

FEEDBACK/RESPONSES

2021-2035 Chippewa County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan
Stakeholder Advisory Group Meeting #3 of 3: Focus Silviculture and Forest Administration

Silviculture

1. Chippewa County has invested in Aspen management planning based on site productivity and spatial distribution to maximize wildlife habitat potential and more evenly distribute harvests over time. Evaluating species composition has the potential to distribute harvests more evenly across time and produce larger bolt-sized products. Big Tooth Aspen has a longer lifespan and greater potential to produce larger products than Quaking Aspen. Should LCFM invest the staff time to evaluate and incorporate species composition in management planning? Please explain how investing in this planning effort would benefit management of County resources.

RESPONSES

No opinion or adequate knowledge on this question.

If species composition management will help produce a larger volume of harvestable product for the county and improve wildlife habitat at the same time it should be used. This provides a win-win opportunity for the county, the wildlife, and the the outdoor enthusiast.

I believe the time has come to revise the management objectives of the forest in the direction of biodiversity, resilience, and carbon capture. This might be a multi-year transition, but as I previously stated, because the most critical issue use right now is climate change, in the short term we really cannot continue with business as usual, when forest management is one of the tools we have to sequester carbon that is immediately available to us, as residents of Chippewa County.

The Great Lakes Forest is one of the world's great carbon sinks, and we should manage it with that in mind. That means allowing trees to achieve greater maturity to sequester the large amount of carbon that mature trees do most efficiently. It also may mean targeting what trees we are able to harvest for industries that will provide the longest sequestration lifespan. I don't know if the chipboard that goes into a house sequesters carbon longer and more efficiently than palettes, but I suspect the former. In no case should it be just burned for energy.

In the end, because we really don't know what is coming, managing for the strongest, most diverse forest will be the best management technique, and not managing for a few key marketable species grown in frequent rotation in relatively homogeneous blocks.

1) I agree LCFM should invest staff time to evaluate & incorporate species composition in mgt planning to enhance/maintain structural complexity, protect ephemeral ponds and water quality and reduce the spread of non-native invasive species.

2. As an alternative to traditional clear-cuts, Chippewa County has used strip clear-cuts to manage Aspen. Those harvests have not improved the quantity or quality of products harvested. There has been less vigorous coppicing, damage to residual trees and damage to regeneration in subsequent harvests observed in these stands. Are there other values to strip clear-cuts that offset the losses to productivity described? Are there other methods of Aspen management which the County should consider? Please explain the potential benefits and risks associated with the alternative harvesting method suggested.

RESPONSES

I am no expert but it seems to me that clear cutting, while less attractive for a few years after harvest, would be the best method going forward. It depends on the specific site and what other species may be damaged during harvest as well as the site potential to produce other species of higher value.

Clear-cuts should still be used. There is both short term and long term benefits for wildlife that clear-cuts still provide.

Because aesthetics is increasingly expected by the public, which is using the forest for more recreational pursuits, the method which provides the best aesthetics should be favored. The highest and best use of the forest lies in transitioning away from most efficient generation of revenue, toward climate mitigation and utilization of the landscape for recreation and education due to the proximity to the large population area and being among the southernmost blocks of public forest in the state.

In the past, aspen management has converted areas of mixed tree species to one increasingly dominated by aspen. In the face of climate change, single species blocks will be more likely to fail than blocks of mixed species, so this should be reversed.

Other values to strip clear-cuts that offset the losses to productivity include:

1. Increased flexibility to prioritize storm-damage salvage sale operations when needed.
2. Increased flexibility to respond to evolving forest uses.
3. Increased market flexibility based on then-current timber values.
4. Enhanced aesthetics.

3. The 2017 Aspen management plan highlights the potential to increase the amount of harvesting and, therefore, revenue by reducing the rotation age well below 50 years. In order to remain closer to the biological rotation age based on [Mean Annual Increment](#), Chippewa County elected to allow a small reduction, 48 years compared to 50. Should a shorter rotation length be considered? Please explain the benefits and drawbacks of the proposed rotation age.

RESPONSES

Leave it at 48 years unless a better system appears through future research.

A shorter rotation can be considered and it will provide the increase provided but long term will it make a substantial difference? Ie: two rotations in 96 years versus two rotations in 100 years.

No. For reasons previously stated, long-lived trees other than aspen, and mixed forest stands should be the preferred goal.

