

Final Report: Healthy Forests for Healthy Water

**by the Great Lakes Forest Alliance, Inc. on the
Upper Mississippi River Forest Partnership and Regional Roundtable
to the USDA Forest Service
Northeastern Area State & Private Forestry**

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GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In late March, 2004, a diverse group of people with a strong interest in sustainability of the forests met to discuss opportunities for improving water quality through forests in the Upper Mississippi River Basin (UMRB). The meeting was intended to gain a greater understanding among regional shareholders of the opportunities and challenges associated with sustainable forests at a regional scale, nested in the national and global scales to develop a common understanding of the forest conditions and trends for the region and particularly for the Upper Mississippi River Basin forests. A series of presentations and working sessions were utilized to help lead participants toward that goal. The specific goal statements are as follows:

1. **KNOW:** Recognize the capacity of the national report, The State of the Nation's Forests, to guide national level discussions and the recognize the value of sustainable forest management criteria and indicator to local and regional efforts.
2. **EXCHANGE:** Gain understanding and exchange knowledge about the Upper Mississippi River Forests. (around the seven broad criteria areas, from biodiversity and forest health to social and economic impacts and forest policy and law.)
3. **VOICE:** Express concerns and ideas/suggestions regarding the social, economic and ecological needs of the Upper Mississippi River and its forests to national and regional policy and decision makers.
4. **ACT:** Provide input to the development of an action plan to make the Upper Mississippi River and its forests economically, ecologically and socially viable--national, regional, local scales.

The recommendations from the Regional Roundtable, in the form of sustainable forest management criteria and indicator feedback, vision, strategies and action proposals were designed to be given to the Upper Mississippi River Forest Partnership to integrate into an action plan.

PART ONE: REGIONAL ROUNDTABLE SYNTHESIS AND ANALYSIS

Following are some key points in the presentations and summarization of working group outputs and attempts to list and organize opportunities that exist to achieve the desired outcomes.

A. Background Presentations

The initial presentations were made by State Foresters from the Upper Mississippi River Basin (UMRB) and stressed the strong commitment to sustainable forest management in the region. It is difficult to address issues on a regional basis because of the many agencies, groups and individuals involved. Therefore, the desire to address any regional issues must be extremely strong, mechanisms must exist to enable cooperative actions and there must be tools available to evaluate the impacts of actions that will lead to desired futures.

The United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service State and Private Forestry (USFS, S&PF) is in the right position and has the appropriate mission to provide leadership and assistance in achieving the regional partnerships and the desirable sustainable outcomes. Kathryn Maloney, Northeastern Area Director (S&PF) in her welcome to participants and Joel Holtrop, Deputy Chief Forester (S&PS), in his keynote presentation, provided information outlining that unique role for their agency as well as their personal commitment to visions that would be expressed later in the meeting.

USFS, S&PF has a regional partnership with the 20 Northeastern States which includes all of the six states in the UMRB (Michigan, Minnesota, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin). One goal is to provide for sustainable forest management, including clean water, clear air and sustainable communities within the region. Since 92% of the forestland in the region is non-federal, S&PF must work with and through others. Also the Forest Service has formed a national partnership, the National Roundtable on Sustainable Forests, which is a shared quest to achieve national sustainability. The S&PF mission includes the goal of sustaining the health, diversity, and productivity of America's forests and grasslands, now and in the future.

There are numerous definitions that speak to forest sustainability, but all reflect a commitment to maintaining forest productivity in the environmental (biological), social and economic realms now and into the future for generations to come. In order to assess and monitor this effort, the US has joined with other temperate climate countries to develop a set of criteria and indicators (C&I) known as the Montreal Process, which will help evaluate trends toward sustainability. The C&I do not by themselves assure sustainability. Rather they are tools (measures) which help us evaluate our progress. They are and always will be subject to interpretation. However, they do establish a baseline and ideally, enable us to measure changes and trends, then reinforce positive trends, change negative ones, and finally to assess overall progress in our journey towards sustainability.

National, regional and local reports with C&I are the beginnings of an assessment process. They provide the best data possible at this time and thus the base for continuing improvement. This is a strong rationale for moving forward even

thought we may believe there are better data possible in the future. We simply cannot wait. The collection, discussion, and assessment of existing data will provide an improved basis for sustainability evaluation and suggest even better measures.

The first National Report provides some points of interest for the group and one in particular related to water quality.

- * For the past 100 years, there has been no net loss of forest land in the U.S. However, we do know that there have been shifts in land use.

- * Increasing forest recreation use is intersecting with decreasing land available for such use.

- * Of all the forest species, 88% still exist in forest which they previously inhabited.

- * Forest fragmentation is real, 50% of all forest land is within 100 meters of a forest edge. It is more difficult to establish a problem related to this forest change.

- * Net forest growth exceeds removals by 47% and mortality is less than three-fourths of one percent.

- * Private forest lands provide the vast majority of removals.

- * The margin of net growth vs. removals is increasing in the West (where most forest land is in public ownership) and decreasing in the East (where most forest land is privately owned).

