



Family Forest Stewardship in Minnesota: Delivering on the Next Million Acres

Report on Accomplishments

February 2009

Prepared by Dovetail Partners, Inc. for the Blandin Foundation's Vital Forests/Vital
Communities Initiative



BLANDIN FOUNDATION™



DOVETAIL PARTNERS, INC.



Family Forest Stewardship in Minnesota: Delivering on the Next Million Acres

Report on Accomplishments

February 2009

Background

Since 2006, the Blandin Foundation and its many partners have been in a dialogue with family forestland owners, forestry professionals, policy makers and stakeholders to advance efforts to foster and encourage sustainable forestry practices among family forest owners.

At conferences held in 2006 and 2007, participants identified specific goals for Family Forest Stewardship in Minnesota and provided recommendations for strategies to be pursued. A leading outcome from past events has been the “Million Acre Goal”. The goal is to increase family forestland under sustainable management through a number of efforts, including the preparation of Forest Stewardship plans for 1 million acres of Minnesota family forestlands that did not previously have a plan.

This report provides information about the many accomplishments to date and progress that has been made on reaching the goals and responding to the recommendations outlined at the Family Forest Stewardship conferences.

Accomplishments

- More than 30 organizations have endorsed the Million Acre Goal and are actively supporting the growth of family forest stewardship in Minnesota.ⁱ
- More than 200,000 acres of Forest Stewardship Plans have been written since 2006, reaching a 6-year high in 2008 with more than 80,000 acres of plans written in the past year. The Stewardship Program has set a goal of writing 125,000 acres of plans in 2009 to stay on track to hit the Million Acre Goal by 2015.
- As of February 2009, forty-six (46) Master Loggers have been certified in Minnesota with three new applications in process. In 2006, the Minnesota Logger Education Program established the Minnesota Master Logger Certification Program with support from the Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR), Blandin Foundation, the University of Minnesota, and other partners.

- In 2008, the 2c Managed Forest Land tax program became law and delivered on the goal of revamping the *ad valorem* tax. Minnesota’s family forest owners are now benefiting from the program. To be eligible for the 2c program the landowner must have a current (less than ten years old) stewardship plan. Nearly 100,000 acres have been enrolled in the 2c program so far.
- The Minnesota Forest Resources Council (MFRC) unanimously endorsed the Million Acre Goal. The MFRC communicated their support in a letter to Governor Pawlenty in which board chair Alfred Sullivan stated that reaching this goal “will nearly double the impact and benefits that can be derived by the State, its citizens and family forest owners.”
- With support provided by the Blandin Foundation’s Vital Forests/Vital Communities initiative, the University of Minnesota Extension has established www.MyMinnesotaWoods.org as a portal for landowners interested in forest stewardship. The site averages about 400 page views by 180 unique visitors daily. The 150 threads on the discussion board average over 450 views each, and each monthly email is opened a total of 1,200 times by 750 people. With steady growth in all categories, the site is currently being rebuilt to increase multimedia content and interaction among landowners, foresters, loggers, and other site users.
- The “Seeing the Forest AND the Trees: How to Make the Most of Minnesota’s Woods” project developed by the Blandin Foundation’s Vital Forests/Vital Communities Initiative completed tours in Northern Minnesota; Ontario, Canada and Finland and Sweden. The Family Forest/Non-Industrial Private Landowner (NIPF) Action Team from the project has advanced several activities related to family forest stewardship in Minnesota, including a pilot project in Itasca County that will employ existing incentives and create new incentives to draw woodland owners into forest management and conservation efforts. The project will include surveys of landowners, research of incentives and a focus on marketing and the evaluation of results.
- The Aitkin County Soil and Water Conservation District achieved Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification for their group certification program. This program offers small landowners in the county a simple, cost-effective way to have their forests third-party certified. The program was developed with support from the LCCMR, U of M, NRCS and other partners. The group currently includes 20 landowners representing 2,772 acres. About 15 forest product companies are members of the group chain-of-custody program administered by Aitkin County Economic Development.