A shorter rotation length should not be considered due to

- 1) increased impact to soils, vegetation and wetland;
- 2) increased negative contribution to climate change factors
- 3) decreases suitable habitat for forest interior species, including birds

4. Chippewa County has used anchor chain scarification, straight blading with a bulldozer, grapple bucket scarification, and direct seeding in order to promote oak regeneration. The most successful method for regenerating oak has been anchor chaining during a good seed year. Red Oak has good to excellent seed crops at irregular intervals, usually every 2-5 years, making timing timber harvests with site preparation challenging. Are there techniques the County has not used (planting seedlings, prescribed fire, pre-commercial thinning) that should be used to promote oak regeneration? Please explain why the suggestion is the most effective method to achieve adequate oak stocking levels.

RESPONSES

Continue as you have as it has produced proven results.

If you are looking for financial gain you want to use the most successful method available. If you are looking at wildlife habitat then red oak is not as important. There are other oaks that provide a better food source.

The most obvious method that is not being used is curtailing the deer population, rather than managing in its favor.

Red oak seems to regenerate lustily when exposed to full sunlight (and perhaps in the absence of fast-growing aspen).

The natural heritage people at the DNR chose to incorporate fire as a management tool in the Chippewa Moraine master plan. While I don't think it is appropriate for use there, there may well be areas in the county forest where this is a useful tool. The purpose would be to remove red maple and other competing trees and allow the fire-resistant oak seedlings to persist. I am not advocating this tool, but rather mentioning it because it is apparently favored by some and I have not seen it mentioned as an option.

1) Prescribed fire, pre-commercial thinning and planting seedlings should be more widely incorporated into the Counties forest management processes

2) Reasons to do include sustaining and enhancing local watersheds and water resources and reducing soil erosion

5. In order to minimize aesthetic concerns from recreational trail users, Chippewa County has used single tree selection with canopy gaps attempting to regenerate oak. Shelter-wood harvests have proven the most effective way to regenerate oak stands but are unpopular with recreational groups because of the visual impact for trail users. Are there techniques, beside canopy gaps, that should be applied along recreational trails in order to regenerate oak? Should efforts to regenerate oak along recreational trails be abandoned and the management objective altered to promote succession towards more shade-tolerant Northern Hardwoods species?

RESPONSES

If the site is best suited for Oak, then managing it in the most effective way is what needs to be done. Recreational use is of second importance and we are losing tax dollars by trying to appease them.

It is the Chippewa Rod and Gun's opinion that we continue with the single tree selection, regardless of the aesthetic concerns

The Chippewa Valley Trailriders have several concerns regarding visual impacts from harvesting oak stands. We prefer the single cut or select cut method to preserve the aesthetic value of the trail and the recreational experience for the user. A fast growing shade tolerant species would appear to be a valuable alternate decision.

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No. All oaks are an important part of the landscape for a variety of reasons. Logging is never aesthetically pleasing and a few will always complain. Hunters use walking trails frequently because of the diverse habitat it provides and walking trails need to be logged too.

I think canopy gaps can be acceptable if used sparingly. I do not have a problem with northern hardwoods, if they are the logical progression in an area, because they further the goal of species mix rather than uniformity, thus increasing resilience in the face of climate change.

My observation is that forest users would prefer the appearance of a multi-aged, natural forest, and instinctively are put off by what looks like tree farming or clear-cutting.

Canopy gaps would probably succeed more if there were nearby oaks and if competing fast-growing species were suppressed and deer were excluded.

- 1) Canopy gaps support multi-use (timber, recreation) objectives better than shelterwood when done in the vicinity of recreational trail systems
- 2) Irregular stand management should be evaluated as an option

6. Rotation lengths on productive soils typical of County Forest oak stands can range from 100-200 years for Red Oak. Most of Chippewa's oak stands range from 80 to 110 years old. As oak stands age beyond 100 years, several factors (reduced growth rate, spider cracking, rot, epicormic branching) reduce the value of standing timber. As older stands decline in vigor, they also become more susceptible to storm damage, insects, and diseases. In what circumstances should the County consider extended rotation lengths for oak stands? Please explain how the benefits of an extended rotation outweigh the risks and decline in value associated with extensions.

RESPONSES

There are no circumstances I can think of that would dictate a longer rotation. Again, manage for optimum timber production, that is the number one goal.

Extended rotation should be considered if it addresses a unique or endangered habitat.

Extended rotation is more efficient in carbon sequestration. Harvesting offers uncertain regrowth in oak.

As the most critical concern for humankind is climate change, lengthening rotation offers one tool to accomplish that, and one of the few that we, locally, can choose to invest in.

