

MANAGED FOREST LAW (MFL) TASK EFFICIENCIES (TE) CONCEPTS

Council on Forestry Meeting March 25, 2014

A. PROGRESS SINCE SEPTEMBER COUNCIL ON FORESTRY MEETING

- Public comments reviewed and considered (*See* Summary of Comments on the Concepts for Discussion for WDNR Tax Law Administration Efficiencies.)
- MFL Task Efficiencies Ad Hoc Team used comments to update identified concepts.
- Forestry Leadership Team (FLT) discussed and identified concepts to implement. (*See* item C below.)
- Project Manager assigned to oversee implementation concepts. (*See* item B below.)
- Field Operations Team (FOT) discussed and decided team format and composition for the groups that will work to implement the concepts FLT identified.

B. ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND

1. **Project Manager**—Nina Carranco, Forest Tax Operations Specialist, will serve as the overall project manager for implementing all MFL TE concepts. In this role, her responsibilities will include: monitoring the overall progress of implementing each MFL TE concept; reporting, on the progress of implementation of each MFL TE concept, to the Division of Forestry management and management teams; ensuring teams are on-track to complete implementation in the specified timeframe; and ensuring teams are implementing concepts and not re-thinking the purposes of the identified concepts.
2. **Project Timeline**—the timelines for completing work to implement the concepts were discussed and identified by FLT. Generally, the timeline identified for this work will result in the majority of concepts being completed by December 2014.

C. SUMMARY OF CONCEPTS TO BE IMPLEMENTED

1. CONCEPT: Criteria to determine when to invest in a field review to approve a cutting notice.

Overview of Concept: Approve and implement a list of criteria for DNR Foresters to use to determine if a field review is warranted by the local DNR foresters to approve a cutting notice. This process will reduce the amount of field review time spent on routine, “low risk” harvests that have been established properly and lead to consistent review of cutting notices statewide.

Concept Team Structure: FOT approved an ad hoc team to implement this concept. Members of this ad hoc team will include the following: (1) a DNR forestry area leader; (2) two DNR foresters; and (3) a cooperating forester. These members are currently being assigned.

2. CONCEPT: Stand evaluation - providing a consistent method to evaluate a proposed selection harvest on MFL Lands.

Overview of Concept: Review and evaluate the stand evaluation tool and its potential use statewide in addition to the criteria on when to use this tool. Full use of this evaluation procedure can lead to better management of tax law lands, eliminate disagreements over quality of marking, and ultimately result in an efficiently administered tax law program.

Concept Team Structure: FOT approved an ad hoc team to implement this concept. Members of this ad hoc team will include: a DNR section chief, a DNR Silviculturist –Ecologist, and four DNR area forestry leaders. These members are currently being assigned.

3. CONCEPT: Cutting notice guidance - A new simple, webpage.

Overview of Concept: Develop a customer driven and user friendly webpage focused on the cutting notice. The webpage could be modeled after the “all about general permits” webpage utilized for waterway permits. Development of the new webpage should increase efficiencies because landowners and partners will have a better understanding of the process and expectations for cutting notices providing more time for DNR foresters to focus on reviewing the proposed harvest practices.

Concept Team Structure: FOT approved the Private Lands Management Team (PLMT) to implement this concept. PLMT includes three members from the Bureau of Forest Management (a section chief, the private forestry specialists, and the forest tax operations specialist), a wildlife biologist, a DNR representative from the Natural Heritage Conservation Bureau, four DNR foresters, one from each of the four Division of Forestry districts (Northwest, Northeast West Central, and Southern), a DNR forestry area leader that serves on FOT, a landowner representative, a cooperating forester representative, and a natural resource educator. In addition, a DNR employee from the Bureau of Forestry Services with website design skill will be assigned to work with the team on implementing this concept.

4. CONCEPT: Expedite the development of electronic submission and review of cutting notices with in Wisconsin Forest Inventory & Reporting System (WisFIRS).

Overview of Concept: Develop a tool in WisFIRS that facilitates completion, review, and approval of cutting notices. Development and use of this tool will save time because DNR foresters will be able to focus on content review.

