

St. Louis County Land Department

Forest Stewardship Report – 2005

For the Period March 2004 – March 2005

Overview

The purpose of the Forest Stewardship Report is to describe progress in meeting objectives with respect to the Environmental Management System (EMS), show performance against defined key performance indicators, and outline EMS objectives for the coming year. St. Louis County manages approximately 900,000 acres of State tax forfeited lands. We recognize our responsibility to manage these forested lands sustainably.

Managed Forests

We use a variety of silvicultural practices to achieve the natural biological potential of the highly productive forests that we manage. We regenerate the forest from seeds dropped by trees left for this purpose, aerial seeding and through planting seedlings. Our harvests are increasingly designed to emulate natural disturbances, leaving single trees or groups of trees, standing dead trees, and logs after harvest.

Environmental Protection

Regardless of the type of forestry practices, the Land Department works to protect water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, and other elements of biodiversity, soil productivity, and other environmental values as part of our forest management.

We also recognize that the appropriate objective for some forests is protection or conservation. We work with others to protect these forests through land exchanges, land sales, planning, conservation easements and other efforts.

Independent Certification

To help us meet our goal of reliable environmental management, the St. Louis County Land Department adopted the ISO 14001 standard for our environmental management system and paired it with the Sustainable Forestry Initiative Standard (SFI).

- All lands managed by the St. Louis County Land Department have environmental management systems registered to the ISO 14001 standard.
- All forests managed by the St. Louis County Land Department are certified to the SFI standard.

Harvesting and Replanting

St. Louis County reforests after harvest. Planting is the dominant method for artificially regenerated stands and is normally done the spring after site preparation is completed. Areas harvested in winter are often held over until the next planting season. Thus, the acres planted in one calendar year will not exactly match the acres harvested in the previous year but cumulatively reflect full reforestation. In 2004, the size of our average clearcut was 22.8 acres and 89 percent of the acres were planted within two years of final harvest.

St. Louis County is located in Northeastern Minnesota and shares its northern boundary with Canada and its southern boundary with Lake Superior. The county is known for its natural beauty of vast forests and lakes.

St. Louis County manages approximately 900,000 acres of State tax forfeited forested lands

Sustainable Forestry Standard

St. Louis County is committed to achieving the objectives and performance measures of sustainable forest management defined by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI). We will design, implement and establish programs to:

- Promote public education by:
 - Supporting demonstration forests;
 - Presentations through schools and civic groups;
 - Participation in associations and initiatives; and
 - Development of educational materials.
- Provide recreation opportunities by ensuring lands under our care are open to the public for dispersed recreation;
- Work with government agencies and others to create and maintain recreational areas and trails;

- Minimize the use of forest chemicals by using:
 - Chemicals only where the need is justifiable;
 - The least toxic, narrowest spectrum product to achieve management objectives;
 - Integrated pest management practices; and
 - Silvicultural prescriptions to reduce the need for chemical application.
- Protect soil productivity by:
 - Scheduling activities to avoid damage to vulnerable soils;
 - Matching operating practices to site conditions;
 - Suspending operations when and where ground conditions may result in permanent damage resulting from rutting or compaction; and
 - Managing nutrients on sites through silvicultural prescriptions, vegetation management and slash distribution.
- Protect the integrity and longevity of State Tax Forfeited Trust Land forests by:
 - Establishing permanent forest boundaries; and
 - Consolidating State Tax Forfeited Trust Lands through exchange, sale or acquisition.
- Protect the health of the forest by:
 - Early detection of pest and disease outbreaks;
 - Cooperating with other agencies in detection and control;
 - Using integrated pest management systems;
 - Cooperating with other agencies in catastrophic wildfire prevention and detection; and
 - Cooperating with other agencies and owners for timber salvage in the event of catastrophic wind or other related weather events, insect or disease outbreaks or from catastrophic fire events.
- Work with tree improvement cooperatives to ensure appropriate research, testing, evaluation and outplanting of genetically improved seeds.
- Implement the Minnesota Voluntary Site-Level Forest Management Guidelines during all management activities.
- Protect water bodies and riparian zones with the use of appropriate silvicultural objectives.
- Maintain a forest cover across the landscape that is composed of diverse qualities, features, and elements.
- Conduct operations in compliance with the visual quality standards in the Minnesota Voluntary Forest Management Guidelines.
- Limit the size of clear-cuts to not more than 120 acres unless larger cuts are necessary to respond to forest health emergencies or other natural catastrophes or to achieve wildlife objectives.
- Ensure that we do not clear cut adjacent to clear cut areas on St. Louis County State Tax-Forfeited Trust Lands unless:
 - Regeneration is three years old or five feet high and at the desired level of stocking;

