



June 7, 2013

Mr. Chris Pence, Land Services Supervisor
Crow Wing County
Land Services Building
322 Laurel St., Suite 14
Brainerd, MN 56401

Re: Comments – 2013 Crow Wing County Water Plan

Dear Mr. Pence:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft 2013 Crow Wing County Water Plan. The County and its staff should be commended for the integration of a comprehensive and purposeful watershed management framework into the plan. This integration, especially efforts that drill down to the minor watershed level, will provide the County and its citizens with a solid foundation from which to develop effective partnerships that will better manage water and land resources.

Linking water quality with forest management, especially on private lands, is a fundamental key to the water quality strategy for the state that we have been actively developing with numerous partners including the BWSR, MN DNR, SWCDs and many others. We are very interested in developing partnerships with the County to support the implementation of this Water Plan in tandem with our forest management programs.

By way of introduction to our complimentary role and mission to the County and this plan, the Minnesota Forest Resources Council (MFRC) is a 17-member state council working to promote long-term sustainable management of Minnesota's forests by coordinating the implementation of the Minnesota Sustainable Forest Resources Act (SFRA). The MFRC is recognized nationally as a model for the coordination of sustainable forest management on a statewide basis through its landscape, site level, and forest policy development programs.

The MFRC's Landscape Program supports citizen-based regional landscape committees that have developed forest resource management plans (landscape plans) for each of Minnesota's six forested landscapes including one for the North Central region of the state. The MFRC's landscape committees were created to serve as a forum to address local and regional forest management issues through planning, coordination, implementation and monitoring. The committees support projects that address priority forestry and related natural resource issues (see enclosed brochures).

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The North Central Regional Landscape Committee (which includes Crow Wing County) currently supports several collaborative forestry projects including those that focus on increasing services to private woodland owners – the tullibee lakes, wild rice, and Camp Ripley/ACUB projects. As demonstration projects, the outcomes of these projects are intended to be shared and integrated with future efforts in the region.

Attached to this letter are some specific comments for text revisions/additions to the draft Water Plan for consideration. Also attached is a diagram that illustrates the range of services available to private woodland owners. This diagram is a part of the approach we are working with the MN DNR Forestry to sort out roles and responsibilities in serving private woodland owners.

Landscape level management in Minnesota is a voluntary, consensus-based approach to the planning of forest and natural resources and their management. It brings people together who have an interest in the long-term health and vitality of a particular region or landscape. It is a process that helps landowners and resource managers better understand how an individual property or site fits into the larger landscape.

The next North Central Landscape Committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 19, 2013, in Brainerd. On behalf of the Committee and its chairman, Jacob Frie, we would request a presentation by your staff on the Water Plan at this meeting as one way to help kick start engaging conversations that explore ways to support the active and ongoing implementation of this plan with our complimentary forestry endeavors. If this can work schedule wise, please call me at (320) 256 -8300 to discuss arrangements.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Lindberg Ekola
Landscape Program Manager

Comments – MFRC Landscape Program 2013 Crow Wing County Water Plan

Action 6: Promote conservation easements.

Administration. Conservation easements are an interest in real property where landowners voluntarily place certain restrictions on the use of their property for conservation purposes. These easements are also an agreement between the landowner and the easement holder. Conservation easements provide flexibility to accommodate a landowner's interest in protecting the land while still retaining ownership. Conservation easements in Minnesota can be acquired and held by (1) governmental entities otherwise authorized to hold real property or (2) charitable organizations whose purpose meets the statutory definition of a conservation easement.

Funding. Grants can provide the funding resources needed to help to provide financial incentives that to encourage landowners to sell development rights and place a conservation easement on their land. Grants can also be obtained to help cover the closing costs associated with a landowner donating an easement have been helpful in securing easements.

Lead: Crow Wing County Land Services Department

Partners: Crow Wing County Land Services Department, Crow Wing Soil & Water Conservation District, Department of Natural Resources and the Private Forest Management (PFM) Program, 30 Lakes Watershed District, Crow Wing County Cities & Townships, Camp Ripley, Minnesota Land Trust, Trust for Public Lands, Minnesota Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, Nature Conservancy, Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation, Minnesota Forest Resources Council and its North Central Landscape Committee, Mississippi Headwaters Board

Financial: Local, state and federal grants, In-kind staff time

Duration: Length of plan

Measurable Outcomes:

- Use the minor watershed assessment tools developed in this plan to help identify areas in the County where conservation easements would be desirable from an enhanced public benefits perspective – water quality, groundwater protection, biodiversity, resource or habitat protection, etc.
- Support existing PFM/landscape stewardship projects including tullibee lakes, wild rice and Camp Ripley/CUB projects.
- Work with partners to identify and pursue funding for emerging PFM/landscape stewardship projects.

CWC Response:

CWC appreciates the comments received and looks forward to further integrating forest stewardship with water planning. The highlighted sections were added to the plan. The other underlined sections already existed in the plan (after Action 8).

Action 8: Promote private forest management.

Although many watersheds in Crow Wing County have vast amounts of public forests, which are effectively managed by the County's Public Land Management office, it is the forested lands on private property that provide one of the largest opportunities to maintain high water quality in the watershed. Landowners have number of educational resources, tax incentives, and other economic opportunities available to them that work to promote long-term forest health and productivity along with benefits to wildlife and water quality. ([insert the attached implementation tool box diagram if possible](#))

Lead: Crow Wing County Land Services Department

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Financial: Local & state grants, In-kind staff time

Duration: Length of plan

Measurable Outcomes:

- [Partner with the North Central Landscape Committee and the MN DNR Forestry PFM Program on landscape stewardship projects that increase the delivery of services to private woodland owners.](#)
- [Participate on the North Central Landscape Committee.](#)
 - Provide annual total number of permits issued (by type).
 - Calculate and record impervious surface totals along with phosphorous input / reduction for each permit issued in the Shoreland District.
 - Summarize this information annually with the goal of achieving no-net increase in phosphorous from the added impervious surfaces on riparian properties.
 - Conduct onsite visits prior to Public Hearings to provide stormwater and shoreline buffer recommendations.
 - Host or present at one land use or Ordinance-related workshop annually.
 - Protect at least two miles of shoreline and 1000 acres of land via conservation easements, private forest management plans, or similar means during the length of the plan.
 - Maintain factsheets, ordinances, and other land-use information online.

CWC Response:

The underlined sections were added to the plan.