



## Land and Minerals Department

### *Environmental Policy*

St. Louis County, through its Land and Minerals Department will manage State Tax Forfeited Trust Lands to provide an optimal combination of available resources for the sustained benefit of the people of St. Louis County by establishing practical resource management programs based on responsible stewardship and sustainability.

To achieve this we will:

**Implement and maintain an environmental management system** that provides the framework for our resource management programs **for Forest Productivity and Health and meet sustainable forest management objectives;**

**Establish management practices that minimize and where possible prevent negative impact to the environment and protect Biological Diversity, Water Resources and Special Sites;**

**Manage visual impacts and provide recreational opportunities** to the public;

**Comply with all applicable laws, regulations,** and also follow any other requirements and guidelines to which we subscribe;

**Incorporate research and technology** into our planning processes and operations;

**Ensure that employees and others who work on our lands are qualified and trained** to conduct the activities for which they are responsible;

**Solicit information and input from the public** so that our plans and activities continue to provide for the sustained benefit of our communities and resources; and recognize and respect the rights of *Indigenous Peoples*.

**Communicate our performance** to the St. Louis County Board, our employees and the public; and

**Continually improve performance** by monitoring what we do and use the results to identify where changes to management practices are warranted.

# Statement of Operational Commitments

**Implement and maintain an environmental management system** that provides the framework for our resource management programs that **provide for Forest Productivity and Health and meet sustainable forest management objectives**

Our primary goal is to minimize and prevent damage to the environment rather than trying to redress environmental impacts after the fact. We will:

- Incorporate environmental values up front in the planning of our activities to ensure those values are protected before we commence work; and
- Conduct and maintain inventories of the lands in our trust to ensure that we have best possible information upon which to base our planning decisions.

Through our environmental management system we will

- Identify the environmental risks of our activities;
- Plan our activities to minimize or prevent unintended impacts to the ecological condition and values before we commence work;
- Establish operating procedures to ensure that activities are conducted in accordance with best management practices and defined operating criteria; and
- Supervise and inspect all field activities to ensure that operating criteria and best management practices are met.

St. Louis County is committed to achieving the objectives and performance measures of sustainable forest management defined by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI).

Minimize the use of forest chemicals by using:

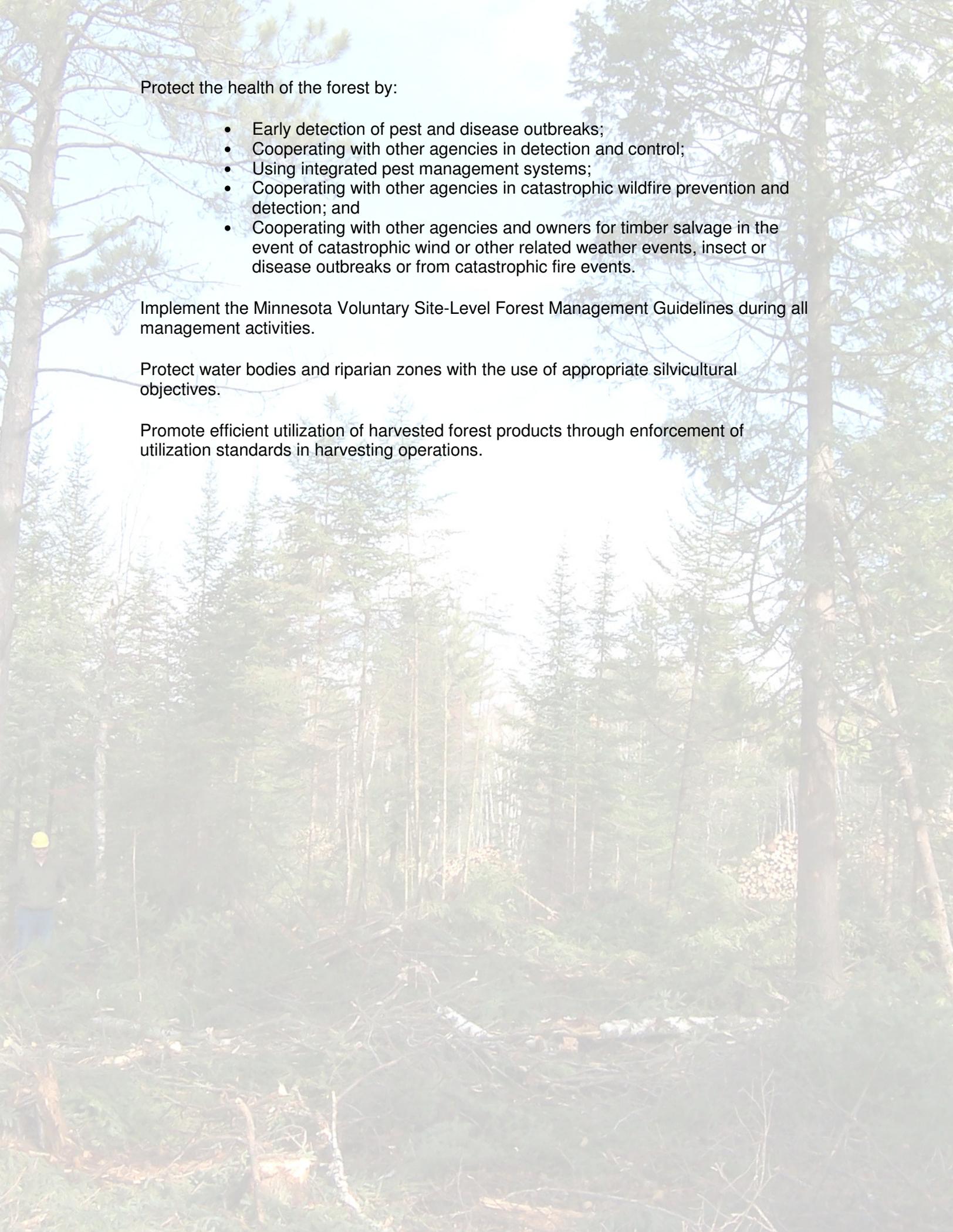
- Chemicals only where the need is justifiable;
- The least toxic, narrowest spectrum product to achieve management objectives;
- Integrated pest management practices; and
- Silvicultural prescriptions to reduce the need for chemical application.