- The Minnesota Wood Education Project has developed new group certification programs for forest landowners and forest product companies to improve access to Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification statewide. The programs are expected to complete their certification assessments for group members in early-2009. An additional 5 County Land Departments are also establishing forest certification for lands they manage and, when completed, these efforts will help Minnesota pass the threshold of having more than half of all forestlands in the state third-party certified.
- Extension mailed certification information to approximately 12,000 family forest owners in Minnesota. This mailing was supported by featured content on www.MyMinnesotaWoods.org and LCCMR funding. A video at the MyMinnesotaWoods website addresses forest certification opportunities for family forest owners in Minnesota.
- Since 2007, seventeen members of the Minnesota Forestry Association (MFA) have participated in the Woodland Leadership Institute sponsored by The University of Wisconsin Stevens Point in cooperation with University of Wisconsin Extension, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Blandin Foundation and woodland owner organizations.
- The Minnesota Forest Resources Partnership has named family forest stewardship as a top goal as a result of a statewide productivity conference and formed a Family Forests Action Team that identified key strategies to “improve management and maintain family forestlands.” The strategies include forest stewardship program capacity building, enhancement of incentives to implement forest practices and cost-share availability, and efforts that will result in the retention of family forestlands and the continued supply of timber products from these lands.
- The Governor’s Task Force on the Competitiveness of Minnesota’s Primary Forestry Products Industry has identified the increased management of family forestland as an important area of action. The final report from the Governor’s Task Force on the Competitiveness of Minnesota’s Primary Forestry Products Industry proposed that \$3 million be appropriated in the next and future bienniums for private forest landowner assistance and information programs administered by the Division of Forestry and that these funds should be used both to encourage management actions and for cost share expenditures.
- The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources received a \$1 million appropriation from the legislature to support the expansion of the Forest Stewardship Program for non-industrial private forest landowners who are actively managing their forestlands.

- The Stewardship Committee has committed to the development of a 5-year strategic plan for the Stewardship Program, the plan revision process is being led by a diverse stakeholder group with an objective of incorporating goals identified by the program's many partners, including the results of the Forest Stewardship Conferences, the Minnesota Forest Resources Partnership's action team strategies, and the efforts of the Minnesota Forest Resources Council's landscape committees.
- In 2008, improvements were made to the SFIA program, including raising the minimum payment to \$7.00 per acre. The report, Findings and Recommendations from the Sustainable Forest Incentive Act (SFIA) Work Group, was completed in January 2006. The Work Group determined that the SFIA must be changed and improved in order to ensure that the Act's policy objectives are met, and recommended additional study to determine optimal incentive structures to maximize enrollment in the Act. The report's findings and recommendations were presented to the legislature, the Department of Natural Resources and other agencies.
- The University of Minnesota completed a study sponsored by the Blandin Foundation to investigate optimal SFIA incentive payment structures and to address other tools for behavior change. The Minnesota Forestry Association's 2007 Legislative Briefing Paper included support for the findings of the University of Minnesota study regarding the SFIA.
- The final report of the Governor's Task Force on the Competitiveness of Minnesota's Primary Forestry Products Industry proposed amendments to the SFIA to encourage enrollment and to foster forest productivity and timber harvesting.
- Research at the University of Minnesota was completed that shed light on landowner interests in forest management and certification and applications of social marketing techniques. A social marketing report was released with support from the Blandin Foundation, *An Introduction to Social Marketing: Potential Applications for Forestry*, Dovetail Partners, September 26, 2006.
- Content on www.MyMinnesotaWoods.org is designed to encourage active management of family forestlands and to contribute to the development of social norms supporting active, sustainable management.

2c Managed Forest Law Tax Program & the Sustainable Forest Incentive Act (SFIA)

Forestry and conservation leaders met on October 10, 2006 to discuss how to advance the strategic vision and recommendations from the Forest Stewardship conference held

in May of that year. The meeting focused on property tax solutions and the recommendations included in the Minnesota Department of Revenue's 2006 report Assessment and Classification Practices Report – Rural Woodlands. Recommendations from this report included the creation of a new property tax classification called "Rural Vacant Lands" (to include 2b timber land), along with a lower rate for this new class than for developed lands.

In February 2007, the Minnesota Department of Revenue presented to the legislature the Assessment and Classification Practices Report - Residential use properties including seasonal residential recreational and residential homestead and nonhomestead property and the Assessment and Classification Practices Report – Lands enrolled in state or federal conservation programs that provide a summary of classification practices within the State of Minnesota, as well as recommendations to improve the uniformity of assessment and classifications for these types of properties. These reports reinforced the recommendations included in the 2006 Rural Woodlands report. The Minnesota Forestry Association's 2007 Legislative Briefing Paper included support for the recommendations of the Minnesota Department of Revenue's 2006 Rural Woodlands report.

