

② KOOCHICHING COUNTY REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION

DATE: September 14, 2010

SUBJECT: Proposed Long Range Plan for the Management of Tax Forfeited Land and Forest Resources of Koochiching County

1. Conduct Public Hearing to receive comment on the Plan; Written comment attached and further written comment received prior to the hearing will be presented to the County Board at the hearing.
2. County Board action on the plan and recommendations.

a. Comment received that based on the advertisement of the Plan hearing, it lacked stating segments of the plan to give notice to the public as to what is specifically impacted. Example: Did not specifically state County leases.

In review of this comment, Administration raises the question as to what the County Board will approve when it adopts the plan. The Plan lays out policy but attached in the plan, is a list of eight recommendations. When the County Board adopts the plan are they automatically adopting the recommendations or does the County Board act on the recommendations separately.

000 The County Board opened a public hearing at 1:40 p.m. to hear public comment on the proposed Long Range Plan for the Management of Tax-Forfeited Land and Forest Resources of Koochiching County as recommended by the Advisory Committee. The Land Commissioner provided an overview of the Plan's intent. Public comment was called. Rod Bergstrom as an Advisory Committee member spoke to the proposed plan and strongly recommends its adoption as presented. Tom Worth questioned why County leases are being addressed in this plan and not as a separate issue. He stated that the proposed increase in cabin lease fees along with personal property tax on the cabin is expensive. With regards to the habitat portion of the plan, he supports the objection of the MN Deer Hunters Association that the plan is shortsighted in sustainability of the forest for habitat with the accelerated timber harvest of 60 to 80 year old aspen. Tim O'Hara representing the MN Forest Industries provided a chart showing the mortality of the forest and stated that 22,000 acres of aspen in the County are age 60 or older. He stated that the plan will catch up on the old forest and then scale down. Scott Dane from the Associated Contract Loggers/Truckers stated concern with the opposition that is coming now with the harvest plan as the committee process encouraged review of comments/concerns so they could be reviewed with all the stakeholders and through data. He encouraged the Board to adopt the plan on behalf of the wood industry. James Sutch stated objection with the increase in the lease fee as it would be too costly to retain a lease and commended the effort of the Advisory Committee for their work. Jim Yount, a member of the Advisory Committee, stated that the harvest model decided in the plan was based on best knowledge and information and it does support forest sustainability. If the harvest plan begins to show detrimental impacts to the forest, the plan can change. He urged the Board to adopt the plan and not sell the plan short. Dennis Wagner stated that the plan is reviewed every ten years so he does not see a big risk to the forest in this time period. Mr. Yount stated that the plan is based on a 100 year model but accelerates harvest of old wood in the first five to ten years so most changes will occur in the 10 year period. Dan Klocek stated his support for the plan stating that 60 to 80 year old aspen is lying on the ground and would be better utilized in the wood industry. With regards to the concern about loss of conifers, he understood that permits require a certain amount of conifer not be cut. Dale Erickson, member of the committee, stated that the plan is a result of true compromise based on expert and knowledgeable resources and encouraged the Board's adoption. Lyle Windsness stated objection to the lease fee increase stating that just because Forest Capital increased their fees, doesn't automatically mean the County should increase theirs. Al Linder, member of the committee, stated that he is pro game and fish but there is a lot of old aspen rotting in the County and is a lost product for the wood industry. He stated that the concern on the loss of conifers in the accelerated harvest plan has been addressed. With regards to the lease issue, the County incurs cost with the leases and the fee revenue now does not cover it. The reality is that recreational property is an added expense for anyone whether they lease or own the land and it comes with a price. Larry Mannausau stated that in economic downturns the increased harvest will help the economy as well as the budgets. The Board Chair read the written comment submitted to include two written comments submitted by Boise and Boise Forte Band. County Board members all stated their appreciation to the Committee for their hard and good work in producing the plan. Commissioner Hanson stated that he would adopt the plan as written. Commissioner Lepper stated that the plan is a good product based on comprise of a good representation of stakeholders and experts in the field. He would also support the plan as presented. Commissioner McBride stated that he does not like to see wood go to waste and supports the harvest plan. However, he is not comfortable with other items in the plan but

acknowledged that it is a plan and it can be amended if something is off. Commissioner Adee stated he too is not comfortable with the all the items in the plan but overall feels it is a good work product. Commissioner Pavleck stated that the plan raises questions for him and would not be comfortable adopting the plan as is. He would be more comfortable adopting it as a guide with the county reviewing and implementing each section. Upon request by the County Board for the Land Commissioner's comment, the Land Commissioner stated that the planning process had two options to consider for the harvest plan and he has concern with the option chosen. His concerns are that the accelerated harvest of old wood will reduce future cut options and the preservation of the conifers in the accelerated harvest plan. With no further comment, the County Board closed the hearing at 2:45 p.m.

