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Executive Summary

In this assessment, stakeholders in the Managed Forest Law (MFL) program including landowners, forest industries, consulting foresters, plan writers, Wisconsin legislative representatives, University of Wisconsin Extension employees and staff of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) (both current and retired) were interviewed to gain their perspective on the current administrative performance of the program and to identify opportunities for improving efficiencies in regards to operation of MFL systems. Between July 24th and September 15th, 2012 Dovetail staff interviewed forty-two individuals by phone and 214 others participated in an online survey. The input gathered through this process provided a robust assessment of the MFL program and aided in the identification of opportunities for efficiency improvements.

The key findings of this assessment include recommendations to significantly improve MFL efficiencies by:

- Expediting the implementation of WisFIRS,
- Implementing a detailed time study of major tasks,
- Defining activities by skillset/position,
- Creating and implementing a formal Communication Plan, and
- Limiting major program changes to every 3, or ideally 5, years to allow for system stability.

The assessment findings and associated recommendations are further detailed in the full report, which also provides information about the potential benefits and strategic approach for each of the major recommendations. The report also summarizes the feedback received from stakeholders. Based on experience with other organizations, it is believed that by implementing these efficiency improvement recommendations, it is possible to save 35-55% of MFL time.

In discussions with stakeholders, there were a few specific opportunities that were raised and that may warrant further investigation. These areas of opportunity for efficiency improvements include: review of the existing conflict resolution process; an evaluation of the current distribution of liability between landowners, service providers and the DNR; and clarification of the level of flexibility for silviculture under the MFL program. These considerations are only briefly highlighted in the report and may represent important areas for efficiency improvements in the MFL program over the long-term and in addition to the more targeted and near-term recommendations emphasized in this report.

While reviewing this report, it should be noted that the overall opinion of the MFL program was found to be consistently VERY HIGH with widespread support for the objectives and continuation of the program. The assessment and recommendations herein are not critical of the overall program. We are specifically talking about making a great program better - not fixing one with problems.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Based upon the surveys, interviews, and a review of the current MFL program and systems, the following five key findings and associated recommendations were identified as the top priorities for significantly improving the efficiency of MFL operations.

WisFIRS

The Wisconsin Forest Inventory and Reporting System (WisFIRS) is eagerly anticipated and addresses a number of critical and timely efficiency issues for participants in all levels of the channel from landowner to DNR staff. (Goal – save 15-25% of MFL time)¹

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Expedite implementation of WisFIRS with all due possible speed!
- In general, it is recommended as good practice to have all external data entered directly by providers (e.g., CPWs) thus reducing the need for data entry activities, and errors, by staff.

Task Efficiencies

DNR staff is asked to wear a lot of hats and in an era of greater demand for fewer resources this is unlikely to change in the near future. In many ways, this flexibility is a source of strength for the overall program! However, this can result in significant inconsistencies in how things are done (and resulting inefficiencies) which the wide range in the time requirements reported suggests. There are a number of things that can be done to increase the efficiency of staff time, and one place to start is in better understanding current time allocations and task requirements. Although the time-on-task clearly varies by size of ownership, and there is no such thing as a "typical" situation, it is clear from the interviews and online responses that increased coordination of activities could have a positive affect. (Goal – save 10-15% of MFL time)²

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Implement a detailed time study of all major tasks undertaken by staff over a significant amount of time (e.g., 90 days) to identify groupings of tasks by amount of time required (e.g., tasks that take less than an hour, an hour, etc.)

¹ Please note that time saved in this report is relative not predictive – meaning the estimates give you a way to prioritize between recommendations not predict outcomes. This specific value is estimated from the time individuals reported they put into data entry work and which varied greatly. The only way to get a more specific prediction is through the time study recommended in the task efficiencies section.

² From experience we have seen that better coordination, sharing, and planning of tasks along with clear time expectations can incur the savings suggested herein.