- It is necessary to respond to forest health emergencies or other natural catastrophes; or
 - The areas are part of the same management unit harvested at different times as a result of weather, operational constraints or scheduling.
 - Protect special sites by:
 - Identifying and mapping sites in our GIS system;
 - Ensuring sites are protected during forest management activities by identifying sites in site plans and supervising activities to ensure they are protected; and
 - Cooperating with other agencies and landowners to identify, plan, and manage special sites.
 - Promote efficient utilization of harvested forest products through enforcement of utilization standards in harvesting operations.
 - Promote the use of qualified resource and logging professionals by:
 - Establishing qualification and evaluation procedures to ensure that qualified operators are used to conduct our forest management activities; and
 - Contributing to training and education programs and providing personnel to assist in the state logger education programs.
 - Participate in the SFI State Implementation Committee, Minnesota Forest Resource Partnership and other associations that provide information and services to land owners and managers.
 - Collect and report all the categories of information needed to report to SFI on compliance with SFI objectives.
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Certification of Sustainable Forest Management

St. Louis County supports third-party certification of forestry practices and environmental management systems in all of its managed forests. Our approach to certification relies on two types of standards.

The first type of standard addresses the management systems and processes needed to implement environmental standards and manage environmental impacts. ISO 14001 for environmental management systems is a globally recognized standard of this type. It defines “how” to manage effectively; for example, by setting clear objectives, documenting best practices, and establishing processes that promote continuous improvement and provide a record of how we’re keeping our commitments.

The second type of standard focuses more on the specific practices associated with growing and harvesting trees – such as providing stream buffers, protecting habitat and preventing soil erosion. Examples of this type of standard include the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) standard and the Forest Stewardship Council Smartwood program. St. Louis County is third party certified to the SFI standard. As with the first type of standard, these standards also address some processes.

2004 Environmental Objectives and Targets

Objective1:	Improve planning process for annual, short term and long term plans.
Target:	Complete development of plans by 2005
Policy Commitments:	This will enable us to meet our commitment to " Establish management practices minimize and where possible prevent impact to the environment and meet sustainable forest management objectives." Planning is the foundation for achieving all of the commitments in the Statement of Operational Commitments related to sustainable forest management.
Plan development continued through 2004.	

Objective 2:	Improve public awareness of St. Louis County Land Department activities and policies.
Target:	Establish a comprehensive public education program by 2005
Policy Commitments:	This will enable us to meet our policy commitment to "Communicate our performance to the St. Louis County Board, our employees and the public." This will also enable us to meet our commitment to "Promote public education" under our sustainable forest management commitments in the Statement of Operational Commitments.
The Department continues its outreach efforts with the continued development of the "People in Forests" video project.	

Objective 3:	Improve the application of stand level habitat measures.
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<p>Target:</p>	<p>Incorporate four or more of the following design elements to promote wildlife habitat on a minimum of 85% of projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Timing of activity, where timing is demonstrably for the benefit of wildlife; ● Physical spacing of activities, where spacing is demonstrably for the benefit of wildlife; ● Timber reserves within or adjacent to the project area not less than 5% of the area; ● Reserve trees left at the rate of 6-12 trees per acre; ● Food sources reserved; ● Den trees reserved; ● Riparian zones identified with filter strips used; ● Eagle, osprey, heron, goshawk nests buffered; ● Coarse woody debris reserved > 4 leave logs per acre; ● Management on extended rotation, as documented in Maple; ● Establishment of long-lived conifers near streams to provide shade and in-stream structure; ● Retention of 60 BA within riparian zone for trout streams; ● Re-vegetation of roads and landings with grass or clover to provide forest openings; ● Management of vegetative mixtures to propagate/encourage threatened or endangered species, where such management is documented in the synopsis; and ● Projects which enhance populations of threatened and endangered species; and ● Projects designed specifically to enhance wildlife habitat other elements which specifically benefit wildlife.
<p>Policy Commitments:</p>	<p>This will enable us to meet our policy commitment to “Meet Sustainable Forest Management Objectives”</p> <p>This will also enable us to meet our commitment to “Manage the quality and distribution of wildlife habitat and contribute to the biological diversity by developing measure that promote habitat diversity” under our sustainable forest management commitments in the Statement of Operational Commitments.</p>
<p>Site planning incorporated wildlife habitat elements into stand level management plans.</p>	

Objective 4:	Improve the quality of decisions and management of encumbrances related to right of way, utilities, pipelines and other linear developments.
Target:	Establish a planning context for linear development on St. Louis County Land Department lands by 2004
Policy Commitments:	This will enable us to meet our policy commitment to “minimize and where possible prevent impact to the environment.”

Objective 5:	Promote overall landscape diversity by managing the collection of distinct elements, features, and qualities across the region.
Target:	
Policy Commitments:	This will enable us to meet our policy commitment to “Meet Sustainable Forest Management Objectives” This will also enable us to meet our commitment to “Manage the quality and distribution of wildlife habitat and contribute to the biological diversity by developing measure that promote habitat diversity” under our sustainable forest management commitments in the Statement of Operational Commitments.