2010/09-20 Motion by Hanson, seconded by Lepper to approve the Long Range Plan for the Management of Tax-Forfeited Land and Forest Resources of Koochiching County and its recommendation as presented by the Advisory Committee with the deletion of the cabin lease fee recommendation on page 1 of the plan and to refer to the Plan for guidance in a separate review and decision of cabin lease fees by the County Board. Voting yes: Adee, McBride, Hanson, Lepper; voting no: Pavleck. Motion carried.



Minnesota Timber Producers Association

903 Medical Arts Building • 324 W. Superior St. • Duluth, Minnesota 55802
Phone 218-722-5013 • Fax 218-722-2065

September 1, 2010

Teresa Jaksa
County Administrator Director
Administration Office
Courthouse
715 4th Street
International Falls, MN 56649

RE: Koochiching County Long Range Management Plan

Dear Ms. Jaksa:

The Minnesota Timber Producers Association (MTPA) is an association representing the state's loggers, truckers, sawmills, and allied businesses. Our members are dependent on a reliable and predictable supply of timber from public administered lands.

MTPA has reviewed "*A Long Range Plan for the Management of Tax Forfeited Land and Forest Resources of Koochiching County*" with respect to Forest Management. Although MTPA feels the county could sustainably maintain and fiscally benefit from the 2010-2011 proposed harvest levels through the plan's life (*table 13, page 46*), we support and recommend that the county board approve the proposed management plan.

MTPA additionally recommends that the county board develop a system to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the plan annually.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important work.

Sincerely,

Ray Higgins
Director of Operations

cc: Commissioner Adee
Commissioner Hanson
Commissioner Lepper
Commissioner McBride
Commissioner Pavleck



MINNESOTA FOREST INDUSTRIES

903 Medical Arts Building • 324 West Superior Street • Duluth, Minnesota 55802 • 218-722-5013 • Fax 218-722-2065 • www.minnesotaforests.com

September 1, 2010

Teresa Jaksa
County Administrator Director
Administration Office
Courthouse
715 4th Street
International Falls, MN 56649

Re: Koochiching County Long Range Management Plan

Dear Ms. Jaksa:

Minnesota Forest Industries (MFI) is an association representing the state's forest products companies. MFI members include Boise, Norbord Minnesota, UPM-Blandin Paper Mill, Sappi Fine Paper, Potlatch Land and Lumber, Hedstrom Lumber Company, Verso Paper, and Minnesota Power. These companies are dependent on a reliable and predictable supply of timber from public administered timberlands.

MFI has reviewed "*A Long Range Plan for the Management of Tax Forfeited Land and Forest Resources of Koochiching County*" with respect to Forest Management. Although MFI feels the county could sustainably maintain and fiscally benefit from the 2010-2011 proposed harvest levels throughout the plans life (*table 13, page 46*), we support and recommend that the county board approve the proposed management plan.

MFI additionally recommends that the county board develop a system to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the plan, annually.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important work.

Sincerely,

Tim J. O'Hara
Vice President of Forest Policy

CC: *Commissioner Adee*
Commissioner Hanson
Commissioner Lepper
Commissioner McBride
Commissioner Pavleck



Boise White Paper, L.L.C.
Woodlands
400 Third Avenue East International Falls, MN 56649

September 2, 2010

Ms. Teresa Jaksa
County Administrator Director
Administration Office
Courthouse
715 4th Street
International Falls, MN 56649

Re: Koochiching County Long Range Management Plan

Dear Ms. Jaksa:

Boise has reviewed "A Long Range Plan for the Management of Tax Forfeited Land and Forest Resources of Koochiching County" (Draft Update: August 2010) and supports the Forest Advisory Committee's recommended forest management guidance.

As one of the largest forest products companies in Minnesota, and the largest employer in Koochiching County, Boise relies on the county to actively manage its timberlands to provide a predictable source of quality fiber to our mill, helping to ensure its long-term economic viability.

