for new means of outreach and education.
- Inform locals about timing of upcoming prescribed burns
 - A: Burns usually take place in April/May. Advanced notice of burns are difficult because the exact burn dates are dependent on the weather. However, field staff notify adjacent landowners on the day of a burn. DNR can also provide a map of the projected burn sites for the year to the town board.
- Prepare landscape for impacts of climate change
 - A: According to climate models, some species of trees are projected to do better in the Sand Dunes under expected climate changes while some will do worse, due to changes in the availability of suitable habitat. Red pine, the most abundant plantation species in the Sand Dunes, is expected to decrease under the new climate regime, while white pine is expected to increase. Northern red oak and northern pin oak are expected to decrease, while bur oak – which was once the most common tree species in the Sand Dunes – is expected to remain steady, and white oak will increase. The operational plan emphasizes increased species diversity in the forest management zone, which may help offset the expected loss of red pine. Further, the plan emphasizes bur oak as the target dominant tree species in the rare features management zones, especially in the savannas. This aligns with climate models as even under a high greenhouse gas emissions scenario bur oak is not expected to be negatively impacted by climate change in the region.
- Demonstrate to stakeholders what changes will look like
 - A: The project team is scheduling a field tour this fall in SDSF.

Suggestions that require more discussion before decisions can be made...

- Get user input on proposed changes to campground
 - A: Proposed changes to the campground and to individual campsites will vary by location and will be implemented gradually as opportunities occur. DNR is open to soliciting input from campground users on the changes to the campground; however, more discussion would be needed to determine who to target for feedback and how feedback should be collected, in order to ensure a well-informed, useful feedback process. This could potentially require a great amount of staff time.
- Manage poison ivy along trails

- A: The DNR performs spot treatments along designated trails for control of invasive species, where deemed necessary. Poison ivy is a native, though undesirable plant that is extremely widespread throughout the forest. Efforts to control it within the trail corridor would require a great amount of effort, which would require additional resources including personnel and materials. It would also require increased pesticide use in the Sand Dunes. However, additional signage can be considered at trailheads or along trail to educate and inform users of its presence.
- Work with horse riders to reduce invasive species/erosion – e.g. restrict horses to trails only, and restrict riding in areas with rare species
 - A: The DNR is committed in educating and informing users about reducing the spread of invasive species. The DNR has placed a boot brush/sign at the north Trail Head to educate hikers of this. Similar efforts could be considered with equine use. More discussion with the horse riders would be beneficial.
 - A: Currently, most State Forests allow unrestricted horse riding anywhere in the forest, **MN Administrative Rule 6100.1355 Subp.2.** (excluding SNA's or where otherwise posted). Restricting horse riding to designated trails would require more enforcement and signage. The DNR regularly looks for opportunities to re-route trails that are prone to erosion and move them to more sustainable locations. The DNR also has the ability to harden trails, where justified, to better handle recreational use.
 - The DNR is examining the issue of horses in the Uncas Dunes SNA and more information is forthcoming.
- Allow equine winter trail use
 - A: There are a variety of questions and issues that would require more discussion on this topic among such things as timelines, public safety, services/staffing, and liability.
- Open the campground earlier in the spring/later in the fall to avoid bugs
 - A: More discussion will be needed to better identify dates, schedules, and staffing limits. Current plans are for both Campgrounds to open April 1 and close October 31.
- Consider geocache opportunities in the SDSF
 - A: It is very likely that geocache opportunities may already exist in the Sand Dunes State Forest. User reports indicate that geocaching does occur. Staff do not maintain caches.
- Install a boat landing on Ann Lake for canoe/kayak use
 - A: A Public Water Access currently exists on the north side of Ann Lake, which is administered by Orrock Township. A plank agreement between the Township and the State is in place for that boat launch. Ann Lake is approximately 185 acres in size. A lake of this size would not justify 2 boat landings. Also, the current day use area at the Ann Lake Campground allows users to carry canoes or kayaks to the lake from the parking area.
- Improve gates/barriers to stop illegal ORV use
 - A: Gates and barriers are largely managed by Forestry staff. They are generally effective and are sometimes combined with berms to prohibit illegal use. ORV's are prohibited in the Sand Dunes. DNR Conservation Officers patrol these areas regularly but are limited in being present all of the time
- Consider methods for attracting more wildlife observers – e.g. wildlife lists on hikes