During the 2007 legislative session, the final 2007 Omnibus Tax bill (HF 2268) included provisions to create a new property tax classification for certain unplanted rural lands, including undeveloped forests. Properties under this classification would have been taxed at a reduced net class rate from 1.0 to .65 percent if they met certain conditions. Under the proposed changes, the subjective requirement that undeveloped lands be taxed at their "highest and best use" was removed. Unfortunately, this language was lost when the Omnibus Tax Bill was vetoed by Governor Pawlenty on May 30, 2007.

During the 2008 session, supporters took advantage of the opportunity to build on the agreement reached the previous year as well as to push for additional improvements. In 2008, the language made it into law, and Minnesota's family forest owners are now benefiting from the 2c Managed Forest Land tax program (Minnesota Laws 2008, chapter 366). To be eligible for the 2c program the landowner must have a current (less than ten years old) stewardship plan. The law created a new classification, which has been given the name Class 2c Managed Forest Land, that provides qualifying land with a class rate of 0.65 percent for the 2008 assessment. As of January 2009, 94,405 acres have been enrolled in the 2c Managed Forest Land program.

The report, Findings and Recommendations from Sustainable Forest Incentive Act (SFIA) Work Group, was completed in January 2006. The Work Group determined that the SFIA must be changed and improved in order to ensure that the Act's policy objectives are met, and recommended additional study to determine optimal incentive structures to maximize enrollment in the Act. The University of Minnesota completed a study sponsored by the Blandin Foundation to investigate optimal SFIA incentive payment structures and to address other tools for behavior change.

The report's findings and recommendations were presented to the legislature, the Department of Natural Resources and other agencies. The Minnesota Forestry Association's 2007 Legislative Briefing Paper included support for the findings of the University of Minnesota study regarding the SFIA. The final report of the Governor's Task Force on the Competitiveness of Minnesota's Primary Forestry Products Industry proposed amendments to the SFIA to encourage enrollment and to foster forest productivity and timber harvesting. During the 2007 and 2008 legislative sessions, changes were made to the SFIA, including increasing the minimum payment to \$7.00 per acre.

Currently more than 800,000 acres are enrolled in the SFIA, an increase of about 200,000 acres since 2006. There are 1,394 participants as of January 20, 2009, a near doubling from 731 in 2006. Interest in SFIA is growing as landowners respond to the marketing of the 2c Managed Forest Land program by county assessors. Landowners, who are enticed into the county assessor's office because of 2c marketing, receive information from the assessor on SFIA and 2c. Landowners, who came in because of 2c, are making informed decisions about which program best meets their needs.

Forest Stewardship Program

More than 200,000 acres of Forest Stewardship Plans have been written since 2006, reaching a 6-year high in 2008 with more than 80,000 acres of plans written in the past year. The Stewardship Program has set a goal of writing 125,000 acres of plans in 2009 to stay on track to hit the Million Acre Goal by 2015. Currently about 1.45 million acres are covered by a stewardship plan.

In 2008, there were thirty-five (35) consulting and SWCD foresters with stewardship contracts and seventy-nine (79) DNR staff certified to write stewardship plans. There are a total of 127 approved stewardship plan writers.

In 2008, the USFS for the first time required all states to conduct a survey of stewardship plan implementation. The USFS developed a formula to determine how many landowners needed to be surveyed - for Minnesota it was 70 landowners. All plans over 1,000 acres need to be monitored each 5-year cycle. Area and Regional DNR staff contacted stewardship plan holders to administer the survey. Of the 70 landowners to be interviewed, 3 were thrown out due to complications.

The results of the 67 surveys that were completed found that 55 were managing their lands consistent with the stewardship plan, representing an 82% plan implementation rate. Of the 12 plans (18%) that were not being followed, it was noted that five of the properties were sold and the new landowners were not maintaining the program.

In the 2008 fiscal year, the DNR reported the following Stewardship and Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP) accomplishments:

1. Stand Establishment

Regeneration – Natural or Artificial	127 acres
Reforestation/Afforestation	6,494 acres
Total stand establishment	6,621 acres

2. Forest Stand Improvement

Wood Fiber Production	1,681 acres
Wildlife Enhancement	5,404 acres
Watershed/Fishery Protection	1,563 acres
Fire	883 acres
Insects/Disease	964 acres
Prevention from Destructive Grazing	362 acres
Total Forest Stand Improvement	10,857 acres

3. Recreation and Archeological Enhancement

Trails Constructed	35 acres n/a feet
--------------------	----------------------

4. Wood Harvested

Saw Timber Harvested	386.6 MBF
Round Wood Harvested (cords/pulp)	5,139 cords
Timber Harvested According to Prescription	561.6 acres
Referrals to Consultants	599 number

Certification

As of February 2009, forty-six (46) Master Loggers have been certified in Minnesota with three new applications in process. In 2006, the Minnesota Logger Education Program established the Minnesota Master Logger Certification Program with support from the Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR), Blandin Foundation, the University of Minnesota, and others.