By elevating the county's harvest level, even at the modest rate being recommended, it will allow Koochiching County Land and Timber Department resource professionals the ability to address older timber stands in the next ten years. These additional timber stands, once marketed and harvested, will not only provide added fiber to our mill and other local forest products businesses, they will provide increased revenues and jobs for Koochiching County. Actively managing older timber stands in the county will result in timber values being captured before they are lost to natural mortality while allowing the stand to regenerate to a healthier more vigorous condition, which ultimately contributes to the sustainability of the resource.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Boise appreciates the effort and time that has been given to this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Toivonen". The signature is stylized with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning and a sharp hook at the end.

Dan Toivonen
Woodlands Manager



DOVETAIL PARTNERS, INC.

528 Hennepin Ave
Suite #202
Minneapolis, MN 55403

Phone: 612-333-0430
Fax: 612-333-0432
Website: <http://www.dovetailinc.org>

2 September 2010

Administration Office
Courthouse
715 4th Street
International Falls, MN 56649

To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide comments on the "Long Range Plan for the Management of Tax-Forfeited Land and Forest Resources of Koochiching County."

Having reviewed the entirety of the plan, I believe the plan presents a comprehensive, clear and high-quality approach to forest management in Koochiching County. As an experienced FSC lead auditor and experienced SFI audit team member, I also believe that the plan supports the continued certification of these lands.

Specific strengths of the plan include:

- Effectively addressing economic, social and ecological considerations, including considerations such as recreation trails, monitoring, wildlife habitat and job creation.
- Incorporating advisory committee recommendations and providing opportunities for public review and comment.
- Providing a socio-economic review of population trends, employment and economic conditions as well as detailed information about planned forest management activities.
- Incorporating the use of native plant communities for evaluating forest potential.
- Providing detailed Strategic Timber Management direction for each major forest cover type.
- The plan is supported by inventory data and the recommendations include seeking to update the inventory information in the coming years.

The plan could be strengthened by providing additional information about the identification of High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) areas as mentioned in association with some of the major forest cover types.

I commend the team that prepared this plan, and I believe it presents great opportunities for continued high quality forest management in Koochiching County.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Fernholz
Executive Director

DANIEL R. DESSECKER
Director
Conservation Policy



P.O. Box 2
Rice Lake, WI 54868
Bus: 715-234-8302
Cell: 412-720-6033
Email: rgsdess@chibardun.coop

9 September 2010

Dennis Hummitzsch, Land Commissioner
Koochiching County
Land & Forestry Office
715 4th Street
International Falls, MN 56649

Dear Commissioner Hummitzsch,

The Ruffed Grouse Society appreciates the opportunity to comment on the August 2010 Draft of *A Long Range Plan for the Management of Tax-Forfeited Land and Forest Resources of Koochiching County*. These comments are generated by a review of the on-line version of this Draft.

Koochiching County is to be commended for drafting a forest land and resource management plan that strives to balance economic, ecological and social considerations. Of particular interest to the Ruffed Grouse Society is the stated intent of the County to move toward a more balanced age-class distribution within the aspen forest type. The Society strongly endorses this objective.

The Draft states that aspen forest stands will be regenerated when 45-60 years old. The regeneration of stands younger than 45 years old could provide a broader window to distribute regeneration harvests across time and, therefore, aid in attaining a more balanced aspen age-class distribution. In addition, the retention of some aspen stands beyond 60 years of age could, likewise, aid in achieving the desired balance. The Ruffed Grouse Society encourages the County to consider regenerating commercially operable aspen stands outside of the stated 45-60 year old window if this will aid in balancing aspen age-class distribution.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your time.

Take care,

Dan Dessecker, Director of Conservation Policy

***Dedicated To Improving The Environment For
Ruffed Grouse, Woodcock, And Other Forest Wildlife***



CITY OF INTERNATIONAL FALLS

600 FOURTH STREET
INTERNATIONAL FALLS, MN 56649
Telephone 218/283-9484
FAX 218/283-3590

TEP Administrative Representative
David Serrano

September 10, 2010

Koochiching County Board
c/o Teresa Jaksa - Administration Director
Koochiching County Courthouse
715 Fourth Street
International Falls, MN 56649

RE: Long Range Plan for the Management of Tax-Forfeited Land and Forest Resources of Koochiching County.