- Lots of small time periods are easier to manage than large ones³, so identify any large time consuming activities (generally any repeating task that takes more than an hour) such as plan review and:
 - Look to eliminate or significantly reduce large time consuming activities,
 - Establish clear efficiency (i.e., duration) goals and expectations for the completion of activities (you may already have these), and
 - Set up a regular scheduling process (e.g., weekly team meetings) that facilitates the prioritization, sharing and distribution of activities between team members (applying Stephen R. Covey's "big rocks, little rocks" concept⁴)⁵ in order to meet organizational goals.
 - Maximize the time staff spend communicating and in the field (human skills) and minimize time spent on any tasks that are redundant or can be automated.
 - Assign activities to those with the greatest ability to be efficient at them (also see next section regarding Roles and Responsibilities).
- Don't start a process until all the data is collected. (LEAN processing has demonstrated that there are vast inefficiencies that result from partially completed and a start and stop process. The key is to ensure all the "parts" are there, and then process the material.)
- Set clear and agreed upon goals and objectives for timelines. This gives people something to aim for and provides guidance for landowners (and other program partners) on what to expect. Obviously there are great variations, but everyone knows that and setting clear expectations provides the structure within which efficiency improvements can occur.

The identification of opportunities for increasing efficiency in specific activities is complicated by the wide variety, varying complexity, and range of time required for completion of tasks by staff in the MFL program. In addition, the geographic dispersion of the staff and the existence of other (non-MFL) organizational expectations further complicate time management for those individuals. However, with today's technologies a great many tasks can be done "online" and/or from remote locations – so it is worth exploring once the time-on-tasks is clarified. Part of the assessment included an informal evaluation of the length of time it took to do various activities related to the MFL program as reported by interviewees and

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³ Stephen R. Covey "First Things First"

⁴ http://zenhabits.net/big-rocks-first-double-your-productivity-this-week; i.e. establish and concentrate on highest priority activities first.

⁵ The idea is that you establish teams that are responsible for achieving goals, and that these teams meet regularly (weekly?) to prioritize and distribute activities based on individual availability and skill. Obviously some activities may not be easily shared, for example due to geographic restrictions, but the objective is to never delay meeting a goal due to one individual being busy and to encourage creativity in how tasks are shared.

survey participants.⁶ Responses varied greatly depending on familiarity and there were a number of individuals unwilling to "guess" due to the variability of situations. *Overall, the way individuals addressed these questions may be indicative of challenges in increasing efficiencies overall.* For instance, many respondents worried more about the question than the answers, and they provided answers under a variety of situations and from a variety of perspectives rather than just giving their best opinion from their own perspective. Individuals that respond in this way often require a significant degree of structure, or are use to that level of structure, such that they have difficulty with open-ended questions. People with these skills can be adept at solving complex problems, but may have difficulty boiling down complex issues to their core substance for communication to a less-informed audience. Setting goals and objectives for timelines, as recommended above, can be constructive, and the following discussion regarding Roles and Responsibilities is also relevant.

Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of DNR staff have evolved significantly over the past decade. As a result of those changes, there appears to be a need for at least two very distinct and sometimes-conflicting skillsets (and interests) for many, if not most positions. Specifically, there is an increasing percentage of staff time needed for computer data entry and data review oriented tasks that do not fit well with the skill, experience, and the interest of many MFL staff members. These tasks also remove highly skilled and experienced staff from the field (forest) where they are likely highly needed and more valuable. Better alignment of skills and interests with roles and responsibilities can significantly improve efficiencies, may enhance employee morale, and potentially have cost saving benefits. (Goal – save 10-15% of MFL time for 80% of staff)

RECOMMENDATION:

 Where possible, separate activities by skillset/position and identify skilled administrative personnel to take on the more administrative tasks in order to free up highly skilled DNR staff with field experience to spend a greater percentage of time on field duties and plan review.

Communications

A number of responses received during the assessment indicated that the level of communication between stakeholders is inconsistent and in some situations appears uncoordinated. There are a number of responses (e.g., unclear priorities and unclear expectations) that suggest the growth in the program has gotten to the point where those information segments that are "falling through the cracks" are significant enough to warrant concern. For example, less than half (43%) of the people participating in the assessment felt that the current communication system was effective. There is a particular need to expand the outreach in both explaining the program to potential new landowners and in the education of existing

⁶ This evaluation of tasks is distinct from the detailed time study that is recommended above.

landowners. Public outreach may benefit the program with improved administrative efficiencies in that people entering the program will become more aware of all requirements (i.e., required harvests and the nature of the agreements they're entering into), and once in the program will comply more often to said requirements. (Goal – make operations run more smoothly, make other time savings more achievable, and save duplication of efforts)