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.



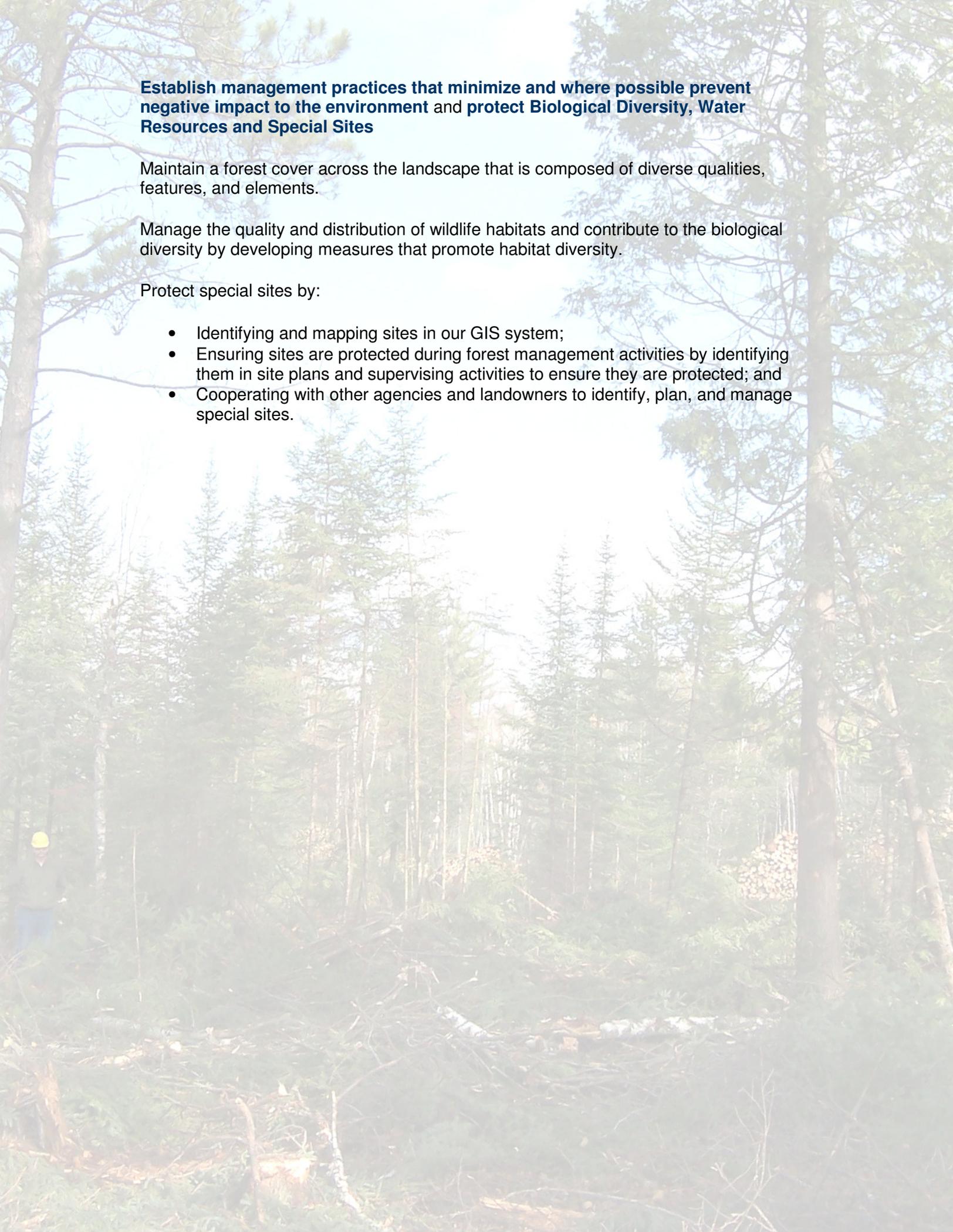
Protect the health of the forest by:

- 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.

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.

Promote efficient utilization of harvested forest products through enforcement of utilization standards in harvesting operations.

A photograph of a forest landscape. In the foreground, there is a large pile of cut logs and branches. In the background, a dense forest of tall, thin trees is visible. On the left side, a person wearing a yellow hard hat and a dark jacket is standing. On the right side, there is a large pile of cut logs. The sky is bright and clear.

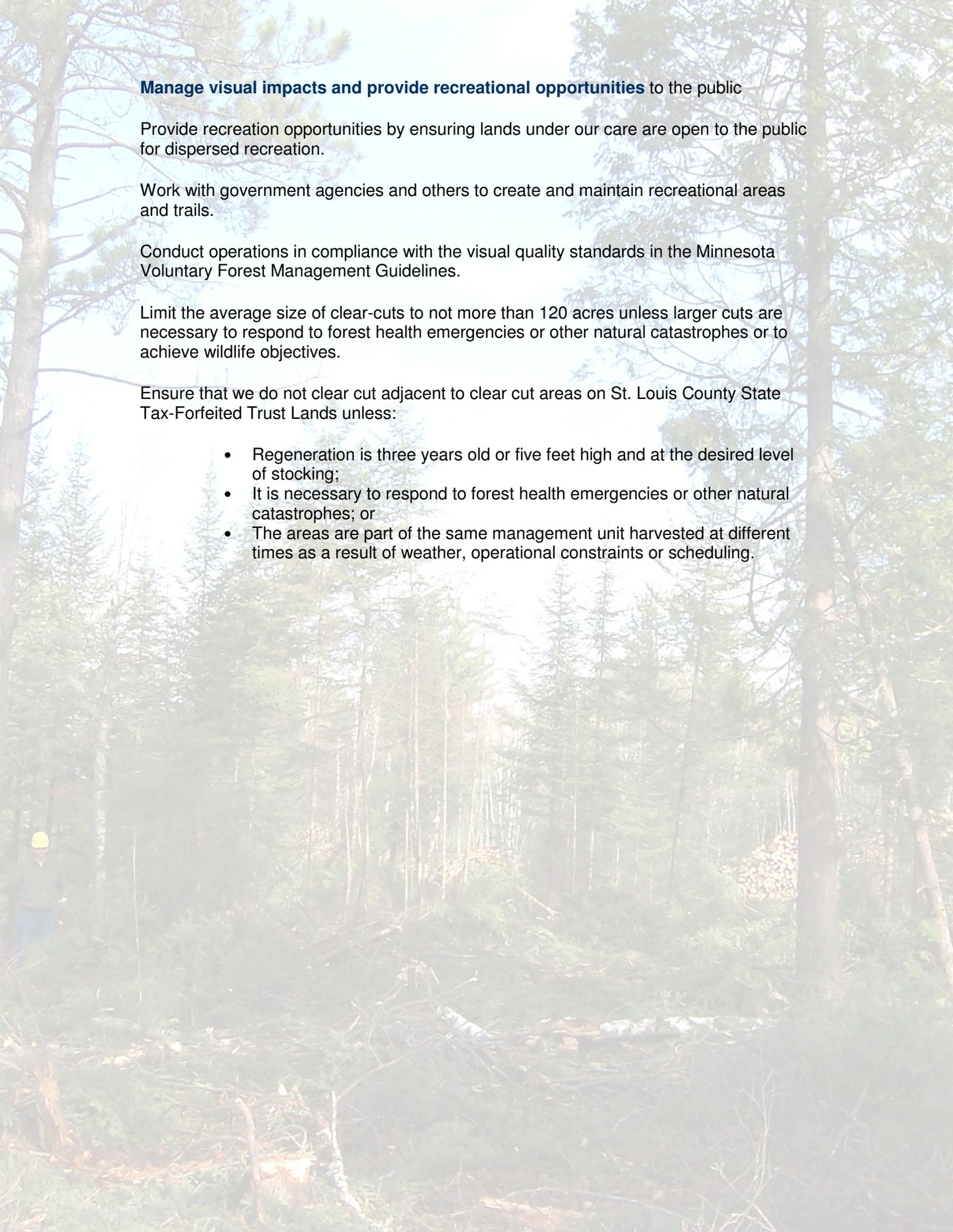
**Establish management practices that minimize and where possible prevent negative impact to the environment and protect Biological Diversity, Water Resources and Special Sites**

