

COUNCIL ON FORESTRY – RED PINE / RED OAK REFORESTION

Status Summary – January 2025

Background:

The concern, and of potential consideration for the Council on Forestry to address, is the decrease in acreage of these young forests, and the challenges potentially impacting public and private landowner's abilities to regenerate these forest types moving forward.

What do we know?

(In no particular order)

- Private and some public landowner objectives tend to shy away from “plantations”, even-age management and can be biased against using prescribed fire
- The word “plantation” tends to have a negative connotation, especially with private landowners. The “plantations” of the CCC era are not the same as today's re: rows, species diversity, wildlife habitat, etc. May need a substitute word or phrase.
- The Wisconsin County Forests have expressed challenges getting sites reforested after harvest due to the lack of site prep contractor availability in the region. A needs assessment was done in Spring 2023. WCFA supplied an article to TPA and WWOA on site prep challenges.
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources struggles with the availability of tree seedlings and seed, but not so much with site prep contractor capacity.
- Site prep is an overall concern for the USFS R9. Wisconsin and Michigan are able to do some site prep work in house. National forests in Minnesota need to be cutting more red pine. Pulp markets in Wisconsin and Minnesota increase struggles. Michigan has the opposite problem of trees getting too big for the mills. They are interested in working together to find solutions.
- There are state, NRCS and consultant sources for private landowner assistance - largely on the what / how to do topics, but lacking on logistical implementation.
- There are Federal and state cost sharing options, presently limited to a portion of costs, maybe opportunities to change % of cost covered or add more \$\$ so more acreage can be covered.
- DNR has a "reforestation" web page with resources. <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/TreePlanting>, with a limited list of vendors. Can this be built out more?
- DNR has very limited equipment to lend, decreasing over time because of maintenance and upkeep costs and declining demand. What's the potential to build this back up?
- Potlatch and Futurewood have expressed interest in helping landowners with site prep. Both have expressed possibly buying large equipment.
- Bell Timber has taken notice of the issue and has expressed concerns about the long-term availability of red pine resource for their mills.
- BCPL is concerned about lack of available site prep contractors.
- Issue could be an opportunity for a research project and/or papers.
- Very poor pulp markets for first thinnings exacerbates the issue.
- Current FIA data shows a significant valley in the future for red pine and red oak.
- FSC and SFI certifications require reforestation of harvested sites. (see page 4)
- PRT Growing Services, one of the premier growers of containerized stock in North America has expressed major concerns about the availability of seed - *“Seed inventories across all suppliers, as well as customer-owned seed, are in poor condition—particularly for red pine. Many suppliers have completely exhausted*

their stock. To address this, we will be organizing several cone collection programs across the GLS region and into Ontario, which we hope will help improve the current situation. It's crucial for the industry to collaborate and discuss strategies to address and improve this challenge. Seed should be a topic of discussion at all industry meetings/conferences.” They are interested in participating in a roundtable discussion.

- It appears there are issues and concerns all along the chain of reforestation – seed, site prep, planting, stand improvement/thinning, markets, etc

What do we not know?

(In no particular order)

- What exactly is the need? Need to collect and analysis data
- How many acres do we expect to lose of this resource? Need FIA analysis in understandable context.
- What exactly are the main constraints and roadblocks?
- What’s the ecological need for Red Pine and Red Oak?
- How significant of a problem is the lack of available site preparation equipment/ contractors?
- What will the availability of migrant planting crews be in the future?
- What would be plan B, if the traditional methods of site preparation and timber stand improvement were no longer an option?
- Does WEDC or other state or federal agencies have a role to play? Can they help (financially, subsidies, WFLGP)? What is the “business” case for the need?
- What’s the short-term and long-term economic impact?
- What are the survival rates with different levels of pre and post-harvest site prep re: herbicide levels, soil carbon loss, etc)?
- What are the overall costs and benefits of increased efforts to establish more acreage of young red pine and oak/hickory forests?
- What are the implications if no action is taken?
- Are the only species of concern red pine and red oak? Are there others?
- What are the stressors/ challenges on seedlings/ young trees? Deer, drought, etc?

Who is the audience?

(In no particular order)

- Governor
- State legislators, who can influence funding
- DNR Secretary
- Need to make the case – why should people & markets care? The future of certain species, potential risk of loss. Make the connection between regeneration, forest health, diversity and forest resilience

What are the desired outcomes/ solutions?

(In no particular order)

- Possible establishment of DNR reforestation specialist – be a subject matter expert, ability to write grants, train foresters, help with landowner messaging on the importance of reforestation, coordinate logistics across landowners. What would the DNR need to create this position?
- Increased seed collection
- Increased site prep contractor capacity
- Increased markets for pulpwood
- Increased landowner awareness to factor in when determining management objectives on private and public lands

Recommendations:

- Don't reinvent the wheel
- Expanded round table discussion with all interested stakeholders.
- Conduct resource analysis
- Conduct needs assessment

Sustainable Forestry Initiative

Objective 2. Forest Health and Productivity

To ensure *long-term forest productivity, forest health and conservation* of forest resources through prompt *reforestation, afforestation*, deploying *integrated pest management strategies, minimized chemical use, soil conservation*, and protecting forests from damaging agents.

Performance Measure 2.1. *Certified Organizations* shall promptly reforest after final harvest.

Indicators:

1. Documented *reforestation* plans, including designation of all harvest areas for either natural, planted, or direct seeded regeneration and prompt *reforestation*, unless delayed for site-specific environmental or *forest health* considerations or legal requirements, through *planting* within two years or two *planting* seasons, or by planned *natural regeneration* methods within five years.
2. Clear criteria to judge adequate regeneration and appropriate actions to correct understocked areas and achieve acceptable species composition and stocking rates for *planting, direct seeding, and natural regeneration*.
3. *Plantings of native or non-invasive naturalized tree species* are preferred. In exceptional circumstances where *exotic tree species* are being planted, they should not increase risk to *native ecosystems*.
4. *Protection of desirable or planned advanced natural regeneration* during harvest.

Forest Stewardship Council

C6.3 Ecological functions and values shall be maintained intact, enhanced, or restored, including:

- a) **Forest regeneration and succession.**
- b) **Genetic, species, and ecosystem diversity.**
- c) **Natural cycles that affect the productivity of the forest ecosystem.**

C8.2 Forest management should include the research and data collection needed to monitor, at a minimum, the following indicators:

- a) **Yield of all forest products harvested.**
- b) **Growth rates, regeneration and condition of the forest.**
- c) **Composition and observed changes in the flora and fauna.**
- d) **Environmental and social impacts of harvesting and other operations.**
- e) **Costs, productivity, and efficiency of forest management.**

Indicator 8.2.a.1 For all commercially harvested products, an inventory system is maintained. The inventory system includes at a minimum: a) species, b) volumes, c) stocking, d) regeneration, and e) stand and forest composition and structure; and f) timber quality.

Indicator 6.3.a.1 The forest owner or manager maintains, enhances, and/or restores under-represented *successional* stages in the FMU that would naturally occur on the types of sites found on the FMU. Where old growth of different community types that would naturally occur on the forest are under-represented in the landscape relative to natural conditions, a portion of the forest is managed to enhance and/or restore old growth characteristics.