RECOMMENDATION:

- Create and implement a formal Communication Plan to address all categories of information to all participants.
- *Plan should incorporate:*
 - o Landowner information and education
 - *CPW training and updates*
 - Increased awareness of key attributes of program (e.g., requirements, benefits, penalties, etc)
 - o Clarity on the program itself (vision, structure, priorities, etc.)
 - Tools & processes that facilitate public awareness of events, successes, changes, and a greater sense of connectedness between the public and the program

System Stability

Individuals view greater stability in the MFL law to be a significantly valuable goal, as the ever-changing nature of the program creates difficulties for all participants. Continuous "tweaking" also complicates the implementation (and maintenance) of any IT system, including WisFIRS and significantly impairs efficiency of staff and compliance amongst landowners (e.g., retraining of staff, partners, and participants with each change). Currently, it is possible for the program to change prior to the full implementation of the previous version. Models exist in the forest management sector (e.g. the Sustainable Forestry Initiative) whereby the frequency of program changes is limited to address this very issue. (Goal – eliminate time spent explaining changes and increase effectiveness of training and communication)

RECOMMENDATION:

• While recognizing that many of the changes to the MFL are due to Legislative action and beyond the direct control of the DNR, we recommend that major program changes to the MFL program be limited to every 3, or ideally 5, years to allow time for system stability and full absorption of any changes into the system.

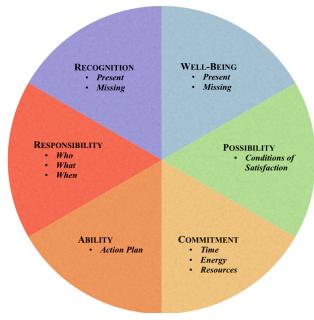
These key findings and associated recommendations can be further described with the following principles for enhancing MFL efficiency:

- 1. Automate what can be automated
- 2. Set goals and reduce time in process
- 3. Match activities to skills
- 4. Coordinate individuals to address "big rocks/small rocks" where possible
- 5. Communicate, Communicate, Communicate
- 6. Stabilize the system where possible (including through advocacy)

Results of the Assessment Process

The purpose of the assessment process is to come to a clear and shared understanding of the current status of the MFL program based on input from a variety of perspectives. Mobius communication model (Figure 1) was used as a guide to developing the questions and in evaluating the results and next steps. The basis of the first step in the process (well-being) is getting a clear understanding of both what is going well in the MFL program currently and what is missing that if it were present would lead to a higher level of and stakeholder success satisfaction. The constructive nature of the "missing" approach

Figure 1. Mobius Communication Model



allows for individuals to recommend solutions to concerns and additions to the program in a manner that is conducive to generating positive results.

Survey Results

Input was received from 256 stakeholders, 42 through phone interviews and 214 through the use of an online survey instrument. Individuals were asked a total of 28 questions as well as providing information about the individual's background (see Appendix A for the full text of the questions).

Individuals selected to participate in the interviews and survey were identified based on their direct involvement with the MFL program and included current and former DNR employees, private sector plan writers and service providers (e.g. Cooperating Foresters, Certified Plan Writers), landowners, forest industries, policymakers and other stakeholders (Figure 2). The WI DNR provided individual's contact information. Respondents were also invited to suggest additional individuals to be contacted.

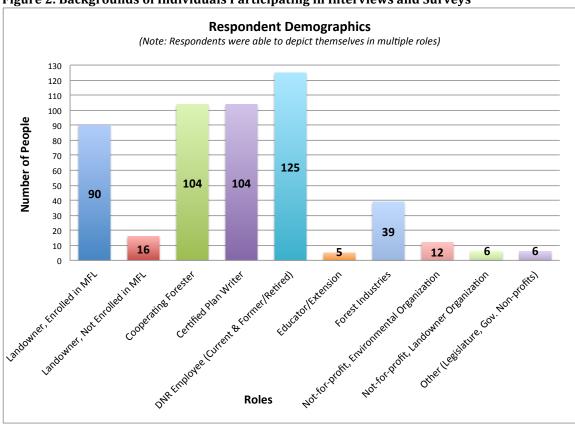


Figure 2. Backgrounds of Individuals Participating in Interviews and Surveys

The top five attributes of the MFL that respondents wanted to see protected were:

- 1. Commitment to sustainable forestry/promotes strong forest management practices (over the long run)
- 2. Provides a steady, well-managed source of raw materials for Wisconsin's forest products industry sustains competitive market, helps resolve marketplace volatility, and keeps forest products industry flourishing
- 3. Program as a whole/keeping program alive
- 4. Tax breaks/deferral/incentive
- 5. Creates abundance of economic value/creates and maintains jobs

Nothing in particular stood out in response to the question about what was "missing" in the MFL program. A number of items were mentioned multiple times, and these ranged from broad issues (e.g., the actions of the legislature, opinions on leasing, and concerns about the overall increasing complexity of the MFL system) to the specific issue of incorrect or inadequate tree marking. If there could be said to be a theme in these responses it would largely be linked to the need to increase the formality of communication activities due to the size of the system being managed.

This was a qualitative study rather than a quantitative one, so no statistical analysis was performed other than to evaluate proportions of respondents. Questions aimed

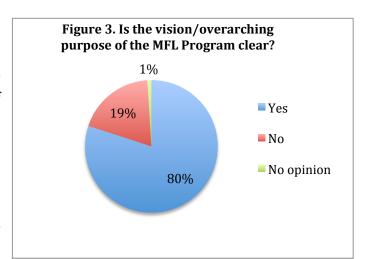
at identifying areas for improvement were designed primarily to elicit information on operational efficiencies. For completeness, questions were also included that attempted to get general feedback on all major organizational systems. For clarity, results are reported by organizational system below.

Vision, Mission, Mandate

Questions #19 & 21 inquired as to the clarity of the MFL vision and legislative mandate (Figures 3 and 4). A large majority reported that the vision itself was clear (80% of respondents) while a much smaller group (46%) felt the actual legislative mandate was clear. To a certain extent the vision οf organization is the individual's view on the goal for the "greater good" of the program while the mandate reflects the legislative requirements of the program. In general you would expect/want these two responses to be similar (with a high level of clarity) in order to have operational efficiency. However, the substantially lower response to a clear mandate is possibly linked to concerns about the ever-changing nature of the law that makes the mandate less "concrete" and thus less clear. This issue is addressed through the communication plan and the recommendation to enhance system stability.

Strategies

Questions #5, 20, 22, and 24 peer into the strategic concerns of the MFL program. Responses to these questions point out the strategic need for communication to improve trust, ensure details are not missed, and to get stakeholder support for improvement activities.

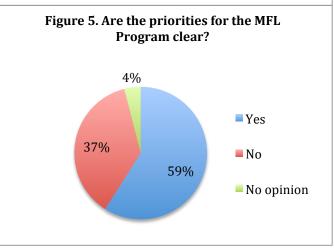


13%

Yes

No

No opinion



Results show 59% of respondents felt the priorities of the program were clear (Figure 5), fewer (41%) felt the structure was a clear and effective way to administrate the program, and fewer still (17%) felt they had access to any improvement plan for the program. Clarity in the annual strategies to achieve organizational vision and mandate is generally considered essential to achieving significant improvements in efficiency and effectiveness. This issue is also addressed through a comprehensive communication plan.

Marketing

Since the marketing and growth of the program were not a focus of this assessment, there were no specific questions designed to evaluate the marketing activities of the organization. However, the growth of the program and the reinforcement of supportive behaviors by all stakeholders are assumed benefits of the program; therefore, it is valuable to recognize these activities as part of any communication strategy. Reinforcement of landowner benefits, responsibilities, and the success of the program should all be included as part of a good communication plan. (For further discussion of communications, see Organizational Issues, page 15, and Figure 8.)

Operations

A large number of questions (questions 6-18) focused on operational improvement information. These responses can be broken down into two categories:

- WisFIRS (questions 6-8)
- MFL Process/Time in Process information (questions 9-18)

WisFIRS

Roughly half of the respondents were familiar with WisFIRS and half were not. The people who indicated they were familiar with WisFIRS were predominantly those with first-hand experience of the MFL program, including cooperating foresters, certified plan writers, enrolled MFL landowners, and DNR employees. Those who answered "no" primarily had second-hand experience with the MFL program: non-enrolled landowners, cooperating foresters, forest industries, not-for-profit environmental and landowner organizations, and "other" which included additional non-profit organizations and Wisconsin state legislative members.

