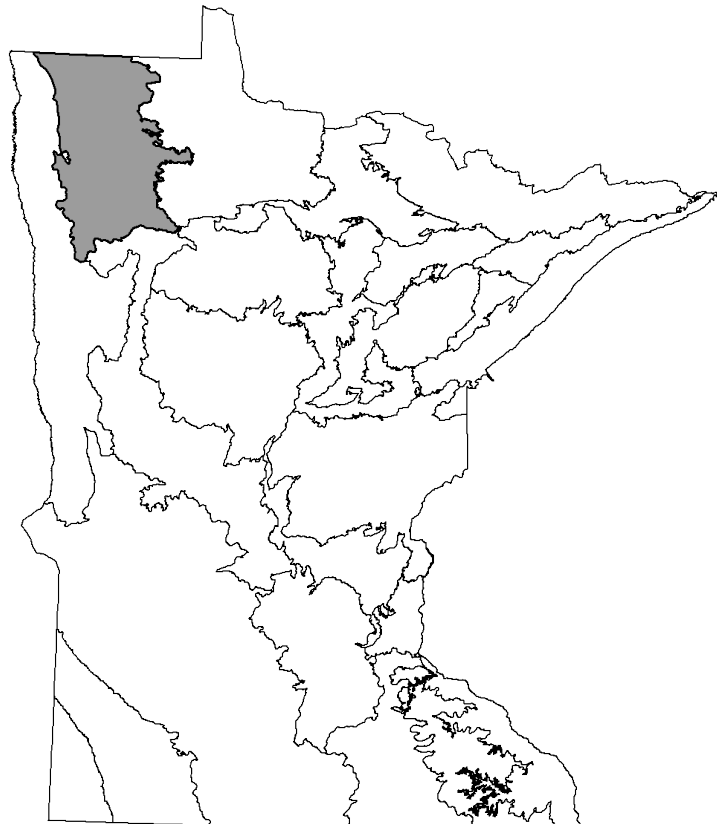


# ASPEN PARKLANDS

## Subsection Forest Resource Management Plan

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### Final Plan Fiscal Year (FY) 2012-2021



Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
June 2011



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## Executive Summary

This Subsection Forest Resource Management Plan (SFRMP) includes management direction, strategies, and goals for vegetation management on state lands administered by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Division of Forestry and Section of Wildlife in the Aspen Parklands (AP) Subsection. The AP landscape covers approximately 2.9 million acres in northwestern Minnesota. State lands comprise approximately 355,000 acres or 12% of the land ownership in the subsection. Approximately 95,000 acres (27%) of the state lands are considered forest and woodlands. These were the primary vegetation types considered for the resource management objectives in this plan.

The AP SFRMP has taken into consideration all appropriate legislative requirements and DNR directions. In addition, this plan has considered and coordinated with vegetation management plans of other land managers: The Nature Conservancy, Minnesota Forest Resource Council – Northern Landscape Committee, and Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge. The strategies and desired future conditions contained in this plan are consistent with the goals of the other land managers in the subsection.

Primary elements of the AP SFRMP include analysis of existing forest conditions, development of desired future forest composition (DFFCs), and a stand exam list which identifies stands to be field visited during the 10-year plan implementation period to determine specific stand treatments. The AP SFRMP recommends the following:

1. Move toward a balanced age-class distribution for even-aged managed cover types that contain sufficient acreage to achieve a balanced age-class;
2. Implement strategies to increase wildlife habitat for identified species;
3. Identify and maintain old forests;
4. Increase the acres of young forest in the subsection;
5. Provide a sustainable supply of forest products;
6. Increase overall timber productivity, consistent with other strategies;
7. Convert a portion of the aspen/balm of Gilead cover types to openlands and brushlands;
8. Convert a portion of the aspen/balm of Gilead to the Oak cover type;
9. Identify and manage a portion of the aspen/balm of Gilead, lowland black spruce, and tamarack cover types as extended rotation forest;
10. Designate and manage forest patches;
11. Limit or mitigate visual impact of management activities;
12. Follow site-level guidelines for riparian areas to assist with protection of water quality in the subsection;
13. Identify and maintain existing cultural resources;
14. Identify and protect important plant and animal species; and,
15. Consider natural disturbance regimes to manage timber harvesting on a sustainable basis.