Maintain a forest cover across the landscape that is composed of diverse qualities, features, and elements.

Manage the quality and distribution of wildlife habitats and contribute to the biological diversity by developing measures that promote habitat diversity.

Protect special sites by:

- Identifying and mapping sites in our GIS system;
- Ensuring sites are protected during forest management activities by identifying them 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.



**Manage visual impacts and provide recreational opportunities** to the public

Provide recreation opportunities by ensuring lands under our care are open to the public for dispersed recreation.

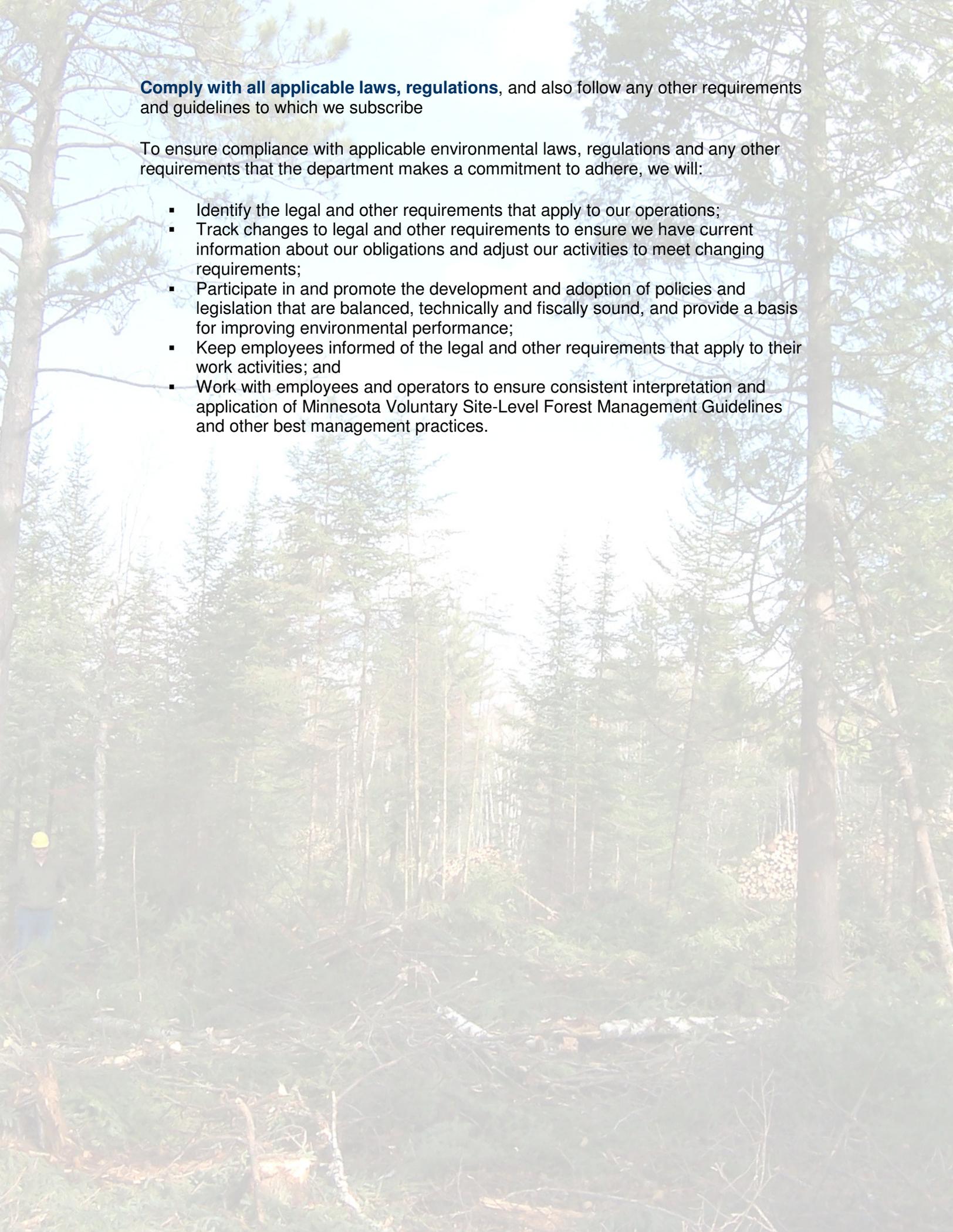
Work with government agencies and others to create and maintain recreational areas and trails.