Although there are many statistics related to forests and timber products use, non-timber forest use data tends to be scarce, but on the increase.

Reflecting on water quality, a point of great interest to the group related to the hypoxia zone (dead zone due to algal blooms) in the Gulf of Mexico, a factor related to land use along and nutrient flows into the Mississippi River, including those in the Upper Basin of the Mississippi. Addressing this issue may require much more than just Best Management Practices (BMP's). I may require changes in vegetation patterns stressing perennial (permanent) rather than annual plant species, particularly on marginal farm lands. Such a change would be fairly monumental, would require a groundswell of support to achieve, and significant data gathering and monitoring to establish effectiveness. In this case, as in many related to sustainability, the change will be incremental and require a long term committed constituency.

Considerable effort, on an international and national level has gone into developing forest sustainability concepts and the use of C&I to discuss, monitor, and evaluate effectiveness of actions. Institutional systems already exist to provide a framework for assessment. These attributes will facilitate the partnership which is developing and help focus discussion and commitment in order to achieve positive results. In the case of the UMRB, forest management and forestry activities can serve as part of the solution. The existence of the Upper Mississippi River Forest Partnership and coordinator provides the focus and leadership needed to identify with and commit to a longer term process. The ingredients for success are here and must be acted on now.

B. The Upper Mississippi River Forest Partnership

The Upper Mississippi River Forest Partnership was inspired and interested in the work being conducted by the Northeastern Area Association of State Foresters (NAASF) to apply the Montreal Process Criteria and Indicators to report on Forest Sustainability at a regional level. Teague Prichard, President of the Northeastern Forest Resource Planners Association and Planner for Wisconsin DNR presented the eighteen (18) base indicators chosen for focus by the northeastern states from the MP C&I to collect data and report. The indicators were prioritized through an in-depth process led by Connie Carpenter of the Northeastern Area State & Private Forestry.

As national focus was drawn to the contributions of forests in the Upper Mississippi River Basin to water quality in the hypoxia zone, the State Foresters proposed the Upper Mississippi River Forest Partnership to draw together landowners, agencies, the academy, research, non-governmental organizations, citizens and communities to focus on the Montreal Process criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management as a tool to enhance and monitor the contributions of forests to water quality. The purpose of the Regional Roundtable was to involve citizens across the region in launching that Partnership through data sharing and dialogue which was designed to lead to better decision making.

Samuel Osinde, the Upper Mississippi River Forest Partnership Coordinator, whose roots are in a similar partnership for the Lake Victoria region of Africa drew participants' focus to the needs for partnership, commitment from people at all levels and involvement of the people who are most affected by the decisions.

The Regional Roundtable vision, strategies and action discussion was designed to be presented to the Upper Mississippi River Forest Partnership to integrate into an action plan.

C. Criteria and Indicator Session Summary

Summarizing some of the discussions related to criterion break-out sessions, Michael Huffman of the Missouri Department of Conservation made a number of points. Several overarching themes he perceived are as follows:

- * The role of private lands and landowners is crucial;
- * There is a strong interrelationship between the criterion and the indicators; None of them can stand alone.
- * Education has a major and compelling role throughout this process.
- * Information is a stimulus for action.
- * Behavior is influenced greatly by social values.
- * There is a global influence and context to local land use. The connections need to be recognized and understood. Examples include forest land use and fragmentation.
- * Biodiversity has many interpretations requiring considerable effort among the group to achieve common understandings that can lead to action.

* People need to understand the links between consumption and resource use and the role of productive capacity in that evaluation.

* Forest health is difficult to define, will be expensive to monitor, has sizable historic variation and should include urban forests.

D. Criterion Discussion

Each criterion held considerable interest for meeting participants. The discussions were lively and thoughtful and in many cases were similar to those that resource planning professionals, other resource groups and even Montreal Process attendees had individually while considering measures and appropriateness. A thorough listing of the raw data from the individual criterion discussions is provided in the Appendix. A summary of significant ideas is contained in this text.

In many cases, similar concerns were mentioned for more than one criterion as well as for indicators. Invasive species were a major concern and threat listed under several criteria, but particularly under biodiversity where it was suggested that new species might out compete and replace native species. The question of what is native and what is new confounded some since species introductions have occurred over centuries and some of those species are now considered native. Protected areas, climate changes, grasslands and wildlife habitat maintained by Native American, and plantations tend to blur the question of naturalness and how functional they may be in fostering natural processes.

The difficulty in measuring many indicators was a common concern mentioned repeatedly. Some speculated that indicators only tell us if we are in trouble and that we might be better to move directly to action steps, e.g. Best Management Practices (BMP's) or to simply plant more trees. Generally trends in indicators were considered most important, but there was a concern about identifying if the direction of a trend was good or bad. A suggestion was made that thresholds should be set for indicators, but most agreed that would be extremely difficult and could likely change with time. Limits to indicators might prove more valuable.