Dear Board Members:

This is to respond to requests for input on the **Long Range Plan for the Management of Tax-Forfeited Land and Forest Resources of Koochiching County**. The city believes it is important to consider opportunities to provide wetlands mitigation credits through county owned public lands as provided for under **103G.2251 STATE CONSERVATION EASEMENTS; WETLAND BANK CREDIT** through preservation of wetlands in public ownership.

Respectfully,

David Serrano
TEP Administrative Representative

Cc: Rod Otterness
Mayor Shawn Mason



MINNESOTA DEER HUNTERS ASSOCIATION



460 Peterson Road • Grand Rapids, MN 55744-8413
218.327.1103 • Toll Free: 800.450.DEER (MN Only) • Fax: 218.327.1349
www.mndeerhunters.com

Friday, September 10, 2010

Koochiching County Commissioners
c/o Teresa Jaska
Administration Office, Courthouse
715 4th Street
International Falls, MN 56649

Re: Long Range Plan for the Management of Tax-Forfeited Land and Forest Resources
-Revised letter of input from Minnesota Deer Hunters Assn.-

Dear Koochiching County Commissioners:

This is a revised letter on behalf of the Minnesota Deer Hunters Association (MDHA). Please allow this letter to withdraw MDHA's previously indicated support and deliver our concerns.

In a nutshell, my original review of the proposed Long Range Plan was inadequate. Upon further review, the unique aspects of Koochiching County (far north climate, shorter growing season and slower growth, etc) make it evident that the extent of the proposed acceleration in aspen cutting could have quite detrimental effects upon wildlife habitat and successive tree species such as Balsam Fir. While your county foresters and local DNR personnel can elaborate on this further, with the proposed accelerated aspen harvest comes basically a 45 year cycle. Consequently, the understory of young Balsam Fir will generally be too small to withstand the harvest. However, with a longer aspen harvest rotation the Balsam Fir would receive the needed time to grow thus increasing its value as a future harvest crop and vastly increasing its value as a habitat component that is vital to multiple species of wildlife, including deer.

Please remember that MDHA is and always has been pro timber harvest. Timber harvest is necessary for good timber management and wildlife habitat management. Timber harvest produces habitat, but if that harvest is accelerated to the point that it excludes landscape considerations you could well be cashing in the future for immediate gain and losing valuable other considerations.

Everything has a cost. Keeping a slightly longer rotation for aspen harvest will have a cost. But, it will also have benefits such as improved wildlife habitat and the cost of improved wildlife habitat is far outweighed by the resulting benefits of increased wildlife populations, increased hunting opportunity, increased tourism, and increased quality of life. Minnesota has 1.7 million sportsmen and women who spend over \$2.17 billion each year. Let's draw them to Koochiching County.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input and thank you to the Koochiching County Land Department for their excellent work.

Whitetails forever,

Mark Wm. Johnson
Executive Director

9-10-2010

To: County Board,

Subject:

Long range management plan for tax forfeited land and forestry resources.

County Board:

After many months of very productive work by a well rounded committee asked to assess the long range management plan for tax forfeited land and forestry resources, I strongly recommend that the board adopt the committees plan as it is written.

Thank you.

Rodney Bergstrom

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rodney Bergstrom". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "R" at the beginning.

9-10-2010

To County Board,

Subject:

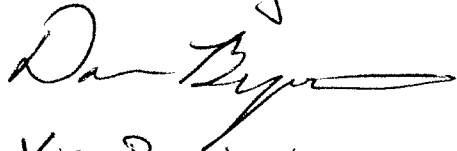
Long range management plan for tax forfeited land and forestry resources.

County Board:

After reviewing the plan that the committee has presented to the County Board, I would agree that the board should adopt the plan as it is written.

Thank you.

Darren Bergstrom

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Darren Bergstrom". The signature is fluid and extends to the right with a long horizontal stroke.

Vice President

Bergstrom Wood Products Inc.

9-10-2010

To County Board,

Subject:

Long range management plan for tax forfeited land and forestry resources.

County Board:

After reviewing the plan that the committee has presented to the County Board, I would agree that the board should adopt the plan as it is written.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "S. J. A.", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

9-10-2010

To County Board,

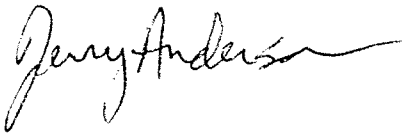
Subject:

Long range management plan for tax forfeited land and forestry resources.