Question 7 asked respondents expectations for what WisFIRS will or will not do. It is important to note that question 7 and 8 only applied to those respondents who indicated having knowledge of WisFIRS.

Of the people who answered, "yes" to knowing about the WisFIRS program, a strong majority had positive expectations for what it will do. Only a few thought WisFIRS will not be beneficial because they thought it will not provide accurate information, retain the art of forest management (will make it more scientific and mechanical), or allow DNR staff to return to the field because of the creation of additional administrative work.

Amongst those with a positive outlook on WisFIRS the top answers included easy access to digital information, improved program and administrative efficiencies, and improved program consistencies. These respondents also stated that WisFIRS will save time and money, will simplify administrative tasks, and will aid in future MFL program evaluations, research, and the creation of standardized management plans.

People with a positive WisFIRS outlook also made recommendations including that the program should be very user friendly, remain updated with real-time data, have a large memory, be utilized for sending digital notices to landowners, allow public access to digital versions of archeological and historical data, and should address digital mapping tools to further improve access and program efficiencies.

Regarding conditions of satisfaction, many of the people who were familiar with the WisFIRS program had no opinion. Amongst those that had an opinion, the two answers that appeared multiple times stated WisFIRS must remain useful, accessible, updated and simple; and that WisFIRS must improve MFL program efficiencies. Answers that were mentioned previously regarding what WisFIRS will do reappeared as conditions of satisfaction including remaining user friendly and updated in real-time, and providing digitization and accessibility to program elements such as mapping tools and deeds.

Additional WisFIRS conditions of satisfaction included allowing/enabling management plan flexibility and creativity, addressing existing animosities and embedded attitudes amongst DNR foresters and consulting foresters, and allowing for the creation of a foundation or one-size-fits-all prescription for management plan writing.

MFL Processes

Question 9 inquired about the MFL program enrollment process and asked respondents to list the steps involved.

A small number of respondents were not familiar with the enrollment process or what steps were involved and some of these stated they had no reason to believe that the enrollment process was a problem. Of the remaining strong majority of respondents who were familiar with the enrollment process, a few had never gone through the process, a small number believed it was not a simple process, and a similarly sized group believed it was a very simple process.

The respondents who were familiar with the enrollment process had either enrolled land themselves, written management plans or were directly involved with the DNR or organizations that dealt with MFL enrolled lands.

Those familiar with the enrollment process stated similar steps: landowners must contact the DNR or consulting foresters and then hire a consulting forester to write a management plan, landowners must obtain and fill out an application form and submit it to the DNR with the applicable fees, the consulting forester must do field

work and write a plan, the consulting forester must submit the plan to the DNR, the DNR must review and approve the plan.

Of particular note amongst respondents familiar with the enrollment process: several stated the DNR needs to do a better job of educating those landowners not enrolled in the program through outreach and up-front communications so that 1) They're aware the program exists, and 2) They understand the program requirements. A few respondents also stated that the process has become more streamlined within the past few years resulting in less time spent on the process and a gain in program efficiencies.

Questions 10 through 15 attempted to evaluate the length of time it took to do various activities related to the MFL program. Responses varied greatly depending on familiarity and there were a number of individuals unwilling to "guess" due to the variability of situations. *Overall, the way individuals addressed these questions* may be indicative of challenges in increasing efficiencies overall. For instance, many respondents worried more about the question than the answers, and they provided answers under a variety of situations and from a variety of perspectives rather than just giving their best opinion from their own perspective. Individuals that respond in this way often require a significant degree of structure, or are use to that level of structure, such that they have difficulty with open-ended questions. People with these skills can be adept at solving complex problems, but may have difficulty boiling down complex issues to their core substance for communication to a lessinformed audience. This style of response also can suggest a need for "perfection" in answering a question. This need for perfection, whether individual or systemic, might be a contributor to the degree of "minor errors" and rework that is required and hence the time required in certain activities (i.e., when is good enough... good enough?). This need for perfection can also be based on fear, that is the fear of making a mistake; which can also be individual or systemic.