- A: DNR can consider adding interpretive signage. Will require more discussion and funding?
- Engage youth – e.g. youth corps, Scouts/schools ‘adopt’ SDSF, demonstrations, ‘forest in the classroom’ (like ‘ag in the classroom’)
 - A: DNR can consider partnering with existing or new efforts. However, staff limitations exist.
- DNR could consider purchasing the 40 acres next to the horse camp
 - A: The DNR would be open to potentially purchase the land if it were to come up for sale, but the department only works with willing sellers. The DNR will not actively seek purchase of land that is not for sale. This is also likely outside the scope of the operational plan.
- Enforce rules of SDSF (Penalize those who abuse recreational privileges in SDSF; enforce rules of SNA (i.e. no horses, motorized vehicles, target shooting))
 - A: DNR supports use of the Boundary Trail in the SNA as a horse trail and has no plans at this time to enforce a ‘no horse’ policy on that trail. However, off-trail horse use is prohibited and will be enforced. This and other rules are enforced as Division of Enforcement staff capacity allows, however, the division is implementing efforts to step up enforcement in the SDSF.
- No change needed – recreation is already high-quality – sustain it
 - A: Change is inevitable on any landscape, as ecological lands are dynamic. Pressures from climate change, forest pests and invasive species, and growing populations in the urban/wildland intersection will bring change to the Sand Dunes. The DNR plans to implement certain changes proactively in order to increase the resiliency of the Sand Dunes landscape in the future so that it may continue to provide timber, habitat, and high-quality recreation.
- Implement plans to expand/enhance oak savanna plant and dune communities, in order to expand rare species habitat
 - A: The DNR aims to improve rare species management efforts in the Sand Dunes; however, the specifics of the implementation of that management are being informed through this public engagement effort.

Suggestions that would be very difficult to implement...

- Time harvests so they do not conflict with recreation (e.g. deer opener)
 - This is a difficult issue to balance. Once a harvest is sold by DNR, loggers have a wide window of time to complete the harvest. There are already certain restriction on this window, such as barring timeframes where soil conditions are not appropriate for heavy machinery. The more restrictions that are placed on a logger’s timeframe to harvest, the less valuable the sale will be, which could result in fewer funds for School Trust and forest management. Loggers generally try to be accommodating to the firearm season. However, with the length and frequency of certain hunting seasons, it is difficult to restrict all logging operations during/before all hunting seasons.
- Hire more DNR staff in the SDSF (get Legislature on board)

- A: This would require a Legislative initiative that would need to be weighed against many other staffing needs at DNR and across agencies. This is outside the scope of the plan.
- Stop hiking on non-designated trails
 - A: Part of the function and value of State Forests is to allow recreational use throughout the public land. Changing or restricting that would require considerable discussion and action.

Misunderstandings and misinformation...

- DNR should be minimally involved in managing SDSF – trees are doing fine on their own.
 - A: Many unnatural factors impact our forests today and will continue to do so into the future: climate change, invasive species, habitat loss due to land use conversion to residential or agricultural uses. Active land management helps keep healthy ecosystems on the landscape. Also, the operational plan is intended to help wildlife and plant populations that are not doing well on their own anymore, due to previous and continued human impacts.

Appendix E: Reference Information

Where to Find Information about the Sand Dunes State Forest:

1. Link to the Anoka Sandplains Subsection Plan and Appendix C - Operational Plan for the Sand Dunes State Forest:
<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/forestry/subsection/anoka/plan.html>
2. Instructions on how to subscribe to the DNR GovDelivery service to receive information about recent and upcoming activities in the Sand Dunes State Forest:
 - Go to this address <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/emailupdates/index.html>
 - Fill in your email address in the white box (scroll down to the yellow area labeled "General Public"), then click on "GO"
 - If you are a new subscriber, you will be asked to confirm your email address first. Fill in the form and click "Submit" at the bottom of the page. You should receive an email confirming that you have signed up.
 - Next, under "destinations" check the box next to Sand Dunes State Forest. Scroll to bottom of page and click on "submit."
 - You will automatically receive any future GovDelivery messages sent to the Sand Dunes list.
3. Link to DNR Website With Information About All Minnesota State Forests:
http://dnr.state.mn.us/state_forests/index.html
4. Link to DNR Website for the Sand Dunes State Forest:
http://dnr.state.mn.us/state_forests/sft00045/index.html
5. Lake Maria State Park phone: 763-878-2325
6. Little Falls Area Forestry phone: 320-616-2450