Conduct operations in compliance with the visual quality standards in the Minnesota Voluntary Forest Management Guidelines.

Limit the average 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:

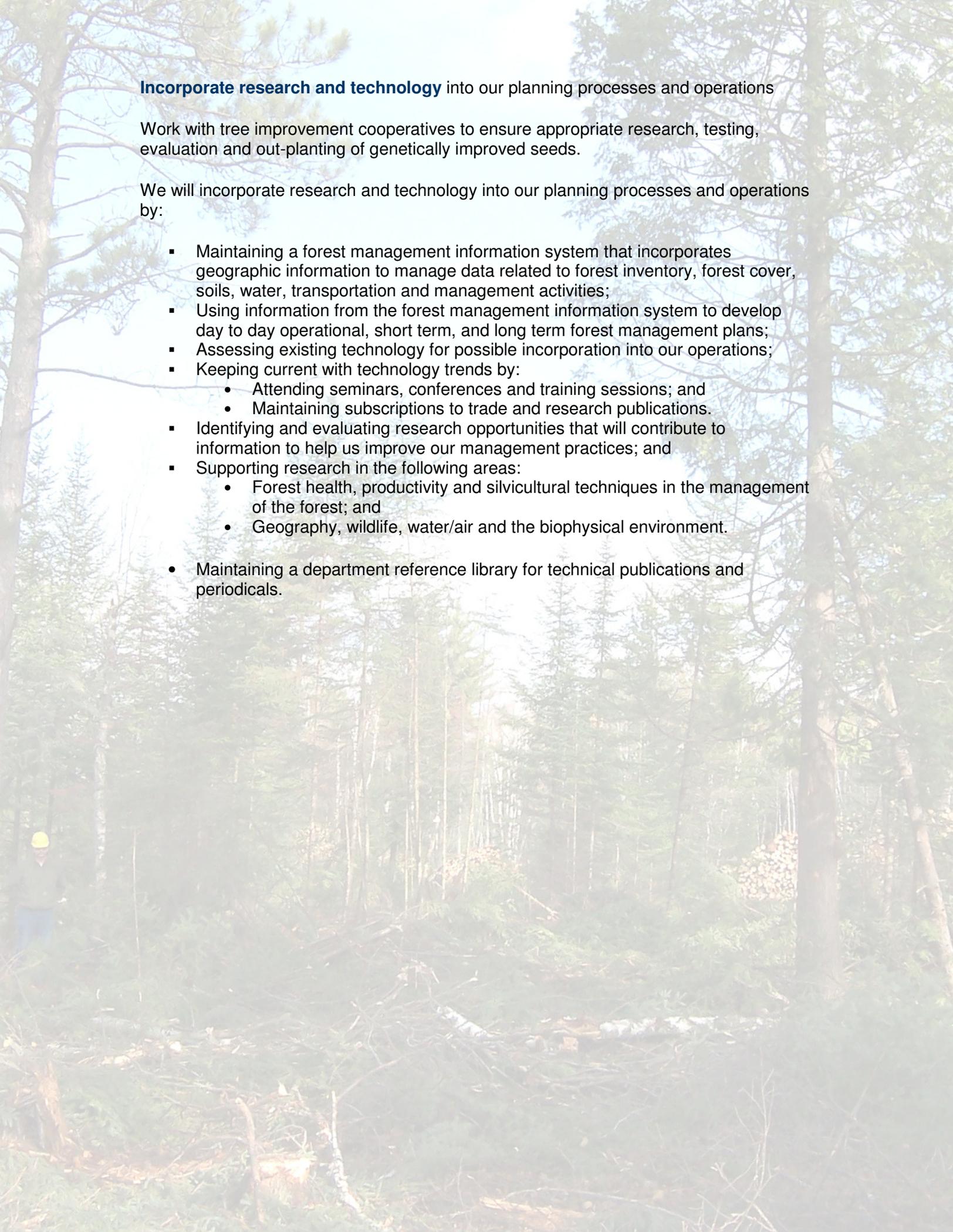
- Regeneration is three years old or five feet high and at the desired level of stocking;
- It is necessary to respond to forest health emergencies or other natural catastrophes; or
- The areas are part of the same management unit harvested at different times as a result of weather, operational constraints or scheduling.