The Aitkin County Soil and Water Conservation District achieved Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification for their group certification program. This program gives small landowners in the county a simple, cost-effective way to have their forest third-party certified. The program was developed with support from the LCCMR, U of M, NRCS and other partners. The group currently includes 20 landowners representing 2,772 acres, an increase of more than 80% from membership representing 1,527 acres in 2007. About 15 forest product companies are members of the group chain-of-custody program administered by Aitkin County Economic Development.

The Minnesota Wood Education Project has developed new group certification programs for forest landowners and forest product companies to improve access to Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification statewide. The programs are expected to complete their certification assessments for group members in early-2009. An additional 5 County Land Departments are also establishing forest certification for lands they manage and, when completed, these efforts will help Minnesota pass the threshold of having more than half of all forestlands in the state third-party certified.

In July 2007, Extension mailed certification information to approximately 12,000 family forest owners in Minnesota. This mailing was supported by featured content on www.MyMinnesotaWoods.org and LCCMR funding. A PowerPoint-based video developed by Dovetail Partners with support from the Minnesota DNR was hosted at the MyMinnesotaWoods website and addressed forest certification opportunities for family forest owners in Minnesota.

Social Marketing & Landowner Engagement

Since 2006, seventeen members of the Minnesota Forestry Association (MFA) participated in the Woodland Leadership Institute sponsored by The University of Wisconsin Stevens Point in cooperation with University of Wisconsin Extension, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Blandin Foundation and woodland owner organizations.

The University of Minnesota has completed research that sheds light on landowner interests in forest management and certification and applications of social marketing techniques. In 2006 a report addressing social marketing opportunities was completed with support from the Blandin Foundation, *An Introduction to Social Marketing: Potential Applications for Forestry* (Dovetail Partners, September 26, 2006). A presentation about Social Marketing has been included in the Woodland Leadership Institute curriculum since 2006.

Content on www.MyMinnesotaWoods.org has been designed to encourage active management of family forestlands and to contribute to the development of social norms supporting active, sustainable management.

The Woodland Advisor Program has developed new family forest landowner-focused resources on management. In 2007, the Woodland Advisor program had 88 classes offered worth Woodland Advisory credit and a total of 948 class attendees (742 unique class attendees). Also, in 2007, Woodland Advisors provided at least 538 hours of volunteer time and reached at least 475 people. Advisors also spent more than 600 hours working on their own properties. Data related to accomplishments in 2008 is currently being compiled.

The Minnesota Forest Association (MFA) currently has 830 members and has set the goal to triple membership in the coming years. Recent organizational priorities have been to improve benefits for members, including an enhanced newsletter and new website as well as additional member events. In 2009, MFA will further develop its network of chapters and membership development. Information about MFA membership will be included in a DNR mailing to 8,000 Stewardship Plan holders.

Next Steps

Since 2006, a full range of organizations has been actively engaging more family forest owners and more of Minnesota's private forestland in stewardship opportunities. Continued work will be needed to reach the "Million Acre Goal" by 2015. One of the areas where progress has not meet the recommendations made at the Forest Stewardship Conferences is in the area of funding and capacity building support.

The 2006 Forest Stewardship Conference included the recommendation to establish a "Family Forest Initiative Fund." As envisioned by the conference participants, *"the fund would provide approximately \$2,000,000.00 (annual) that is self-sustaining and managed through the Forest Resource Management section of DNR. Funds would be used to pay for preparing new Stewardship plans on family forests, updating existing Stewardship plans as cost share to land owners for plan implementation, and to support educational and technical assistance delivery to family forest land owners."* Specific strategies for creating this funding stream, included:

- Seek funds through the newly reconstituted Legislative and Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR)
- Explore opportunities through the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) and the Department of Energy (DOE) to use existing programs to provide financial and/or technical support for forest-based businesses
- Collect a \$0.125 per cord surcharge on wood harvested from family forestland.

Since that meeting, there is also the possibility of adding the Lessard Outdoor Heritage Council to the list of possible supporters of family forest stewardship.