There were numerous suggestions to add indicators, particularly related to demographics, such as forest land per capita, or to alter some by establishing them on a per capita basis. Because of increased populations and where people now live, urban forests have become more important and we should have indicators specifically for them. As population has increased, particularly urban, there was an expressed concern for the "not-in-my-back-yard(NIMBY) phenomenon. People want to continue existing consumption patterns, but do not want to bear any of the costs associated with producing those goods.

The support for establishing and maintaining healthy forests is strong, but there is recognition that the concept is difficult to define and interpret. Measurement will be expensive and very time consuming. Are there effective, simpler ways to characterize

this concept? Do historic conditions truly reflect forest health when we know that forests are constantly changing and that they may have been in some transitional state at any time we select. Again, a range of historic variation may be more useful.

Likewise, it will be important to establish some type of baseline data within the socio-economic criteria with measurements available both before and after actions are implemented. Measuring and ranking spiritual values is important, but extremely difficult. We know that people have strongly held values, but those values are not necessarily consistent with an individual's willingness to pay the consequences of their choices.

Under the legal, institutional criterion, more effort needs to be expended with local units of government. Townships can impact natural systems through taxes, zoning, education, and infrastructure development. Public involvement and education are important at that level, yet one commentor suggested that he or she had never heard a discussion of biodiversity at a township meeting. Forest cooperatives and the farming community may need to be more involved since both provide access to landowners and likely participants in the UMRB Forest Partnership project.

Finally, there were a number of comments suggesting that we need to move forward with C&I's for the UMRB. We need to take a long term outlook remembering that it could be 100 years before we attain the desired outcome. Small successes should be viewed positively, in contributing to the overall goal. Considering the interaction of people and the forest resource, trade-offs must be conceptualized and discussed. Indicators can be added, dropped, altered, and refined as we progress. All selected indicators must be reviewed and analyzed before deciding what significant problems exist and how to proceed towards solutions. Trend data is critical and detecting change will help us understand the impacts of our actions. There will not necessarily be direct causal relationships so long term analysis is necessary. We may want to identify the major threats to the UMRB and focus our efforts on those threats in order to make a perceptible difference.

E. Federal Panel Summary

Three federal representatives participated in a panel discussion, question and answer session defining a possible role for the federal government in the UMRB project.

Mark Rey, Under Secretary for Forests and Natural Resources, USDA, began by talking about the limited federal funds available to help in the near future because of the large budget deficits. More optimistically, he did list reasons that would support a federal role for participation. That role could include situations where the problem transcended local or state boundaries and called for coordination at a larger level. Funds were more likely to be available for projects that serve as incubators for new programs and that have an experimental emphasis. Innovation would be important,

looking at new ways to cross governmental boundaries to achieve regional goals, e.g., controlling invasive species or dealing with fragmentation of forest lands. Included might be certain types of forest research, particularly basic research needed to support applied research by others. Again, the emphasis would be on enterprising new approaches that transcend local initiatives and beg for coordination across governmental levels. Any project needs a sense of urgency, and if not a crisis, then certainly a sense of consensus, e.g., forest fire or a loss of rural landscapes. If you hope to achieve change, **boldness** will be required!

Joel Holtrop spoke of the necessity to build and improve connections among participating entities that help provide a synergistic outcome.

Kathy Maloney spoke more specifically about C&I being a valuable tool with a common framework from which to judge sustainable forest management implementation. She also stated that money is more likely to be available on a one time basis with very specific ground application. The goals need to be well-defined with a recognized role for each of the participants. Clarity of purpose for uses of any money are essential. The very basic questions that must be answered reasonably are:

- * Why do you want the money?
- * How much is needed?
- * What are you going to do with it?
- * How will it contribute to the attainment of your goals?

F. Visions, Strategies and Action Discussion

After considerable discussion of the C&I's, the group participated in a vision and action process. That session was intended to help people visualize what they would like the UMRB to look like at some future time, the processes that would enable us to get there, and the actions that would contribute to attaining that future state.

E. 1. Visions

The people and communities of the UMRB would become involved in a transparent process that would facilitate participation. Understanding of forest values, assisted by educational efforts, would be widespread. A land ethic will develop with strong commitment to sustainable lands and forests and a sustainable forest industry in the UMRB. There would be a recognized priority and a consensus for a healthy functioning landscape that supports water quality. Communication and outreach are effectively utilized throughout the Basin and encourage community participation with balanced perspectives and a spirit of negotiation and compromise. Any solutions would address local needs while maintaining global perspectives.

The forest itself would support diversity, be healthy and productive and very resilient. Existing forest land (at least present acreage) would be maintained but the structure and function will improved. Uplands are healthy, marginal farmlands

reforested, flood plains restored and water resources improved. Forest fragmentation is mitigated and healthy ecosystems are restored and maintained. Invasive species are understood and appropriately controlled. Riparian zones contribute positively to local economic and social well-being. Cultural and social needs in the UMRB are satisfied.