There is no way to place a value on survival.

- 1) Irregular management can be applied in a gradient of intensity in a wide range of cover types and may be especially well suited as an alternative to single-tree selection.
- 2) Irregular mgt. may be well suited as an alternative to single-tree selection
- 3) Irregular mgt. in northern hardwood management when stand stability or regularity is not essential.

7. White Pine, White Cedar, and Hemlock were historically more prevalent across Wisconsin. Chippewa County restricts harvesting conifers on most timber sales and has conducted pre-commercial thinning to promote these species where populations and site conditions justify treatment. Are there other species or timber types which the County should promote? Please explain the costs and benefits associated with the suggested management.

RESPONSES

No opinion or adequate knowledge on this question.

Maintaining a small amount of extremely old growth. The county may lose revenue but provide unique viewing opportunities and habitat for wildlife.

These species are heavily browsed by deer. Reducing the deer herd would improve the success of them.

At one time, local forest managers removed balsam and described it as a weed. I am not familiar with the commercial value, but consistent with the goal of species diversity, trees of all types should be allowed to thrive unless they are detrimental to forest health (as opposed to numbers of a particular favored species) unless there is a good reason to believe (like ash, for example), that they are on a short path to extirpation.

I support continuing to restrict cutting of white pine and white cedar.

I support no cutting of Hemlock.

Cutting of Yellow and White birch should be restricted

8. The [Emerald Ash Borer](#) (EAB) infestation exists in Chippewa County and across most U.S. States and Canadian Provinces East of the Rocky Mountains. In order to realize the most commercial value and slow the spread of EAB, harvesting Ash from Swamp Hardwood stands has been made a management priority. Since 2015 the county has offered two to three sales per year consisting primarily of Ash wood products. The webpage contains the Assessment of Swamp Hardwoods which guides sale establishment. Are there commercially viable stands the County should consider not harvesting, allowing EAB to run the course of infestation? Please explain the benefits, costs, and risks associated with the suggestion.

RESPONSES

Continue to harvest as you have been. Once the EAB gets into the forest, it will more quickly spread if there are more trees for it to spread to, at least that is my opinion. Dead mature trees are of little value.

The Chippewa Rod and Gun suggests that some selected areas where Ash trees are smaller in quantity and the monetary gain is minimal, that the EAB let it run its course to create habitat for wood peckers and other animals can benefit from the dead trees.

If there is endangered habitat involved careful consideration should be given. Otherwise everything should be done to control the emerald ash borer.

I think that it would be a good investment in future forest diversity to permit some ash to stand without harvesting, in sites that perhaps yield the most vigorous growth, in hopes that there might be a random occurrence of survival that can provide the seed for future re-growth in its preferred habitat. I am not knowledgeable enough to know if this is a remote possibility, but in the event that it were a possibility, it would suggest that widely separated stands left to survive would be a good investment in the future.

I appreciate the idea of allowing some commercially viable stands, or portions of, not being harvested to allow ongoing science-based observation of outcomes that monitor interior non-timber forest species progressions.

9. **Oak Wilt** has caused some mortality in small pockets at several locations across the County Forest. Though neighboring counties have experienced large scale outbreaks of Oak Wilt, they have not occurred in the Chippewa County Forest to date. Harvesting restrictions (April 15-July 15), aerial reconnaissance, site inspections, and laboratory testing have been used to monitor the disease. Are there alternative measures the County should consider to mitigate the threat from Oak Wilt or other insects, diseases and invasive species? Please explain how the suggested action would benefit resource management or mitigate risks.

RESPONSES

None that I know of, it appears you are doing a good job already on this.

I do not know of other methods to control oak wilt but it is very important to control it as best you can. I have seen what oak wilt can do and it is not pretty.

I can attest personally to the presence of oak wilt in the Town of Sampson, not far from county forest. It was introduced via injury to a tree trunk as collateral damage by a soil tester, which spread from tree to tree. Therefore the threat of oak wilt is very real and very easy to introduce with machinery operating in the forest, even when the intent is not to cut at all.

Your doing a good job, thank you.

10. The effects of succession can be seen in the Forest Structure Past, Present, Future report on the plan update webpage. As the report suggests, intensive management of Aspen should maintain most of the cover type over time, while White Birch has declined and oak is expected to decline. Are these observed and predicted shifts to more shade-tolerant cover type changes desirable? Please explain the most effective methods available, benefits and cost associated with altering these trends.

RESPONSES

No opinion or adequate knowledge on this question.

