

Procedure Fact Sheet

Guiding Principles and Process



Guiding Principles

The following principles can be used to guide the use of sustainable forest management indicators:

- 1. Constructive dialogue works best:** Our society performs best when we find ways to share our common interests democratically and fairly through constructive communication and consensual agreement. Use of sustainable forest management indicators can lead to clear, unambiguous, consensual, public policy decisions that will help prevent confrontation and debate as well as challenges to resource managers by diverse public interest groups pursuing their own particular preferences.
- 2. Sustainability is a journey, not a destination:** Society is already in general agreement about the goal of sustainability for our resources and humanity. The pathway to sustainability belongs to all of us. It is the workplace of all resource managers and scientists as well as policymakers and resource interest groups. The struggle to live in harmony with our environment is unending – a challenge for which there is no scientific, perfect, permanent, short-term solution. Vigilance and monitoring through the use of indicators become our task in steering the course to sustainability.
- 3. Progress on the sustainability pathway is incremental and adaptive:** The dynamics and unpredictability of science, plus uncertainties about the course of markets, public preferences, and policy, as well as technology and nature, make progress adaptive—an unending learning experience for resource managers, policymakers, and the public alike. Old problems are solved, but new ones appear. Indicators are a tool for a learning society to use to advance systematically, step by step, by making informed decisions and taking sound actions that offer continuing benefits as it steers its way towards environmental, economic, and social sustainability.
- 4. A framework for discussion and measurement is needed:** As a learning society, we need a framework that acknowledges the evolving nature of the pathway towards sustainability and its longer-term and larger scale dimensions. Making that framework explicit through the use of indicators offers the opportunity to create a more communal and hopeful approach for sustaining our society and environment.
- 5. There is a wide range of sustainable outcomes:** The uncertainties of nature and our resource science, technology, markets, values, and policy indicate that there is a range of feasible sustainable outcomes. Nature itself does not have a specific goal for its ecosystems, nor does it set targets for the future. Likewise sustainability is not a unique target or a fixed point but a wide range of acceptable or desirable outcomes. There must be a range of acceptable routes or courses to sustainability. The actual route taken is ultimately a political decision in a democratic society.
- 6. Separating long-term and short-term decisions is critical:** Public discourse, debate, and confrontations about resource use and management tend to be concentrated on individual practices and lack a strategic understanding of how as we a society advance towards a more sustainable environmental, economy, and society. The outer bounds of sustainability involve long-term policy considerations, whereas choices on the preferable course of action are shorter-term policy considerations, much like adaptive management decisions. Current debates have been more

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persistent and resistant to general solution partly because we confuse the outer bounds of sustainability with the social choice for a preferred course within those bounds. Instead of trying to address them simultaneously, we must sort out the long-term policy issues of the bounds of the sustainable pathway from the short-term choice of courses within those borders. Indicators provide a needed focus on long-term policies.

7. **Indicators will help light the pathway to sustainability:** Selected indicators must be responsive to public values and equitably address all five *Statewide Forest Plan* goals. The information from indicator measurements will help identify emerging or developing conditions that may constitute a threat to exceed the limits (outer bounds) of sustainability and facilitate the adjustment or improvement of public policies.*

Partners, Monitoring, and Maintenance

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resource Division of Forestry will take the lead on maintaining and reporting on the chosen indicators and metrics. It is assumed that monitoring and data collection will increase over time and it is the Wisconsin Council on Forestry's hope that a continued increase and refinement in the number and quality of indicators and metrics will improve the information about Wisconsin's forest sustainability. Partner organizations will be instrumental in this effort to share monitoring plans and data collected.

Currently funding is not available to choose indicators and metrics for which there is not already data available. However, that should not discourage involvement of these indicators and metrics. Excellent indicators and metrics that are only currently limited by funding should be listed and defined with what is needed to implement them. This list will provide goals for future monitoring efforts.

* John Fedkiw, D.W. MacCleery, and V.A. Sample, *Pathway to Sustainability: Defining the Bounds of Forest Management* (North Carolina: Forest History Society, 2004), 7-23.