The institutional structures needed to support this effort would include consistency in planning at all levels and adequately funded avenues making participation relatively easy. Information and communication flows are effective, leading to appropriate land use policies. This would require agency and group coordination with balanced perspectives by participants. Values across all three pillars would be recognized and respected. Technical and financial assistance would be adequate for all interested landowners. Inventory and monitoring efforts would be effective, inexpensive, and pertinent to development sustainable forests. BMP's are effective and holistic with a balanced and widely supported sustainable forest management education program. Good markets would exist for all forest outputs, both those with present markets and those that are considered non-market goods at this time.

E.2. Actions to Implement Visions

There is a need for information and education (I&E) efforts related to key issues, particularly those that reconnect people to the land and resource. Forest and field days, school forests, demonstration plots, training of educators and a media blitz related to sustainable forests are needed. New efforts are needed to develop local woodland leaders, e.g. 4-H, local colleges, and landowner and forestry organizations. Working groups with known and recognized leaders must be formed and advertised. Simplified evaluation of methods for local sustainability efforts must be developed. Market for forest outputs must be linked from local to regional levels and improved to provide incentives to manage sustainably.

Plans that relate to forests are connected to other levels of planning so that consistent efforts develop. Legislative workshops are utilized to developed support, incentives and policies that encourage reforestation and timber stand improvement. Harvests are used effectively to balanced forest health issues. We need to establish riparian management zones and promote agro-forestry, particularly on marginal farmlands. Financial resources must be increased to support education and assistance efforts with landowners.

Methods to develop the necessary support will include: roundtables, town meetings, forums, grants, personal contacts with landowners and legislators, and making forests a crucial part of master planning efforts. Tax benefits to landowners that contribute to positive changes in management need to be implemented. End user taxes could support educational efforts. Natural resource based industries should be encouraged and taxes and incentives provided that contribute to sustainability. Right to practice forestry laws that encourage sustainable forest management are needed. Forest research that develops new markets and improved markets(new forest-derived

medicinals, increased forest productivity, etc.) will improve incentives for sustained management. Eventually forest production will be determined more by what is good for the land than what is demanded in the marketplace. Finally, program monitoring is required to achieve success.

E. 3. Shareholders

A long list of participants was developed and included the following, although the list should not be considered exhaustive. Certainly additional participants will be found:

- * Community leaders, particularly gatekeepers
- * Residents
- * Landowners, including absentee
- * Riparian landowners
- * Governmental agencies:
 - Local, e.g. township, county, conservation districts
 - State forestry organizations, wildlife, and environmental agencies
 - National Association of Conservation Districts
 - Farm Services Agency
 - Natural Resources Conservation Service
 - USDA Forest Service
 - United States Fish and Wildlife Service
 - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
 - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 - State legislatures
 - University Extension
 - Scientists(University, State & Federal)
- * Forest certification entities, e.g. Forest Stewardship Council, Green Tag, Sustainable Forestry Initiative, etc.
- * Land trusts
- * Agricultural groups, e.g. Farm Bureau
- * Natural resource consultants
- * Land management cooperatives
- * Watershed and landscape planning organizations
- * Public land management groups
- * Natural resource industries
- * Surveyors
- * Real estate companies
- * Logger organizations
- * Timber producers
- * Natural resource company scientists
- * Water utilities

- * Related business and industry
- * Land and water user groups, e.g., fishing enthusiasts, hunters, water sport recreationists, recreational vehicle users, outdoor organizations.

G. Session Conclusion

Finally, Al Todd of the Forest Service summarized thoughts that he heard. He emphasized the quality of the discussions and the excellence of the dialogue among the participants. He reminded participants of a Gifford Pinchot quote that was particularly relevant to the major issue of the meeting: “The relationship of forests to rivers is like father to son.” (Mother to daughter? Parent to child?) He noted that Kathy Maloney perceived that we were at the beginning of a journey whereas Joel Holtrop saw it as the beginning of a quest. Regardless, there was a common understanding that utilizing C&I to measure advancement to sustainable forest management would lead to:

Better Data leading to Better Dialogue resulting in Better Decisions.

Appropriately, C&I will allow us to communicate complex information in simpler ways.

The participants in the meeting were very enthusiastic and readily joined in the discussions. It was obvious there was a strong cooperative attitude toward addressing land use issues in the UMRB. Government leadership showed a strong commitment to providing resources to initiate and assist in getting the project started. Funding sources, at least on a one time basis, are likely since this is a regional project involving numerous levels of government across many political boundaries. There was a consensus that this project needed to move forward to address what could become or may already be a crisis, i.e. water quality in the UMRB and the Gulf of Mexico. There was also agreement that C&I within the context of sustainability forest management could provide the mechanism needed to monitor and direct efforts necessary to reach desired goals. It was understood that outcomes will be long term and that there must be a committed and coordinated willingness to persevere in order to make this project successful. All the pieces exist to make this effort a success. The time to start is now!

Prepared by Gerald Theide

SECTION TWO: SYNTHESIS AND ANALYSIS OF RAW DISCUSSION DATA

The discussion notes were synthesized for each of the two major discussion sessions and are summarized here. For more discussion, see the appendix in which the

raw data is prefaced with the complete synthesis.

A. Vision Statements

Participants presented vision and strategies and nominated shareholders for the Upper Mississippi River Basin and the region related to people and communities, the state of the forest and the supporting structures and capacities were synthesized (Appendix B). The vision statements are presented here.