In addition to stable funding for family forest stewardship, there is also continued need to fully utilize tools of engagement such as social marketing and to take advantage of emerging ecosystem markets and carbon credit opportunities that may help support the health, productivity, and biodiversity of Minnesota's private woodlands.

ⁱ Partners & Sponsors:

Ainsworth, American Tree Farm System, Boise, Dovetail Partners, Forest Capital Partners, Forest Guild, Great Lakes Forest Alliance, Minnesota Association of Consulting Foresters, Minnesota Association of County Land Commissioners, Minnesota Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts, Minnesota

Campaign for Conservation, Minnesota Deer Hunters Association, Minnesota Forest Resources Council, Minnesota Forest Resources Council Landscape Committee, Minnesota Forest Resources Partnership, Minnesota Forestry Association, Minnesota Logger Education Program, Minnesota Seasonal Recreational Property Owners Coalition, Minnesota Society of American Foresters, NewPage, Potlatch, Ruffed Grouse Society, Sappi, The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy, University of Minnesota Cloquet Forestry Center, University of Minnesota Department of Forest Resources, University of Minnesota Duluth Natural Resources Research Institute, University of Minnesota Extension, UPM, USDA Forest Service, Woodland Advisor

Appendix A

Recommendations - 2006

The first family forest conference hosted by the Vital Forests/Vital Communities initiative was *Family Forest Stewardship: Getting to the Next Million Acres* held May 25, 2006 at Saint John's University. With the input of over 70 landowners, professional, policy makers and other stakeholders, four major recommendations were identified.

Recommendation 1: Increase family forestland under sustainable management.

Specific goals for addressing the recommendation by 2015, included:

- Prepare Forest Stewardship plans for 1 million acres of Minnesota family forest land that do not currently have plans
- Update, as needed, the Forest Stewardship plans on the 1.3 million acres of family forest land that already have plans
- Enroll 20 percent of family forestland – about 1.2 million acres – in sustainable certification programs
- Assure 80-100 full-time equivalent foresters and other natural resource professionals from both the private and public sector are available to provide stewardship plan preparation and implementation services for family forest owners.

Recommendation 2: Establish a Family Forest Initiative Fund

The fund would provide approximately \$2,000,000.00 (annual) that is self-sustaining and managed through the Forest Resource Management section of DNR. Funds would be used to pay for preparing new Stewardship plans on family forests, updating existing Stewardship plans as cost share to land owners for plan implementation, and to support educational and technical assistance delivery to family forest land owners.

Specific strategies for creating this funding stream, included:

- Seek funds through the newly reconstituted Legislative and Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR)
- Explore opportunities through the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) and the Department of Energy (DOE) to use existing programs to provide financial and/or technical support for forest-based businesses
- Collect a \$0.125 per cord surcharge on wood harvested from family forest land.

Recommendation 3: Revise the Sustainable Forestry Incentive Act

This recommendation was based on a report developed by the SFIA Work Group, convened by Minnesota Forestry Association (MFA) in Fall 2005.

Recommendation 4: Revamp the ad valorem property tax

As of 2006, the tax rates for undeveloped forests and other wild land were the same as for an urban home site or a rural home site, despite the fact that developed sites need many more services than undeveloped land (e.g. schools, police and roads). Such a disparity helps drive parcelization and development of forestlands. Further, undeveloped agricultural land is currently taxed at about half the rate of undeveloped forestland.

Specific steps to address these disparities, including:

- Lead a reassessment of Minnesota's property tax system to reduce the tax rate for the classification "timberland" (old 2b) from 1.00 to 0.55 to match undeveloped agriculture land
- Establish clear minimum criteria for participation in this class that will promote forest sustainability
- Assure that the revised system is available to all forest landowners who meet minimum criteria
- Assure that undeveloped land now in the "seasonal recreational" class is also eligible for this benefit.

Appendix B

Recommendations - 2007

In September 2007, a second conference was held, *Family Forest Stewardship: Sustaining Our Commitment, Advancing the Agenda*. For this event, nearly 100 family forestland owners, professionals, and other interested parties came together to review the process over the past year and identify the next steps. The conference resulted in the identification and refinement of four key recommendations for advancing family forest stewardship in Minnesota and reaching the Million Acre Goal.

Recommendation 1: Revamp the ad valorem tax

To advance this recommendation, the Minnesota Forestry Association will convene a meeting of the leaders of the key organizations to confirm commitments to the proposed Action Steps and to identify any additional strategies, partners or follow-up that may be needed.