County Board:

After reviewing the plan that the committee has presented to the County Board, I would agree that the board should adopt the plan as it is written.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jerry Anderson". The signature is written in black ink and includes a long, sweeping horizontal flourish at the end.

Long Range Plan for Management of Tax-Forfeited Land and Forest Resources of Kooch. Co.

Commissioners,

9/13/2010

I was unable to attend the meeting where you discussed the plan. I am glad you decided to allow public comment.

As a committee member representing hunters, trappers and other recreational users of county lands, I believe you will be doing a disservice to these citizens if you approve the plan as written.

I believe you should consider option 1-C for the management of timber as a better choice for the following reasons:

1) This option allows some aspen forests the chance to get a little older. This benefits some wildlife species such as deer, ruffed grouse, fisher and cavity nesting waterfowl (wood ducks, common goldeneyes and hooded mergansers). By allowing these forests to get older, the component of balsam fir gets a chance to grow large enough to benefit deer and ruffed grouse in winter. The larger trees also allow pileated woodpeckers the chance to excavate cavities which are used by waterfowl and fisher for nest and den sites. Deer and grouse are very important to local hunters, and fisher are a popular animal for local trappers.

2) This option has an accelerated harvest over what has happened in the past and targets older wood first. Plenty of aspen will be sold for income.

3) Each aspen timber sale will need to be more acres if you choose the option in the proposed plan. I say this because in order for existing staff to sell more wood, they will need to make larger sales. I don't believe the board will hire additional staff at this time. I believe we need to keep our aspen sales as small as feasible to benefit ruffed grouse in particular. If you look across the county, there are very few landowners making small cuts anymore. Private industrial forests and other private landowners tend to cut large blocks of timber, and I would expect they would as they have different management goals on their lands. Even state aspen sales have increased in size over the last 10 years. Option 1-C would give the county a better chance to manage smaller blocks of aspen to benefit the numerous grouse hunters in this county.

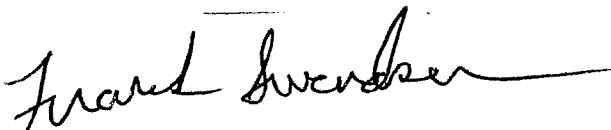
4) If you choose the current proposed plan, the options for diverse wood products will be decreased. Cutting aspen at such a young age pretty much eliminates the bolt market and the market for secondary species such as balsam and spruce. You are basically setting the county forest up to be managed for a paper industry only. I believe that is a little short-sighted since none of us can predict future markets. Keeping your options open is a good idea in my opinion.

5) Option 1-C keeps an even-flow of wood for the long-term. This benefits the county on an steady income basis, and benefits wildlife species with a constant range of different aged forests.

6) I think, as public land managers, you have an obligation to manage the lands of Koochiching County for all of the citizens and their interests as well as for a broad range of wildlife species. That is currently happening on county lands and would continue under option 1-C. This option maintains a balance among generating income, creating and maintaining wildlife habitat, and providing recreation for hunters, birdwatchers and other users of the forests.

Thanks

Frank Swendsen
2605 County Road 103
International Falls MN 56649
218-286-5434
frank.swendsen@frontiernet.net





Bois Forte
T R I B A L G O V E R N M E N T

September 13, 2010
Koochiching County Board of Commissioners
715 4th Street
International Falls MN 56649

Dear County Board members:

Bois Forte wishes to comment on the proposed forest management plan.

As an indigenous people, the Bois Forte Band sustains them selves, in part, through traditional hunting and gathering activities within the boundaries of the Nett Lake Sector of the Reservation. Altering the County's forest management plan to a more aggressive, shorter rotation age, and introducing a liquidation of "over mature" timber in an abbreviated time period would adversely and significantly impact the Band by:

- Reducing vegetative bio-diversity through the loss of the balsam fir component.
- Reducing wildlife habitat through loss of thermal cover, concealment cover, and nesting areas, resulting in a shift of fauna species and diversity.
- Affecting the visual quality of the area by reducing the overall average diameter to aspen stands less than 9" DBH at rotation, and virtually eliminating the conifer component of the aspen cover type.
- Increasing soil trafficking increasing the potential for water quality degradation.

In light of the aggressive timber harvesting by, primarily, industrial land administrators in the historic white tail deer yard north of the water body of Nett Lake, and the resulting devastation to the integrity of the thermal cover in such a large area, Bois Forte urges the County Board to fully consider how their actions may impact indigenous people and relations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Corey Strong", written over a horizontal line.