1. Leadership:

Leadership on the Upper MS forests and water is established and widely recognized. Leadership recognizes ecological, economic and social values across administrative boundaries and addresses sustainability of forests from the perspective of local needs nested in global needs and engages the forest and agricultural communities in the process.

2. Respect the Role of Private Woodlands and Their Owners

Private woodland owners maintain their forest land as forests and contribute to sustainable forest management through a comprehensive and customized forest plan and it is manifested through a healthy forested landscape.

3. Voice

Leadership gives voice to a diverse array of people groups including, but not limited to: citizens, business, communities, the academy, landowners and farmers so they can contribute their wisdom and experience to help make better decisions about forest and land use policy and practice in a local to global perspective. Ensure people who have direct connection to the land are involved in decision-making. Everyone has access to the forests.

4. Collaboration.

Organizations and agencies, public and private, agriculture and forest, local to national, collaborate by sharing staff, resources and expertise rather than compete to assure forest sustainability and water quality. There is integrated, efficient, cross-sectoral agency coordination to exchange expertise and avoid overlap with a balanced perspective that considers global trade-offs.

5. Education and Outreach

Education and Outreach is manifested by citizens, business, communities, landowners and farmers who are knowledgeable and support of sustainable forest and water management because they understand forest values and issues and their unique roles for improving ecosystem health. There is a well-balanced sustainable forest resource

education program.

6. Healthy and Optimally Diverse Forests

Healthy and optimally diverse forests are the norm; They are productive, resilient, and sustain their cover of the Upper Mississippi River and other watersheds, particularly through riparian forested areas. The forests in the Upper MS River Basin are healthy uplands and restored floodplains with a diversity of forest composition, flora and fauna. Invasive species are understood regarding status and impact on ecological diversity.

7. Viable Forest Products Economic Base

A viable forest products industry supports a sustained forest landscape and economic viability of communities located near the forest. Consumers are living within the means of natural production. This is evidenced by an acceptance that sustainable forest management includes sustainable forest industries, all of which contribute to the economic vitality of communities and the region and support a forested landscape. Family forestry is economically viable. There is an economic return for afforestation.

8. Optimal Species Diversity

There is optimal species diversity to satisfy ecological, economic, social and cultural needs.

9. Land Use and Planning

There is a balance of forest land use to stem fragmentation to maintain and enhance forest function through appropriate land use policy and practice.

10. Research

Research, while often perceived as a strategy is recognized here as a viable component of a vision of healthy forests, communities and industries. The vision is represented in that forest and water quality inventory and monitoring will lead to adaptive forest management concepts and that it is inexpensive, effective and contributes to articulating, monitoring(design) and validating sustainable forest management.

B. Strategic Recommendations

Innovative or comprehensive strategic recommendations are presented here from the raw data synthesis of the vision and strategy discussion(Appendix B).

1. Develop a forest sustainability report card to evaluate the work at each scale from landowner to community to state, region, nation and international perspectives. Engage agricultural community and indicators into the Upper MS discussion.
2. Prioritize forest resource areas that need to be preserved and those for active

management and recreation.

3. Serve all interested landowners with technical and financial assistance programs.
4. Create a better flow of information/education to local levels, including about all sustainable forest management criteria and indicators, from biodiversity to carbon sequestration.
5. Ensure the right to practice forestry and restructure the tax system to encourage woodland owners to keep their forest land intact.
6. Create a Landowner Economic and Ecological Alliance for Families, Farms, Fields and Forests (LE²AF₄).
7. Reach consensus as communities around improved water quality, a healthy functioning forested landscape and a viable forest products industry as being a high priority.
8. Engage the diverse array of people groups in a *roundtable process* that is accountable up and down scales of geographic influence.
9. Jointly pursue the recognition of critical issues, including hypoxia.
10. Interconnect regional and state strategic forest management plans.
11. Design an end-user tax to support comprehensive a educational strategy.
12. Coordinate and provide more effective education and communication to a wide variety of people groups regarding the many forest values.
13. Research and design a holistic Best Management Practices, including biodiversity.
14. Establish healthy riparian management zones through federal, state and local programs to educate and financially assist riparian zone stewards.
15. Ecological services(habitat and water quality) are improved through incentives.
16. Initiate an array of efforts to maintain a viable forest products industry tied to a forested landscape.
17. Develop a demand for locally produced wood products through public relations, policy and promoting certification.
18. Develop a value system that the market does not drive the harvest but that individual needs, not wants, drive consumption.
19. Work with policy and decision makers to provide incentives and reward sustainable forest incentives.
20. Develop a research agenda to strengthen locally appropriate indicators, to monitor local trends, to evaluate data on hypoxia so as to delineate strategies and opportunities for improvement.