Action Steps:

- Develop and circulate a sign-on letter to support the recommended changes to the tax law in the 2008 Legislative Session as presented at the conference². The effort will be championed by the Minnesota Forestry Association (MFA) and will focus on efforts to seek the support of the legislature and administration.
- Develop a fact sheet to support and explain the need for and benefits of the tax law changes. Blandin Foundation will coordinate development of the fact sheet. MFA will take the lead on its distribution and dissemination.
- Engage additional stakeholders and interested parties in this effort, including conservation organizations, Minnesota Seasonal Recreational Property Owners Association, the Minnesota Association of County Assessors, and the Department of Revenue, among others. Minnesota Forestry Association will lead communications and coordination among these interests.

Recommendation 2: Forest Stewardship Capacity Building

To advance this recommendation, the Blandin Foundation will reconvene the conference Steering Committee to review these proposed action steps and identify the strategic path forward.

Action Steps:

- Develop specific (i.e., regional or county-level) targets for achieving the Next Million Acre Goal. Identify regional teams and partners to implement the plan.
- Analyze how many natural resource professionals are currently available and how many more may be needed to meet the 2.3 million acre goal (current acreage plus the additional million). This analysis would include evaluating plan writing capacity (and needs) as well as the capacity to implement scheduled management activities. Capacity for services must be sufficient to serve existing

clients as well as anticipated growth. (If gaps in capacity are identified, strategies for addressing them will need to be developed.)

- Explore potential diversified fee structures for management plans, SFIA enrollment, and other services, including plan implementation and forester follow-up on management activities.
- Develop mechanisms (i.e., annual survey) to capture information about other management plans and activities besides those that are being registered with the MN DNR, potentially to include information about properties < 20 acres in size.
- Additional marketing to promote the Stewardship Program and to get landowners signed-up on a “waiting list” for getting a Stewardship Plan.
- Link Action Steps for this recommendation with the strategies being proposed by the Family Forest Action Team associated with the Minnesota Forest Resource Partnership’s Productivity Conference.

Recommendation 3: Social Marketing Research and Initiatives

To advance this recommendation, the Blandin Foundation will reconvene the conference Steering Committee to identify partners and specific activities to implement.

Action Steps:

- Strengthen connections with national social marketing efforts and develop a focus on specific audiences such as new landowners, realtors, women, multi-generations, lake associations, and estate planners. Targeting should also build upon available information about “prime prospects” and “possible defectors”.
- Apply the available volunteer time of Woodland Advisors to speak to neighbors and communities groups about the importance of forest stewardship and help sign-up landowners for stewardship plans.
- Develop a media campaign that promotes family forest stewardship and includes newspaper and newsletter articles, letters to the editor, and other communications. Messages should capitalize on climate change concerns, legacy issues, increasing understanding about available options, wildlife habitat, and the importance of land protection. A marketing specialist could assist with the effort.
- Social marketing efforts could be made more effective with additional research efforts. Research would evaluate demographic trends of new landowners and how to most effectively reach them. The Minnesota Forest Resources Council’s reconvened research advisory panel may aid in refining priorities for research. Extension is currently involved in planning for a national symposium on the topic of peer-to-peer woodland owner outreach in Fall 2009.
- Enhance the website MyMinnesotaWoods to include opportunities for landowners to easily sign up to get a stewardship plan. Online management plan research tools could also be further developed as well as an increased focus on habitat and other landowner interests. Additional use of video could enhance the website.

Recommendation 4: Certification Recommendations

To advance this recommendation, the partners on the LCMR project “Third-Party Certification for Family Forests” will convene to review the proposed action steps. The project partners will also compile recommendations to report back to the LCCMR.

Action Steps:

- Explore the development of a statewide carbon credit program or other carbon trading approach that would provide an additional incentive for family forest stewardship, align with certification requirements and build upon work done by the Center for Integrated Natural Resources and Agricultural Management (CINRAM).
- Develop a business plan for the logger certification program to evaluate the potential for a self-supporting program and to set programmatic goals and rationale.
- Pursue LCCMR support (or other funding) for a statewide certification initiative that emphasizes the development of additional stewardship plans that meet the logger certification requirements (for properties >100 acres in size) and also addresses forest management certification standards.
- Expand training, outreach and marketing efforts related to certification. Engage foresters and service providers in learning more about certification opportunities and how to assist landowners with identifying a certified logger or other programs. Engage existing certificate holders (i.e., large public land managers and private industry) in sharing certification information.