Corey Strong, Commissioner of Natural Resources
Bois Forte Tribal Government
PO Box 16
Nett Lake MN 55772

September 13, 2010
Ray, MN 56669

Hello, I am Frank Haney, I am the 4th generation of Haney's to be involved in timber harvesting and producing forest products here in Koochiching County. I strongly support the Forest Advisory Committee recommendations for near-term forest management following the general principals listed and the levels shown in the table. Approximately 15 years ago there was a meeting at the Holiday Inn one evening with Boise, DNR people, Dennis H. and some loggers to discuss timber sales at that time and projected future sales. I will always remember Dennis told us that Kooch Co. was selling 65% of the aspen volume that was growing every year. After a few years that leads to somewhere near the situation that the DNR is in, where 3 times as much wood as is harvested dies and falls on the ground every year. We can all thank DNR wildlife for a lot of that foolishness. I noticed that under the Plan Context that the importance of the paper mill at I. Falls and the harvesting and transportation of wood to the mill is recognized as having a major economic impact in Koochiching County. What do you think the \$ per cord of aspen will be in Kooch Co. if this mill is closed. I hope everyone involved in making a decision on this draft plan understands this clearly. If we are to continue to have a paper industry here in Kooch Co we have to be able to COMPETE with the rest of the world. As far as a lot of the wordiness of the plan goes it is disgusting. I don't see where any of us are obligated to attempt to make every idiot on the face of this planet happy with Kooch Co's. forest management plan. Sound forest management is a straightforward common sense thing. In absence of common sense this may be necessary.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank Haney". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Comments on the Tax-Forfeit Land and Forest Recourses Management Plan

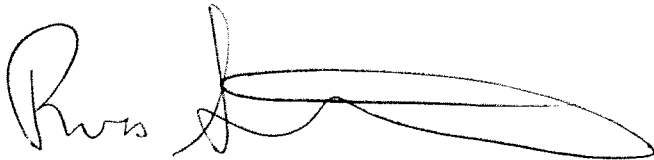
1. Don't accelerate timber harvesting to the levels that is recommended by this plan.

I would assume that this plan is built on data collected by consultants and presented to the committee. I have worked with many consultants and experts and it is very interesting by having the right discussions with many of them, the data they have collected can be manipulated to show desired results. (The Government does this all the time!) Not sitting on this committee, I have no way of knowing if this was done or not but I know it can be done. (I would like to believe the consultant and the expert are neutral without opinion and just facts.) It appears that NO thought is given to what happens with the forests and the wildlife after ten years of increased harvesting. Timber sales generate large amounts of money to the County to provide services to the residents of Koochiching County. Why would you want to "run yourself" out of business in ten years by only having "substandard" (small) wood to harvest after this time. It appears this plan is designed to cut trees and do little to maintain habitat for the many creatures that rely on the forest to survive. I am not against timber harvesting as it does help maintain an ecological balance and provides many jobs but I am against over harvesting as this plan would suggest.

2. I fail to see what the cabin lease rates have to do with forest management. It appears the committee added this to get peoples minds off of the real issue of timber management. But while on the subject, the lease rates should not be changed just because someone else has higher lease rates. The rates need to be set to reflect the cost of administrating the lease. I doubt this is \$350 a year. If more revenue was needed for this program, I would suggest that the cabins be taxed by value just like any other house would be. I have heard of some people's "shacks" are quite elaborate compared to others. Level the playing field. An audit of cabin locations compared to surrounding cabins needs to be done with the idea of adding more leases if it meets the existing criteria of spacing. If anyone is wondering, I do not have a County lease!

3. I would suggest setting another committee and hiring a different consulting company and starting over. I know this would be expensive, but the future of our environment is at stake!

Russ Strand
2596 TR 281
International Falls, MN

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Russ Strand", with a long, sweeping horizontal flourish extending to the right.

The Daily Journal

Published on International Falls Journal (<http://www.ifallsdailyjournal.com>)

Plan will change forests

By Journal Staff

Created 09/08/2010 - 10:06am

To the editor,

If you are a hunter, trapper, bird watcher or other user of the forests of Koochiching County, you should take a look at the newly revised plan for Koochiching County forest lands.