PART THREE: LESSONS LEARNED IN CONVENING A REGIONAL ROUNDTABLE

The Regional Roundtable was contracted in July, 2003 and to be convened no later than March, 2004. The Great Lakes Forest Alliance, Inc., a non-profit forum to

facilitate sustainable forest management among diverse forest perspectives in Michigan, Minnesota, Ontario and Wisconsin was selected to facilitate the process for Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri and Wisconsin. The project was a twelve month project with various deliverables in addition to the Roundtable, most notably, Fact Sheets for the Upper Mississippi River Basin on each of the Montreal Process Criterion and a final report. A steering committee related to the Upper Mississippi River Forest Partnership was to guide the design of the Roundtable. Several lessons have been learned from the management process that may be of value to future projects. Those highlighted here include:

- * Steering Committee
- * Developing Mailing Lists of Potential Participants
- * Discussion Facilitation
- * Data deliverables
- * Fact Sheet editing
- * Cost of Administration

A. Steering Committee Diversity

The Steering Committee was called together within one month for initial in-person meeting. While the individual Steering Committee members were an excellent source of input and guidance, the committee as a whole lacked the depth of diverse perspectives initially desired. Many people were unable to attend the first, in-person and therefore, significant meeting, because they were already committed for dates a month out. Though they agreed to participate, they seldom, if ever, joined the teleconference meetings. For a future event in which a short planning timeline were required and potential steering committee members were unfamiliar with each other, it might be more helpful to have a couple of meetings conducted first by teleconference and then an in-person meeting a couple months out. It would be significant to engage each potential steering committee member fully in the process to gain their commitment, and then their schedule to permit, a significant, in-person meeting.

B. Publicity for the Roundtable

Rather than an invitation to specific individuals, the Alliance broadly invited representatives from business, government, environmental groups, woodland owners and citizens. Over 5000 invitation post cards were printed and distributed but that was only possible because Steering Committee members made a concerted effort to supply Alliance staff with mailing labels. While the Alliance houses an extensive mailing list for the states it historically has worked with, contacts in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa and Missouri were needed. Staff of Meridian Institute supplied the Alliance with mailing addresses for the Indian tribes in those additional states as well.

Additional electronic mailings were distributed four times by the Alliance staff and by Steering Committee members to their affiliated woodland owners, industry,

environmental NGO's, local government and citizens.

In the future, convening such a Roundtable would be more successful in including more participants from each state if additional time were available to enlist key steering committee members specifically from industry and environmental NGO's in the additional states.

C. Discussion Facilitation

The discussion process was borrowed directly from the bio-regional discussion group strategy at the World Forestry Congress in Quebec City in 2003. The guidelines for facilitators were adapted to meet this specific project but formed an excellent strategy for volunteers who are professionals in the field to both lead the discussion and to participate in the discussion through the use of a co-chair. (A similar strategy was also used by the Blandin Foundation's Minnesota Forests and Rural Communities project.) Detailed notes were presented to discussion leaders by e-mail prior to the start of the Roundtable. It would have been most effective to also have a dedicated time prior to the start of the conference to walk through the discussion facilitation with chairs and co-chairs *without* asking them to stay an additional night. The discussion leader materials are presented in Appendix I.

The discussion leaders were quite effective and the wealth of their discussion notes indicate the strategy to utilize leaders within the field was an effective process for discussion facilitation(Appendices B and C).

D. Data Deliverables

The development of Fact Sheets on each criterion arose through the planning process and while as a final product they prove an excellent tool for education, there remained several difficulties with the development of the Fact Sheets. A contract was let with each of six authors for the seven fact sheets.

While the forest inventory analysis data are in the public domain, researchers had difficulty getting the data they needed released from the Forest Service staff who housed the data. In one case, seven months later, the research person has still not responded to the specific fact sheet author's request.

At the Regional Roundtable criterion discussions it was learned that the economic data were invalid. The GLFA was unwilling to print inaccurate Fact Sheets so the process was significantly delayed. Forest Service staff work overload was determined to be the cause of data from an earlier year having been copied into the more current year.

A contract had been let from the Forest Service research to collate the data in an Upper Mississippi River watershed basin set but it was in pre-publication status at the time of the Regional Roundtable. We attempted to retrieve pre-publication data but in most cases were unsuccessful.

Finally, there remains the question of what is most useful at the non-federal

level: basin or state jurisdictional data sets. Most citizens and landowners in the Midwest tend to rely on state jurisdictional allegiance. There are so many watersheds in the north in the region of lakes and rivers and Great Lakes that every piece of land is in some watershed. Does only the Gulf of Mexico need forests to protect the water quality or do the Great Lakes also benefit from the impacts of forests? Certainly both do and it is questionable whether in this region it makes sense to focus on a particular political strategy toward one watershed over another. Perhaps the information most user-friendly remains that of state data aggregation with a set of recommendations about forests and water quality.

E. Fact Sheet Science Editor

The Fact Sheets were reviewed by a sub-group of the Steering Committee and by the Great Lakes Forest Alliance board of trustees. Initial drafts demanded significant changes to be acceptable to all of the groups involved in editing. Some decisions were political, some scientific, some data related. It would be most effective in the future to contract with a Science Editor to set guidelines, Fact Sheet components and to work with authors for science accuracy while working with the staff who facilitate the process of review which would include the politically correct distinctions.