There are two major recommendations that arise from this group of questions. These are:

- Don't start a process until all the data is collected. (LEAN processing has demonstrated that there are vast inefficiencies that result from partially completed and a start and stop process. The key is to ensure all the "parts" are there, and then process the material.)
- Set clear and agreed upon goals and objectives for timelines. This gives people something to aim for and provides guidance for landowners (and other program partners) on what to expect. Obviously there are great variations, but everyone knows that and setting clear expectations provides the structure within which efficiency improvements can occur.

For question 10, "How long do you think the current MFL Enrollment Process takes?" the greatest area of variability appeared to be the potential for <u>inadequacy</u> and <u>errors</u>. Given that variability, respondents, especially employees were relatively unwilling to commit to a timeframe for completing an enrollment.

It would appear that controlling/limiting variability through a more structured process (e.g. agreed upon goals and objectives for timelines) would significantly reduce time. For example, it appears that in situations where the activities can be concentrated they take very little time. However, if a sequence of errors or questions arise that require research the whole process can take months and, for a number of responses more than a year. Anything that allows a project to lag increases time on the individual tasks as well.

Individuals were more comfortable responding to question 11 about the time it takes to develop and approve a plan. The most common response from DNR employees appears to be between 2.5 and 3 days to complete the process depending on plan complexity and total acreage. Estimates by consulting foresters appeared to vary greatly, although 24 hours is the most frequent response. A number of responses pointed out that they expect this total time to go down significantly with WisFIRS fully implemented.

Question 12 asked about the estimated time needed for the plan review process. DNR employees report that the process can take as little as a few hours (in some cases one hour) if an experienced qualified CPW is utilized and there are few to no errors. It is common to point out that the <u>skills of the CPW</u> will have a big effect on the time it takes to review a plan. Interestingly, plan writers felt that it either depended on the experience of the reviewer or in some cases on how much the reviewer trusted the CPW (that is referring to their tendency to go over the whole plan in as much detail as if they'd done it themselves).

Question 13 looked at the time it takes to do plan updates. The most common answer appears to be a few hours, greatly dependent on exactly what is being updated. A number of individuals suggested the same amount of time as creating a plan in the first place. Many individuals pointed out that there was no easy answer to this question or any of these time-related questions. Many also were succinct and to the point (e.g., "...Plan development varies, but in general, field work takes 2-3 hours, paperwork 4-8 hours, total 6-11 hours"). This discrepancy in responses may be a result of the degree to which the individual performs the activity, their particular situation in regards to the number of variables they are forced to address, or their personal response to the question. Consulting foresters seemed to be more succinct about this question – they either knew it or they didn't.

Question 14 asked about the withdrawal process. The responses to this varied from "minutes" to "years." Obviously there are a lot of factors that affect withdrawals, and some employees reported they have never even done one. However, it was fairly common to suggest that it would only take a few (couple?) hours if things went fairly smoothly. The largest variables here seemed to be related to how

respondents interpreted this question. Before answering the question, many respondents asked whether the question referred to voluntary landowner withdrawals or forced (involuntary) withdrawals. A majority of responses stated that voluntary withdrawals are fairly painless and take a little amount of time (hours to a few days), while forced withdrawals take much longer because of additional paperwork, back and forth correspondence between the DNR and landowners, and multiple additional variables.

Question 15 inquired as to whether the respondent had any other MFL process related efficiencies to suggest. The most common two areas of interest that were mentioned were cutting notices and transfers, but specific recommendations weren't offered.

Question 16 inquired as to opportunities to improve efficiencies in enforcement. The only consensus appears to be that the DNR is generally doing a good job at enforcement and that it has improved in the past few years. It also appears that respondents feel the new WisFIRS system (data collection, control, and access) will have a significantly positive impact on enforcement issues.