**Comply with all applicable laws, regulations,** and also follow any other requirements and guidelines to which we subscribe

To ensure compliance with applicable environmental laws, regulations and any other requirements that the department makes a commitment to adhere, we will:

- Identify the legal and other requirements that apply to our operations;
- Track changes to legal and other requirements to ensure we have current information about our obligations and adjust our activities to meet changing requirements;
- Participate in and promote the development and adoption of policies and legislation that are balanced, technically and fiscally sound, and provide a basis for improving environmental performance;
- Keep employees informed of the legal and other requirements that apply to their work activities; and
- Work with employees and operators to ensure consistent interpretation and application of Minnesota Voluntary Site-Level Forest Management Guidelines and other best management practices.

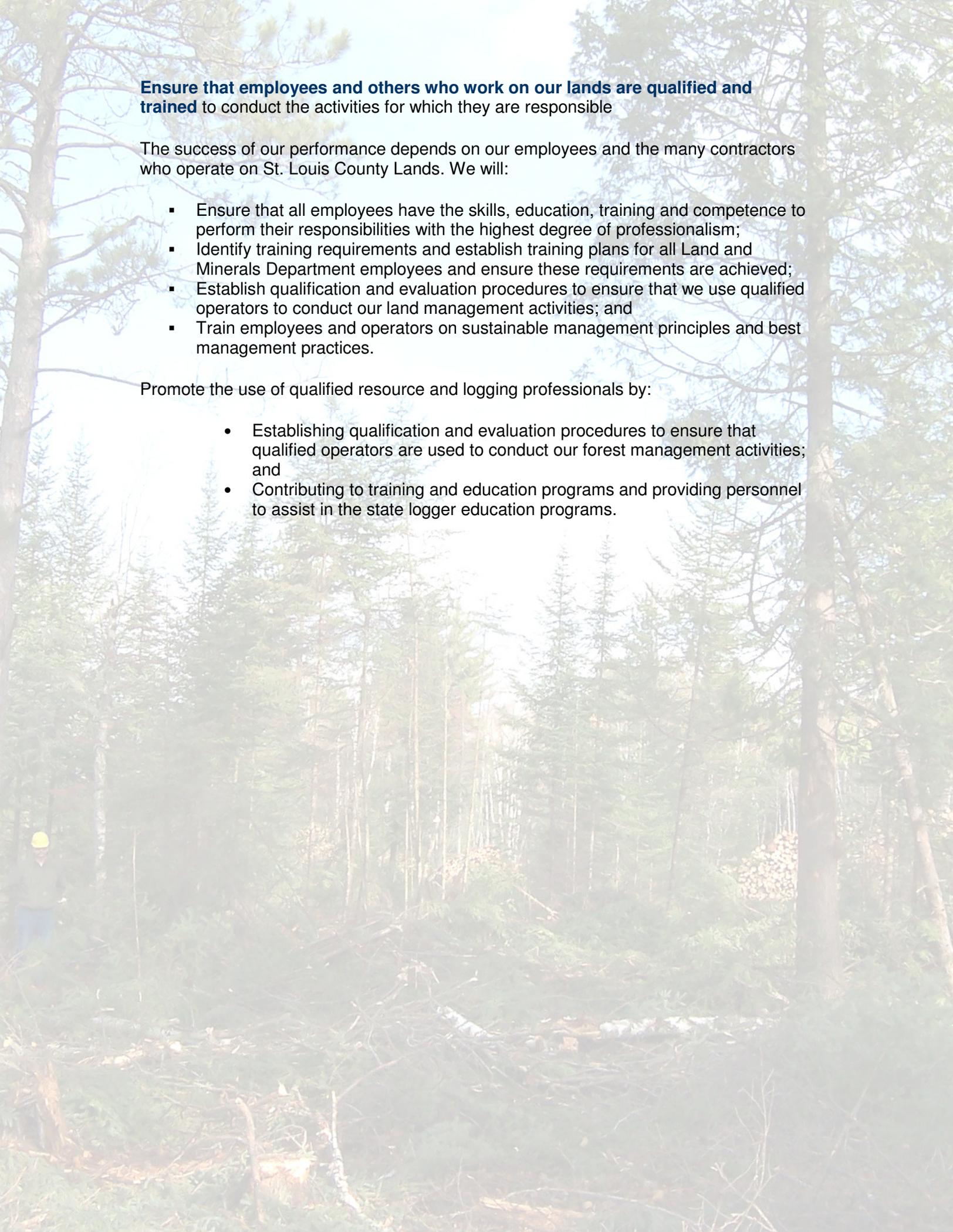


**Incorporate research and technology** into our planning processes and operations

Work with tree improvement cooperatives to ensure appropriate research, testing, evaluation and out-planting of genetically improved seeds.

We will incorporate research and technology into our planning processes and operations by:

- Maintaining a forest management information system that incorporates geographic information to manage data related to forest inventory, forest cover, soils, water, transportation and management activities;
- Using information from the forest management information system to develop day to day operational, short term, and long term forest management plans;
- Assessing existing technology for possible incorporation into our operations;
- Keeping current with technology trends by:
  - Attending seminars, conferences and training sessions; and
  - Maintaining subscriptions to trade and research publications.
- Identifying and evaluating research opportunities that will contribute to information to help us improve our management practices; and
- Supporting research in the following areas:
  - Forest health, productivity and silvicultural techniques in the management of the forest; and
  - Geography, wildlife, water/air and the biophysical environment.
- Maintaining a department reference library for technical publications and periodicals.