F. Cost of Administration

In the Midwest, efforts tend to factor cost-effectiveness as highly as meeting and exceeding grant deliverables, or quality of work. We were successful in meeting the project tasks for substantially less money than contracted. This was due to less people requesting travel scholarships, to reasonable hotel and meal costs and to avoiding the cost of paid facilitators for the event. Many agencies and groups partnered with the Alliance and the Steering Committee to participate in the Roundtable and that is due to the credibility of the Alliance and to the individuals of the Steering Committee who both volunteered and who requested help from others.

In addition, the travel scholarships were designed to cover costs without encouraging excessive costs. Most regions of the country can locate a Roundtable in a less expensive venue and have access to forest resource professionals who are willing to partner with the process for positive results. The positive result is that additional follow through work flowing directly from the Roundtable can be accomplished through this procurement. As a result, this model does give a reasonable cost estimate for future Roundtables.

G. Coordination of Two Key Issues

The concept of meshing the Roundtable concept with the Upper Mississippi River Forest Partnership as a way to consider the appropriateness of using Montreal Process Criteria and Indicators to monitor forests as a part of the solution to water quality was an excellent way to be both cost-effective and collaborative on study and

implementation. At first it seemed difficult to sell the National Sustainable Forest Roundtable, which had the genesis of the regional roundtable concept, on the value of the concept; At other times it seemed the focus was solely on the Upper Mississippi implementation process. Some of the jockeying seemed political in nature, other times it was just difficult for many of us to get our minds around so integrated a concept. But as often is the case, the Roundtable participants seemed to see the integration of sustainable forest management easily as evidenced by the depth and breadth of vision and strategy discussion items! It was a lesson in pragmatics: People close to the implementation often make more sense out of complex theories and policies as they focus on translating those ideas into practice.

PART FOUR: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FOLLOW THROUGH

From the synthesis of the participant discussion, several overarching recommendations must be presented.

1. Initiate a Woodland Owner/Farm Owner Task Force for Information and Policy

Again, discussants were consistent in their commitment to recognize the value of private woodlands and respect the woodland owners. Moreover, consistently the need to expand these discussions to include farmers and the agricultural community was articulated. The Upper MS Forest Partnership might support through staff and travel a task force comprised predominantly (more than 50%) of woodland and farmland owners along with local governments, organizations, agencies and businesses which provide support to the landowners. Their scope of work would be to delineate a strategy to get information and education to landowners and to share their knowledge and expertise with policy and decision makers. Potential items on their agenda which arose from this Regional Roundtable might include, but not be limited to:

- * Design a strategy to serve all landowners with technical and financial assistance to maintain a forested landscape.

- * Ensure the right to practice forestry.

- * Restructure the tax system to encourage landowners to keep or restore their forest land.

- * Design a system to provide incentives for ecological services, including clean air and water.

One example of an outcome of this task group, for instance, would be to propose a Woodland/Farm Owner Legislative Council in Wisconsin to recommend policy and practice changes to that state legislature.

This strategy may best be modeled after the Canadian Model Forest Programme and the Upper Mississippi River Forest Partnership might offer an opportunity to pilot the Programme.

2. Design and Implement a Comprehensive, Customized, Coordinated Outreach and Education Process

Across all discussion sessions, the need for outreach and education that is coordinated, rather than duplicated, and customized, rather than one-size-fits-all was articulated. The individuals and groups presented an excellent array of both *innovative* and *comprehensive* strategies for education and outreach to landowners (woodland and farmers) and citizens and students to realize the vision of healthy forests for healthy water. Education and outreach have been identified as high priority for many years and around many forest-related issues but for the most part are disconnected: Some excellent efforts are localized without a venue for sharing them and some efforts are inadequate in scope and impact.

Pertinent to this issue are the concepts of education to an array of other “publics” on the interrelationship of water and forests: that forests are a solution to some of the water quality issues. Then, what does that mean: Education by and with—not just “for”—private woodland owners, industry, county and local government, in other words, the people who own the land in this region, the people who own the land, about what that interrelationship implies for practice through policy, incentives and personal commitment.

The time is now to develop a comprehensive and collaborative strategy for outreach and education. The participants from this Roundtable and other experts in the field may be looked upon to develop such a strategy as it will require a diverse array of strategies and shareholders to assure the strategies will be implemented.

3. Develop a Research Partnership, Delineate a Research Agenda and Engage Research Projects.

Again, in every discussion session, research needs were articulated, from articulating watershed “power indicators” to evaluating data on hypoxia, all so that shareholders could delineate strategies and opportunities for improvement or adaptation.

A partnership could involve the research scientists from public and private institutions as well as agency and organizational leaders, business, communities and woodland and farmland owners. By having both researchers and users engaged in discussion together the research could be most relevant to the application needs, action or participatory research (that which involves action on the ground as a part of the research, such as data collection for local level indicators) could occur and the transition from research to recommendations would be most effective and efficient.