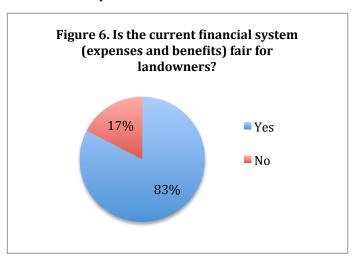
Question 17 was designed to give respondents the opportunity to give broad, general feedback about opportunities for operational improvement. For many, the question was too broad for them to generate ideas. However, a number of good, detailed suggestions were collected along with a few rants. There were a number of suggestions related to the role of consulting foresters (trusting them more and even off-loading some activities onto them) that suggest the relationship between staff and consultants could be evaluated for better coordination. One other area of multiple response involved issues around exceptions to the norm – meaning unique situations of unintended consequences (primarily economic or environmental) that take significant time and effort, as there is sense that there is no current process for resolution.

Question 18 allowed individuals to make specific recommendations about the

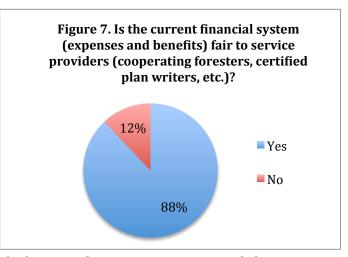
programs they are most familiar with. Due to the nature of the question, there were very few responses and they tended to be individualized.

Financial Issues

Questions 27-29 provide insight on the cost benefits of the system to various stakeholders. A large majority (83% of respondents) feels the current system is fair for landowners (Figure 6).



similar majority (88%) responded that the system is fair to service providers (Figure 7). There were a number of comments on the lack of standardization of service provider activities and fees that can lead to discrepancies in cost and service level. A minority of respondents (43%) felt there were sufficient funds for the DNR staff to do their jobs well currently. This latter response

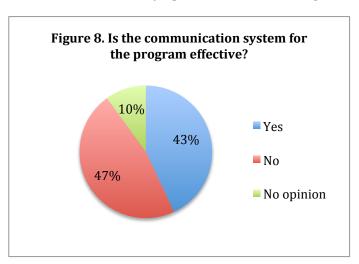


must be evaluated both in terms of who is in the response group and the economic context that exists within which the system is currently operating. In the absence of another scale it is also easy to think there is insufficient funds when acreage has increased and available funds have not; whether this is true or not.

Organizational Issues (Human Resources)

Questions 23, 25 and 26 evaluated the training programs, communication system, and the roles and responsibilities of various groups. Most respondents felt that the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders were clear and agreed upon. Generally, when roles and responsibilities are clear, the next step in the process would be to do a time study on what individuals actually spend their time doing.

Less than half (43%) felt that the current communication system was effective (Figure 8). There were a lot of good responses to this question. In general the respondents felt that, overall, communication was very good but that there were regions, gaps, situations, individuals, etc. where communication was not at the level desired or needed.



More than half (57%) felt that the training programs were effective and a number of individuals voiced a lack of awareness of any training programs. Where training programs exist, better communication may be required, and where they don't yet exist consideration should be given to including training as part of a communication plan.

Additional Considerations

In discussions with stakeholders, there were a few specific opportunities for efficiency improvements that were raised and that may warrant further investigation. These opportunities include:

- Review of existing conflict resolution process (e.g., as applied to silviculture guidelines or mandatory practices) to determine pros and cons of current approach and the potential impacts of utilizing a modified, more formal or more structured process;
- Evaluation of impacts of the current distribution of liability between landowners, service providers and the DNR, and the situations that arise when landowners choose not to utilize the services of a Cooperating Forester; and
- Clarification of the level of **silviculture** flexibility under the MFL program and the application of the silviculture guidelines to ensure sound forestry practices on enrolled lands.

These considerations may represent important areas of opportunity for efficiency improvement in the MFL program over the long-term and in addition to the more targeted and near-term recommendations emphasized in this report.

Conclusions

In this assessment, stakeholders in the Managed Forest Law (MFL) program including landowners, forest industries, consulting foresters, plan writers, Wisconsin legislative representatives, University of Wisconsin Extension employees and DNR staff (both current and retired) were interviewed to gain their perspective on the current administrative performance of the program and to identify opportunities for improving efficiencies in regards to operation of MFL systems. Between July 24th and September 15th, 2012 Dovetail staff interviewed forty-two individuals by phone and 214 others participated in an online survey. The input gathered through this process provided a robust assessment of the MFL program and aided in the identification of opportunities for efficiency improvements.