2005 Environmental Objectives and Targets

Objective 1:	Improve planning process from an informal process to a formal process for the annual, short-term and long-term plans.
Target:	Complete development of plans for 2006.
Policy Commitments:	<p>This will enable us to meet our commitment to “Establish management practices minimize and where possible prevent negative impact to the environment and meet sustainable forest management objectives.”</p> <p>Planning is the foundation for achieving all of the commitments in the Statement of Operational Commitments related to sustainable forest management.</p>

Objective 2:	Improve public awareness of St. Louis County Land Department activities and policies.
Target:	Establish a comprehensive public education program by 2005
Policy Commitments:	<p>This will enable us to meet our policy commitment to “Communicate our performance to the St. Louis County Board, our employees and the public.”</p> <p>This will also enable us to meet our commitment to “Promote public education” under our sustainable forest management commitments in the Statement of Operational Commitments.</p>

Objective 3:	Improve the application of stand level habitat measures.
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Target:	<p>Incorporate four or more of the following design elements to promote wildlife habitat on a minimum of 85% of projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Timing of activity, where timing is demonstrably for the benefit of wildlife; ● Physical spacing of activities, where spacing is demonstrably for the benefit of wildlife; ● Timber reserves within or adjacent to the project area not less than 5% of the area; ● Reserve trees left at the rate of 6-12 trees per acre; ● Food sources reserved; ● Den trees reserved; ● Riparian zones identified with filter strips used; ● Eagle, osprey, heron, goshawk nests buffered; ● Coarse woody debris reserved > 4 leave logs per acre; ● Management on extended rotation, as documented in Maple; ● Establishment of long-lived conifers near streams to provide shade and in-stream structure; ● Retention of 60 BA within riparian zone for trout streams; ● Re-vegetation of roads and landings with grass or clover to provide forest openings; ● Management of vegetative mixtures to propagate/encourage threatened or endangered species, where such management is documented in the synopsis; and ● Projects which enhance populations of threatened and endangered species; and ● Projects designed specifically to enhance wildlife habitat other elements which specifically benefit wildlife.
Policy Commitments:	<p>This will enable us to meet our policy commitment to “Meet Sustainable Forest Management Objectives”</p> <p>This will also enable us to meet our commitment to “Manage the quality and distribution of wildlife habitat and contribute to the biological diversity by developing measure that promote habitat diversity” under our sustainable forest management commitments in the Statement of Operational Commitments.</p>

Objective 4:	<p>Improve the quality of decisions and management of encumbrances related to right of way, utilities, pipelines and other linear developments.</p>
Target:	<p>Establish a planning context for linear development on St. Louis County Land Department lands by the end of 2005</p>
Policy Commitments:	<p>This will enable us to meet our policy commitment to “minimize and where possible prevent negative impact to the environment.”</p>

Objective 5:	Promote overall landscape diversity by managing the collection of distinct elements, features, and qualities across the region.
Target:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance and increase current acreage of jack pine timber type by 10% of its present acreage (6,184 acres) by 2009. Target increase 610 acres in the next five years • Increase upland black spruce type acreage by 100% of 2004 acreage by 2009. 1414 acres to 2828 acres • Reduce acreage of aspen types by 10% within identified northern hardwood areas by 2009. Increase northern hardwood acreage by same amount in the same time frame. • Increase red and white pine types by 10% of current acreage by 2009. • Increase the acreage of upland white spruce by a factor of 1.25 above current annual acreage harvest levels (80 acres to 100 acres) by 2009. Reforest white spruce on these increased acreage accordingly.
Policy Commitments:	<p>This will enable us to meet our policy commitment to “Meet Sustainable Forest Management Objectives”</p> <p>This will also enable us to meet our commitment to “Manage the quality and distribution of wildlife habitat and contribute to the biological diversity by developing measure that promote habitat diversity” under our sustainable forest management commitments in the Statement of Operational Commitments.</p>
Objective 6:	Raise the level of conformance of field operators with the following: DOT requirements, spill kits, MSDS, Threatened and Endangered Species, Reportable spills, and knowledge and awareness of St. Louis County environmental management system.
Targets:	<p>Meet DOT requirements for tanks over 119 gallons for diesel.</p> <p>Meet compliance with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labels, licensing and shipping manifests as applicable; • Spill kits; and • MSDS;. <p>Improve awareness of field operators on threatened and endangered species and special attributes.</p> <p>Knowledge and awareness of St. Louis County environmental management system and sustainable forest management commitment, policies and work instructions.</p>

Policy Commitments:	Compliance with laws and regulations, pollution prevention and use of qualified contractors.
Objective 7:	Improve management of gravel pit operations.
Target:	Implement Project Plans for all viable gravel pits by the end of 2006. Implement reclamation plans for all non-viable gravel pits by the end of 2007.
Policy Commitments:	This will enable us to meet our policy commitment to "Meet Sustainable Forest Management Objectives" This will also enable us to meet our commitment to "Manage the quality and distribution of wildlife habitat and contribute to the biological diversity by developing measure that promote habitat diversity" under our sustainable forest management commitments in the Statement of Operational Commitments.
Objective 8:	Develop a direction for a Primitive Site Leasing program.
Target:	Develop a draft plan by the end of 2006.
Policy Commitments:	This will allow the department to provide recreation opportunities by ensuring lands under its care are open to the public for dispersed recreation.