From this Regional Roundtable, agenda items for this group might include, but not be limited to the following:

* Assess research and evaluate the effects of invasives; Inventory the status of invasives to enable policy to reduce additional invasives.

- * Develop a research agenda to strengthen local indicator of sustainable forest management discussions, including rate of change, elements, such as interaction of agriculture not already in the indicator sets.
- * Study data on forest productivity potential
- * Study improving data collection, how to measure rate of change, metrics and presentation in relation to the Montreal Process Criteria and Indicators.
- * Design systems for data collection and reporting in a cost-effective manner or streams for funding
- * Study the relationship of consumption and production to offer insights for education and outreach and economic planning.
- * Study international trade impacts on local communities.
- * Study potential “power suite” of indicators for the Upper Mississippi Basin.

Again, the Canadian Model Forest Programme includes opportunities for local landowners, business and agency staff to request research that meets their needs and has the funds to support quality research from the academy. The Upper Mississippi River Forest Partnership could link local landowners with the academy.

4. Study the Review and Adaptation of the Montreal Process Criteria and Indicators

Participants raised needs to enlist participation from woodland owners, community group representatives, including local government, and state agency personnel in addition to other traditional participants, such as industry, environmental NGO's and research experts, for study of the review and adaptation of Montreal Process Criteria and Indicators.

The private woodland owners who participated in the Roundtable were both avid discussants and outspoken in the lack of opportunities offered to them to participate in the development of policy and practice related to managing forest lands. In the northern part of this Basin and in other parts of the country, private woodland owners are the largest single block of forest landowners. Their participation should be considered imperative.

State agency staff remain the repository for many data sets, especially those which are newly selected and those historically not relevant in the forest monitoring by the Forest Service such as social data. In this region state agencies are also more closely connected with private woodland owners and their associations than federal agencies typically are. Hence if they collect and store and share the data, their input should be recognized as essential.

The Montreal Process Criteria and Indicators are being considered for revision at this time and input to this process could be made from a regional group.

Again, the best strategy to achieve this goal might be for the Upper Mississippi River Forest Partnership to be a pilot based upon the Canadian Model Forest Programme which engages landowners, agencies, citizens and business and addresses local level indicators for sustainable forest management.

5. Design and Implement a Local to National Leadership Roundtable Process.

Discussion consistently emphasized the need for recognized leadership to see recommendations on the role of forests for clean water to come to fruition.

Furthermore, participants demanded a local to global perspective and voice for diverse groups, including those who felt themselves typically disenfranchised from policy discussions, namely woodland owners, communities and local government.

This Leadership Roundtable would be nested from local communities where woodland owners, farmers, business, local government, community organizations, tribes and schools would be able to both receive information and share local and traditional knowledge. State roundtables would include representatives from local roundtables and communities of interest. There may be regional roundtables that included clusters of states or watersheds, such as the Upper Mississippi River Basin forest partnership and again, include representatives from each tier and people with expertise at the regional level. Those groups would then receive and contribute to the National Sustainable Forest Roundtable or another nation level vehicle. Ideally, an International Roundtable that included the diverse forest partners would hear and share to enable local to global idea exchange and enhancement. Each Roundtable should address items for which it has the decision space.

These Roundtables could serve as education vehicles, as change agents for policy and practice, as advisory bodies to advocate for land use that sustains the forested landscape, offers research agendas and so forth. For example, the agenda items on the Roundtables flowing from this meeting might include, but not be limited to the following:

- * Develop a forest sustainability report card
 - * Develop holistic Best Management Practices to translate from C&I to implementation
 - * Prioritize forest resource areas for protection and active management and recreation
 - * Interconnect regional and state forest management plans
 - * Identify riparian management zones and provide education and financial assistance to support them
 - * Reach consensus as a community over priorities for water quality, healthy forests and a viable forest products economy
 - * Design an incentive system to reward ecological services of water and air quality.
- All shareholders identified by the participants would be able to find a tier for which their representation would be most effective and their voice most heard.

Another way to accomplish this goal might be to convene regional roundtables that reach a broad range of stakeholders and encourage dialogue by local groups within the Upper Mississippi River watershed in preparation for these events.

Obviously, these five strategies are not mutually exclusive. Perhaps the best model for follow through could be the Canadian Model Forest Programme. The Upper

Mississippi River Forest Partnership could be a pilot to enable all landowners within the watershed to be members of the partnership along with natural resource agency partners, non-governmental organizations, industry, community leaders and the research academy. The local voice would raise research needs and identify local level indicators of sustainable forest management to guide education, policy and practice and to be used to monitor the role of forests in enhancing water quality. Adequate research, education and coordination dollars over a sustained period of time (Canada authorizes for ten years) are cornerstones of the Canadian programme.

This effort would leave two concepts unaddressed, namely a coordinated outreach and educational effort that transcends the watershed boundaries and that includes a focus upon citizens and students, in addition to landowners. Also, this lacks the vertical integration with national level dialogues about sustainable forest management. A linking of regional programmes to the national level would be needed to adequately address this issue.

Note: Please download "Appendices" file separately. It can be found at <http://www.lsfa.org/publications>.