The key findings of this assessment include recommendations to significantly improve MFL efficiencies by:

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- Limiting major program changes to the MFL program to every 3, or ideally 5, years to allow for system stability.

Based on experience with other organizations, it is believed that by implementing these efficiency improvement recommendations, it is possible to save 35-55% of MFL time.

While reviewing the findings and recommendations in this report, it should be noted that the overall opinion of the MFL program was found to be consistently VERY HIGH with widespread support for the objectives and continuation of the program.

Appendix A. Survey and Interview Questions

- 1. Please describe your background and experience with the MFL Program.
- 2. What is your role in the MFL Program (check all that apply):
 - Landowner, enrolled in MFL Program
 - Landowner, not enrolled in MFL Program
 - Cooperating Forester
 - Certified Plan Writer
 - DNR Employee, Current & Former/Retired
 - Educator/Extension
 - Forest Products Company
 - Not-for-Profit Environmental organization
 - Not-for-Profit Landowner organization
 - Other (please describe)
- 3. What are things about the MFL Program that you like or value and you want to be sure are protected or preserved?
- 4. Are there things that are missing that if added would improve the MFL program in some way?
- 5. What do you think is essential to ensuring the quality and integrity of the MFL program?
- 6. Are you familiar with WisFIRS?
 - Yes
 - No
- 7. If yes, what are your expectations for the new WisFIRS program as to what it will and will not do?
- 8. What are your conditions of satisfaction for a successful WISFIRS program? (e.g., what does it need to do or not do for it to be valuable to you?)
- 9. When you think of the MFL "Enrollment Process", what are you including in the process? (e.g., initial application, form submittal, review, plan development and approval, etc.)
- 10. In your experience, how long does the typical MFL Enrollment Process take (hours, days, weeks, etc.)? What are the most significant factors that impact the amount of time this process takes?
- 11. How long do you think the current MFL Plan Development process takes? (e.g., field work, plan drafting, landowner input, etc.)

- 12. How long do you think the Plan Review and Approval Process takes? (e.g., submittal, office review of documents, field review, etc.)
- 13. How long do you think Plan Updates take? (hours, days, weeks, etc.)
- 14. How long do you think the Withdrawal Process takes? (hours, days, weeks, etc.)
- 15. How long do other MFL Processes (if any) take? Please describe process.
- 16. Do you see any opportunities for improved efficiencies related to enforcement of the MFL program?
- 17. What opportunities (if any) do you see for improving overall MFL program efficiencies?
- 18. Any additional comments on the MFL processes you are most familiar with?
- 19. Is the vision (e.g., overarching purpose) for the MFL program clear?
 - Yes
 - No
 - No opinion

Any Comments?

- 20. Are the priorities for the MFL program clear?
 - Yes
 - No
 - No opinion

Any Comments?

- 21. Is the legislative mandate clear?
 - Yes
 - No
 - No opinion

Any Comments?

- 22. Is the MFL structure clear and is it the most effective way to administrate the program?
 - Yes
 - No
 - No opinion

Any Comments?

- 23. Are the roles and responsibilities for the various involved parties (DNR, plan writers, landowners, etc.) clear and agreed upon?
 - Yes
 - No
 - No opinion

Any Comments?

- 24. Is there an accessible plan in place for the improvement of the MFL program? Is your role in that plan (if there is one) clear and agreed on?
 - Yes
 - No
 - No opinion

Any Comments?

- 25. Is the communication system for the program effective?
 - Yes
 - No
 - No opinion

Any Comments? Likes? Dislikes? Additions? (e.g. newsletter)?

- 26. Are the current training programs effective?
 - Yes
 - No
 - No opinion

If no, how could the training programs be made more effective? If yes, any comments?

- 27. Is the current financial system (expenses and benefits) fair for landowners?
 - Yes
 - No
 - No opinion

Any Comments?

- 28. Is the current financial system (expenses and benefits) fair to service providers (cooperating foresters, certified plan writers, etc.)?
 - Yes
 - No
 - No opinion

Any Comments?

- 29. Are their sufficient funds for the DNR staff to their jobs well?
 - Yes
 - No
 - No opinion

Any Comments?

30. Is there anyone else you can suggest who may be interested in providing input to this project? If so, please provide their contact information below. You may also use this space for any further comments you have.