Vegetation management will provide a broad range of habitats that meet the needs of game and nongame species, while providing for the specific habitat needs of individual species when appropriate. A goal for the plan is to provide healthy, self-sustaining populations of all native plant, fish and wildlife species and a few desirable introduced species. Specific strategies will be implemented that reduce the negative impacts caused by wildlife species on forest vegetation.

Old forest will be maintained on a small percentage of state lands in the subsection. The long-term effective extended rotation forest percentage goals for the even-aged managed cover types are listed below:

- Aspen/balm of Gilead – 3%;
- Lowland black spruce – 11-16%; and,
- Tamarack – 5%.

Old forest conditions will also be provided in uneven-aged managed cover types, ecologically important lowland conifers (EILC), and around designated old-growth stands.

The plan calls for more traditional forest management on approximately 58% of timberlands in the subsection. For example, 28,559 acres of the aspen/balm of Gilead forest is to be eventually managed between 45 to 65 years of age. A shorter rotation, between 35 and 45 years of age, will be used on another 16,577 acres of the aspen/balm of Gilead cover type group during the first 10-years of plan implementation.

An overarching goal of the plan is to enhance open landscapes, primarily brush and grass cover types, but also young forest. To meet this long-term goal, some aspen/balm of Gilead stands (15,478 total acres) will be managed or converted to other non-forested cover types over the first two decades of the plan. Some of the young forest habitat, further discussed below, will also contribute to this open landscape goal. This is especially true for 24,595 acres or 29% of aspen/balm of Gilead cover type acreage that will eventually be managed on a 20 year or less rotation.

Over the long-term, the plan is to maintain approximately 54,000 acres (78%) of the remaining aspen/balm of Gilead cover type as young forest under 30 years of age. Of these 54,000 acres, almost 30,000 acres will be generated from stands managed on at least a 20 year rotation up to stands managed on a rotation of 65 years of age.

An increase in the acres of the grass, brush and oak cover types is a goal for the state lands in the subsection during implementation of this plan. The aspen/balm of Gilead cover type will be targeted to achieve the cover type increases for each cover type presented below:

- Increase the oak cover type by 400 acres (41%) during the first ten-year planning period and by 749 acres (77.5%) over the next 50-years; and,
- Increase brush and grass cover types in the subsection by 7,733 acres (4.3%) during the first ten-year planning period and by 15,563 acres (8.6%) mostly by the end of the second planning decade;

Patch management within the subsection during implementation of this plan will emphasize designated large forest patches and increasing their average size over time. Six percent of the DNR timberlands addressed by this plan have been designated as forested patches. Riparian areas will be managed to provide habitat for fish, wildlife and plant species. The Minnesota Forest Resource Council's (MFRC's) "*Voluntary Site-Level Forest Management Guidelines*" will be applied on all state lands. These guidelines identify specific management strategies for riparian areas that maintain quality for fisheries and animal habitat, eliminate visual impacts and provide for erosion control throughout the subsection.

Minnesota County Biological Surveys (MCBSs) have been completed for a majority of the counties that are in the subsection (i.e. Kittson, Marshall, Pennington, Red Lake, and Roseau Counties). MCBSs for Beltrami, Clearwater, and Polk Counties are currently in progress. The Survey documented some important sites of biodiversity significance. Strategies have been developed to manage state lands in these MCBS sites while

sustaining or minimizing the loss to the biodiversity significance factors on which the MCBS sites were ranked. Known locations of rare plants and animals and their habitats and rare native plant communities will be protected, maintained, or enhanced on state lands in the subsection.

The treatment level (i.e. harvest, thinning, etc.) recommended for the 10-year plan shows a dramatic increase in timber offered in the first two decades of the planning period when compared with past harvest volumes in the subsection (i.e. 489,764 cords offered in FY 2012-2021 compared to 224,700 cords sold in FY 2000-2009). After the first two planning periods (FY 2012-2031) the timber offered for sale in the subsection will return to the more traditional levels that have been offered in the past (i.e. 2000-2009 levels).

Other issues addressed in the plan include:

- Protecting wetland and seasonal ponds;
- Limiting damage from insects, disease, and exotic species;
- Minimizing forest management impacts on visual quality;
- Monitoring climate change effects on forest lands;
- Protecting cultural resources;
- Evaluating disturbance events; and,
- Planning new road accesses.

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