**Ensure that employees and others who work on our lands are qualified and trained** to conduct the activities for which they are responsible

The success of our performance depends on our employees and the many contractors who operate on St. Louis County Lands. We will:

- Ensure that all employees have the skills, education, training and competence to perform their responsibilities with the highest degree of professionalism;
- Identify training requirements and establish training plans for all Land and Minerals Department employees and ensure these requirements are achieved;
- Establish qualification and evaluation procedures to ensure that we use qualified operators to conduct our land management activities; and
- Train employees and operators on sustainable management principles and best management practices.

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.

**Solicit information and input from the public** so that our plans and activities continue to provide for the sustained benefit of our communities and resources, and recognize and respect the rights of *Indigenous Peoples*.

The Land and Minerals Department, as a manager of State Tax Forfeited Lands in St. Louis County, has a responsibility to be responsive to public input and concerns in the management and stewardship of those lands. The Land and Minerals Department also has a duty to manage lands to provide the optimum benefit for the County at large. We take all input seriously and will consider any input we receive, knowing we will not be able to promote, act upon, or incorporate all suggestions and requests. It is the intent of the Land and Minerals Department to:

- Provide opportunity for input from the public in a number of ways including:
  - Open houses at specific locations within the County;
  - Public field tours and information sessions;
  - The St. Louis County Land and Minerals Department web site; and
  - Through the County Board.
- Consider recommendations and input from the public;
- Implement recommendations where they will improve the management of the resource and are in the best interest of the people of the County; and
- Provide prompt feedback to anyone providing input including descriptions of actions taken or reasons for not taking any action.
- Communicate with affected Indigenous Peoples to:
  - understand and respect traditional forest-related knowledge;
  - identify and protect spiritually, historically, or culturally important sites;
  - address the use of non-timber forest products of value to Indigenous Peoples in areas where we have management; and
  - respond to Indigenous Peoples' inquiries and concerns received.