These trends are inevitable, subject to interventions from storms, fires, floods, beaver activity, and infestation. Many of these are by-products of climate change. So the answer is yes, shade tolerance becomes inevitable until it isn't. As a result, the most economic thing to do is to manage for diversity. This reduces potentially the income from products, but also reduces the expense of management. It adds the benefit of a natural forest that is more desired by recreational users and contributes more effectively to mitigate climate change (a benefit which is incalculable).

Irregular management is desirable for mid & long term sustainability

11. In compliance with State and [Forest Stewardship Council](#) standards the County uses [Tree Marking and Retention Guidelines](#) when establishing even-aged regeneration harvests. Green Tree Retention (GTR) requires that 5-15 percent of the existing forest cover type be retained when regenerating stands. What methods produce the greatest wildlife habitat potential when applying GTR requirements? How does the suggested method affect harvesting operations, revenue and future stand composition?

RESPONSES

No opinion or adequate knowledge on this question.

The greatest habitat potential would occur when trees are retained adjacent to water or wet areas, because that is the most biologically diverse part of the landscape.

GTR should be factored at the high end of the guidelines to promote forest and wildlife resiliency.

Forest Administration

12. The [Public Forest Lands Handbook](#) states that County Forest Administrators have “a legal responsibility to the public to obtain maximum financial return from forest land.” This is achieved by advertising sales publicly twice a year and awarding timber sales to the highest bidder in a sealed bid process. A performance bond of 25% of the sale value, advanced payment for pulpwood haul tickets, annual training through the [Forest Industry Safety and Training Alliance](#), and worker’s compensation insurance requirements reduce the County’s liability. The County has received complaints that the process may be too burdensome for smaller logging contractors. Are there changes the County could make to provide more opportunities to small contractors? Please explain how the proposed changes benefit small contractors and potential impact on County liability or revenue.

RESPONSES

Leave this alone, the requirements are necessary for safe and professional harvesting of county timber. These requirements are not overly burdensome.

The process that is put in place for logging operations to follow is there to guarantee quality results at the end of the harvest. Unfortunately the processes to follow do not take into consideration the size of the operation. This is true with many businesses. Processes and regulations should not be changed just because of this. Creating more small harvests that big operations would not consider could help this.

Some jobs that are best performed by small contractors could have specifications that large contractors might find difficult or undesirable to meet, such as restriction on size or type of equipment permitted. Small contractors can't be "lef off the hook" when it comes to the list of requirements stated in the question.

Changes to provide more opportunities to small contractors include winter harvests using mule/horse extraction in and around sensitive areas and recreational trails, including the Ice Age Trail. Payment may be augmented to the small contractor given that subsequent labor and equipment costs to remediate damage is reduced, and multi-habitat and aesthetic values are obtained.

13. Contracts assign penalties for not completing harvests in a stipulated time frame. In the current plan, the [Timber Sale Contract Renewal Policy](#) assigns contract lengths and extension penalty percentage based on sale volumes and harvesting restrictions. Logging contractors often complain that the cost of these provisions hinder their operations. What revisions should be made to contract lengths and penalty amounts? Please explain how the proposed changes would benefit logging contractors, impact incentives to complete work, or otherwise affect sale administration by the county.

RESPONSES

I am not sure how and why you assign penalties for late harvests. Some flexibility needs to be maintained as conditions sometimes rapidly change and harvesters can end up losing a lot of money on a sale due to unforeseen circumstances. Take the current market, affected heavily by extensive weather blow downs making for a glut of some types of wood and also the corona virus impact on the wood industry due to the loss of a lot of customers that normally buy end products. Neither of these events could have been predicted and they rapidly affected the market. I think that contract extensions should be granted and penalties, if any, carefully assessed in light of the causative factor(s) of the necessity of the extension.

Contract lengths and penalties should not be changed. Logging operations know that these are in place when they take the contract. If past practice shows that the county is in part responsible for certain types of harvest delays they should then make modifications to how they set up the harvest sale.

No comment.

No changes to the current practice recommended.

14. On 12/13/16, the Chippewa County Board adopted [Resolution 39-16](#) to designate County Highways M, E and G as Aesthetic Management Zone A. A range of silvicultural techniques (irregular sale shapes, groups of Green Tree Retention, scattered individual reserve trees) have all generated complaints when used to reduce the impact of clear-cutting aspen. Sales with unharvested buffers have met with general public approval. Are there management options that could maintain public support while regenerating Aspen stands in Aesthetic Zone A? Should aspen within Aesthetic Zone A remain unharvested allowing natural succession to other timber types? Please explain how the suggested management would affect wildlife habitat, stumpage revenue, and public perceptions.