This plan will change the aspen forests on county lands dramatically and will be negative for deer, grouse, fisher, non-game birds, hunting and aesthetics of the forest.

The plan calls for dramatically increasing the amount of aspen acres to be cut over the next few years. It also changes the maximum age at which aspen will be cut to a much younger age. Basically county land will become a sea of dog-haired aspen. And just when the forest gets large enough for a hunter or bird watcher to be able to walk through it, the county will harvest it again.

Many of us enjoy walking through and looking at an aspen forest that has a mixture a balsam fir. These will be gone, because they will be cut before the balsam gets a chance to grow big enough to be a valuable component for wildlife and aesthetics. Deer and grouse utilize these mixed aspen/balsam forests in the winter time.

The large aspen that have cavities in them will be a thing of the past. These cavities are used by wood ducks as nesting sites if they are reasonably close to water. They are also used by fisher for den sites to raise their young. And for those interested in non-game birds, these cavities are used by saw-whet owls and other cavity nesting birds. Most of the cavities are created by pileated woodpeckers, but the number of trees for them to utilize will be dramatically decreased.

I was a citizen volunteer on this committee, and I have been in on every other revision of the plan for managing county forest lands. Normally, a mixture of county residents have come to an agreement on how to manage county lands.

Advertisement. Article continues below.



This time it was quite different. The committee and the county board were influenced either directly or behind the scenes by a lobbyist for the forest industry and a professor from the U of MN. These non-residents did not seem to care one bit about the wildlife or aesthetic values of the forest to the residents of the county. They only cared about cutting aspen early and often to generate income.

If you are interested in the management of county lands, you need to make your concerns known to the county board. There is a public comment period through Sept. 13 and a public meeting on the afternoon of Sept. 14.

If you are interested in an alternative the was discussed by the committee that would be good for wildlife, have slightly older forests and still generate plenty of income for the county you should talk to the county Land Commissioner, Dennis Hummitzsch. He can explain very well what alternative 1-C would be.

As a committee member, I voted against this plan because of the concerns I have discussed above.

Frank Swendsen
International Falls, MN

Source URL:

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[2] <http://www.rwpads.net/www/delivery/ck.php?n=ifalb8ca9e5>

The Daily Journal

Published on International Falls Journal (<http://www.ifallsdailyjournal.com>)

Result of forest plan debatable

By Journal Staff

Created 09/11/2010 - 7:00am

To the editor,

As chair of the Citizen Committee that developed the "Long Range Plan for the Management of Tax-Forfeited Land and Forest Resources of Koochiching County," I felt it necessary to respond to Frank Swendson's letter to the editor printed in last Wednesday's edition of The Journal.

Frank painted a picture that showed members of the Citizens Committee being influenced by non-residents, while past plans were driven by residents. That implies that these many Citizen Committee members weren't making their own decisions. However, this Citizen Committee's members were all independent thinkers who listened to and participated in the many long discussions. As with past plans, "a mixture of county residents came to agreement on how to manage county lands."

The following is about this Citizen Committee and the process we used:

- All committee members were appointed by the Koochiching Board of Commissioners,
- All 17 committee members were residents of Koochiching County living in and around Northome, Littlefork, Birchdale, Ray, Ranier and International Falls.
- The committee met 12 times over the past year, starting in September '09 and ending in July '10.

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- Decisions were made by consensus agreement. When consensus wasn't possible, a super majority (2/3's) vote was needed,

- The University of Minnesota professor that Frank referred to in his letter is indeed a non-resident. However, Dr. Howard Hoganson was asked by the committee to analyze what the county forests would look like in the future, using specific criteria that the Citizen Committee set. None of the scenarios we studied would turn the county lands into “a sea of dog-haired aspen.” The Minnesota Legislature provided money, through the Minnesota Forest Resources Council, for Dr. Hoganson to help counties with their forest planning. Dr. Hoganson is recognized as a national leader in forest modeling.
- There was unanimous approval of the plan at our last meeting. All 14 members present at the meeting voted to recommend the county board adopt the plan. Three of the 17 members did not attend the meeting, one of whom was Frank.

While I don't agree with his Frank's vision of what the future of Koochiching County forests will look like, I won't debate his vision in this letter. Readers of The Journal need to be know the Citizen Committee members carefully made their decisions based on what they thought was the right decision for the best management of our county forests.

Steve Earley, chair of County Forest Citizen Committee
International Falls, MN

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