Concept Team Structure: FOT approved a DNR internal team (that works on the development of WisFIRS) with the addition of two DNR foresters to work on implementing this concept. This team is comprised of the following DNR staff: a forester, the forest tax operations specialists, the forest tax enforcement specialist, the private forestry team leader, the public & private forestry section chief, the geographic information system (GIS) program manager, the information technology development program manager, and a budget management associate.

5. CONCEPT: Consolidate current standard operating procedures for cutting notices.

Overview of Concept: Consolidate all elements related to the cutting notice review and approval in the Tax Law Handbook into one comprehensive section. This action will increase efficiencies by providing DNR, Cooperating Foresters and others the ability to locate information quickly and consistently.

Concept Team Structure: FOT approved the Private Lands Management Team (PLMT) to implement this concept. Please see item 3 above for the list of the individuals that serve on PLMT.

6. CONCEPT: New cutting notice standard operating procedures (SOPs).

Overview of Concept: Develop new SOPs that incorporate the process flow chart and results of implementing other MFL TE concepts. Starting on this task is dependent on other MFL TE concepts being implemented. For example, the criteria to complete a field review will need to be built into new SOPs once approved as well as instructions related to the WisFIRS cutting notice tool. As such, implementation of this concept may wait until other MFL TE concepts are completed.

Concept Team Structure: FOT approved the Private Lands Management Team (PLMT) to implement this concept. Please see item 3 above for the list of the individuals that serve on PLMT.

7. CONCEPT: Dynamic, timely, transparent, and institutional process for updating standard operating procedures (SOPs).

Overview of Concept: Develop a two-prong approach to get information on policy and program changes to the public: (1) develop Laws and Regulations webpage with links to handbooks, notices, and authorizing statutes and other official correspondence and (2) a notice system which

is used to implement changes quickly. Notices may or may not become part of official handbook update.

Concept Team Structure: FOT approved an ad hoc team to implement this concept. Members of this team will include: two DNR foresters, a member of the Forest Tax Program, and DNR employee from the Bureau of Forestry Services with website design skills. These members are currently being assigned.

8. CONCEPT: A clearly defined policy that defines sound forestry for MFL using the DNR Silvicultural Handbook and the Wisconsin Forest Managed Guidelines (FMGs) as Generally Acceptable Practices (GAPs).

Overview of Concept: Reaffirm the definition of sound forestry, for the purposes of administering the tax law programs, to be the GAPs within the DNR Silviculture Handbook and FMGs. Incorporate this policy into handbooks.

Concept Team Structure: FOT approved an ad hoc team to implement this concept. Members of this team will include: a DNR section chief, a DNR Silviculturist –Ecologist, a lawyer from the DNR Bureau of Legal Services, two members of the Silviculture team, a DNR forester, and a Forest Tax Program representative. These members are currently being assigned.

9. CONCEPT Review MFL Transfer Process for possible efficiencies. (I.e. implement a Lean Project).

Overview of Concept: This was not a concept put forth for comment by the MFL TE Ad Hoc Team. This concept stems from comments received. Specifically, comments indicated that the MFL transfer process takes significant time as well as expertise. Comments received included suggestions to review this process, using the lean project approach, for efficiencies by identifying tasks and needed skills. Some commenters suggested that the administration elements may be centralized to align skills with work tasks, but recognize DNR foresters are needed for certain elements.

Concept Team Structure: FOT approved the formation of a lean team. Members of this team are currently being assigned.

D. NEXT STEPS

Council will be updated as needed and/or requested on implementation of these concepts. Next steps include the following:

- Team leads and members identified and secured for concepts.
- Project Manager will meet with each team leads to identify steps and resources needed to implement concept. This information will be documented in “cover sheets,” which will provide a high level summary of the plan to implement each concept (See e.g. document 1).
- Communicate with internal and external partners about implementation of concepts.

- Teams will work on implementing concepts, including engaging external partners such as the Council on Forestry.
- The “products” for each concept will be vetted in the appropriate Division of Forestry management team (Forestry Leadership Team (FLT) and Field Operations Team (FOT)).
- Changes that result from the implementation of concepts will be codified in the necessary format, including website updates, handbook changes, etc.