RESPONSES

Again, as I said earlier, the county forest's number one goal is to produce revenue through effective management. I don't approve of unharvested buffers if the only reason for them is "aesthetic". We need to do the most cost effective management possible.

It is the Chippewa Rod and Guns opinion that the trees should be managed to the road line to manage power outages and down trees on the road.

Is this a concern where generating smaller harvest sales could help small logging operations? Harvesting aspen should not be stopped because of complaints. Sometimes natural succession can be as ugly as logging.

If seriously following the aesthetic management techniques results in public disapproval, then leaving the barrier of mixed types does not seem to be a big expense, and clear cutting has the uncalculated cost of impacting the perception of the forest not only in the eyes of the public but in the spending of the visitor at local businesses. The county forest is a destination for many seeking a north-woods experience, and they spend tourism dollars locally.

The county board resolution mentioned in the question left standing naked one remaining area which meets the statutory definition of Zone A aesthetic management, but has been classed as Zone B in the county code, and that is the Ice Age National Scenic Trail. The corridor that the trail passes through has recreation and scenic value as its primary use by definition. This now remains a glaring anomaly in county aesthetic management zones since the county highways were switched to Zone A and should be changed.

I support retaining Zone A designation and allowing natural forest succession to proceed.

15. The Chippewa County Code of Ordinances 16-7(b) (2) states: "Policy concerning the cutting of firewood for personal use by an individual shall be established by the committee as deemed necessary." The current plan requires that a permit be purchased for a specific area. The county maintains a map of closed timber sales with good access for firewood left from harvesting operations. A permit is currently required for each closed sale area. Should the County consider changes to broaden the firewood policy so that all closed sales on the map are covered by one permit? Are there other changes to the policy that the County should consider? Please explain the benefit to the public and any environmental or administrative concerns associated with the proposed changes.

RESPONSES

Permits should remain for a specific area. I see no benefit in making blanket permits. The current system allows better control and knowledge of who is where.

Chippewa Rod and Gun suggests that one permit is required to harvest on any open area. It is apparent that the \$5 fee for this permit is not intended to bring in revenue for the county, if it were, the fee would be higher. This would allow the harvester to not be concerned if the permit they have is ok for that area.

One permit for all areas makes sense. This should reduce paperwork for the county and make it easier for the individuals that want to cut firewood.

Under no circumstances should all firewood sales be under one permit, as that would invalidate the purpose of the program, which should be to provide assistance to those who need it and are willing to do the work necessary to salvage the logs. There is no benefit to the forest to have the logs removed, and likely beneficial not to remove the wood at all, were it not for the social and public relations benefit accorded by the current program.

No comment, seems to be working.

16. Are there any other specific issues, areas of concern, or points of consideration related to policy and management that the County should consider regarding silviculture and forest administration?

RESPONSES

I have nothing further to add here. I think a good job has been done overall with the best interests of the public taxpayer being kept foremost in the management of the forests.

Chippewa Valley Trailrider response/request: we realize the importance of forest management and our request is that the loggers make efforts to not destroy our trails that we have worked so hard to establish. If harvesting is scheduled for areas with horse trails we request several weeks advance notice so we can effectively mark the trail so slashings and debris is not thrown on our trail for us to clean up. Where our trails is demolished we request permission to reroute immediately so the trail is not impacted or unpassable.

There are numerous ways for citizens to obtain value from their forest. They include payoffs in the form of reduced property taxes as a result of sale of forest products, recreational opportunities, business opportunities caused by the recreational benefits, general quality of life of citizens who desire a refuge from city life, and improved chances of survival for ourselves and our descendants as a result of beginning to impact climate change.

As in all choices, there are quick payoffs, and there are investments in bigger payoffs in the future. I believe we have an obligation to begin thinking about transitioning the forest economy from cash revenue to social and environmental revenues. These take the form of climate mitigation, recreation, and providing biological refuge.

As a public forest near a large population base and one of the southernmost such forests in the state, we need to recognize the highest and best use of the forest land, which we did not earn but was given to us, is no longer to maximize value in the form of revenue but in these other forms which are actually of greater value both today and in the long term.

Thank you for offering the opportunity to participate in this forum in this manner.

Expand irregular stand management acreage; provide financial support from timber sales for rec trail management for partner group implementation; pro-actively limit timber equipment crossings of rec trails.