

Forest Conservation & Stewardship Strategy Forum

April 30 – May 1, 2010

Issue based work group output

Indiana forest issues were loosely defined within work groups. Workgroups worked to develop/brainstorm commonly understood strategies and then voted on the strategies to prioritize them. Included below are the strategies that got votes. Work groups then developed action steps for the top strategies.

Fragmentation

Fragmentation and/or conversion of forests to another land use, breaking forests into smaller, unconnected patches, converting forests to paved surface, residence, agriculture, water

Prioritized Strategy List (votes)

- Increase ability pass forestland to next generation without parcelization (6)
- Increase economic incentives to keep land in forests and restore forests (6)
- Conserve existing forest patches, roadless tracts (4)
- Develop markets for forest products (4)
- Connectivity – trails, greenways, green corridors (3)
- Education about fragmentation (3)
- Statewide zoning, planning and tax incentives that guide development to existing developed lands (3)
- Mitigate conversion of forestland for any public use (3)
- Use existing infrastructure corridors (2)
- Priority IN K-12 education in acquiring outdoor experience (1)
- Develop and promote long term conservation agreements with forest owners (1)
- Develop forest-friendly planning and zoning models for counties (1)
- Increase percentage of forest cover to connect less fragmented areas (1)
- Revise Classified Forest & Wildlands program to include permanent options for forest preservation (1)

Action Steps

Strategy 1: Increase economic incentives to keep land in forest and forest restoration

- Increase ability to pass forests to next generation without parcelization
- Promote long term conservation agreements for landowners
- Expand CFW program
- Develop markets for forest products other than lumber

Strategy 2: Conserve existing forest patches, roadless tracts

- Use existing infrastructure corridors
- Guiding development to areas that are already developed
- Develop strategic partnerships
- Establish a mitigation
- Acquisitions & easements

Soil & Water

Conservation and maintenance of soil and water resources, retaining or adding forests to protect from soil erosion, retaining or adding forests to increase water quality

Prioritized Strategy List (votes)

- Increase the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs), timber harvests, invasives, TSI (5)
- Increase forest cover in prioritized riparian areas (5)
- Protect and manage existing forests (5)
- Increase forest cover in watersheds (4)
- Increase forest cover around/in woody wetlands (3)
- Create and utilize database of all forest landowners to promote forestry best management practices awareness (2)

Action Steps

Strategy 1: Increase and expand the use of BMPs in timber harvests, invasives and TSI

- Develop BMPs for Invasives and TSI
- Every 5 years, review and update BMP manuals
- Utilize existing databases (example Harris) to reach landowners, forest industry professionals, community decision makers, policy makers in general
- increase awareness of BMPs to general population
- promote certification programs in an effort to expand and increase use of BMPs

Strategy 2: Increase forest cover in riparian areas

- Utilize exiting tools to prioritize riparian buffer placement: watershed tool, RUSLE, WEP
- Increase cost share \$ (State)
- Promote other funding sources: Farm bill programs, CREP, 319, EQIP, Healthy Forest Initiative
- Promote use of tools to watershed groups, IFWOA
- Coordination of training and implementation of programs
- Partner with land trusts and watershed groups

Strategy 3: Protect and manage existing forests

- Increase state funding to administer programs (mill tax as an example)
- utilize existing tools to identify high priority forests

- Partner with land trusts, watershed groups
- promote certification, BMPs and exiting programs like Classified Forest Program
- Training and education of private landowners
- Promote cost share programs for better management of existing forests
- promote the use of forest management plan

Invasive Species

The spread and control of invasive species, managing the impact of invasive plants, controlling the spread of invasive plants

Prioritized Strategy List (votes)

- Provide landowners and managers with training, tools, and technical assistance to assess forest health on their lands (5)
- Develop statewide Early Detection Rapid Response Program for invasive plants lead by Agency (5)
- Develop best management practices (beyond water quality BMPs) to assess invasive and treat prior to forest management activities (4)
- Develop and implement a comprehensive deer management strategy based on ecosystem health (3)
- Kill deer/ overpopulation problem; comprehensive deer management strategy based on ecosystem health (3)
- Develop a comprehensive, coordinated statewide invasive species management strategy (2)
- Restrict nursery stock sales on invasive plants in the state (1)

Action Steps

Strategy 1: Provide landowners and managers with training, tools, and technical assistance to assess forest health on their lands

- Work with the Invasive Species Council to develop forest invasive species education program with separate focuses for technical staff and landowners. Include information on economics of invasives in training
- Work with the media for an ongoing educational stories
- Develop of a website that serves as a clearinghouse on information on invasives and management of invasives
- Have an inventory of “stock” invasives articles for educational uses
- Establish a “resource pool” on invasives (a control/management forum with searchable archive)
- Field days are the best. Plan in advance, advertise in Woodland Steward. Communicate info on emerging invasives to on the ground staff.

Strategy 2: Develop statewide Early Detection Rapid Response Program (EDRR) for invasive plants lead by Agency

- Establish statewide inventory of invasive plants. Coordinate with the Invasive Species Council
- Establish which “agency” is in charge of EDRR
- Agency will determine EDRR species by county & develop response strategy
- Develop a list of partners and train in EDRR and have report back to Agency.

Strategy 3: Develop best management practices (beyond water quality BMPs) to assess invasive and treat prior to forest management activities

- Clean and treat logging equipment before moving to new sites

Biodiversity

Conservation of biodiversity (including plant and wildlife habitat), retention of viable plant and animal communities, keeping common species common

Prioritized Strategy List (votes)

- Maintain, enhance and manage large forest patches for biodiversity. (6)
- Increase the percent of forest that are in the age class of less than 19 and greater than 100 years old. (5)
- Develop corridors to connect isolated forest patches and enhance dispersal and genetic integrity - develop, create, restore forest where does not exist. (4)
- Consider arrangement of diverse, multiple management opportunities; spatial and size (3)
- Preserve ecologically unique forests (entire system) and communities (1)
- Base deer management on habitat health (1)
- Facilitate landowner's ability to assess, understand and act upon biodiversity issues on their property – assistance and training (1)

Action Steps

Strategy 1: Maintain, enhance and manage large forest patches for biodiversity.

- ID where large forest patches are
- Define what a large forest is [Develop a co-op system for small patch owners to join/combined for a large patch]
- Conservation bonding
- Provide incentives to owners of large parcels to maintain the large parcel
- Inter-generational transfer of large patch ownership

- Educate public of options available to maintain ownership of their large patches intact.
- For definition consider GIS approach by watershed
- How to approach local planning and zoning bodies
- Fund Heritage Trust

Strategy 2: Increase the percent of forest that are in the age class of less than 19 and greater than 100 years old.

- Work with landowners to educate and assist in how to manage forest
- Public land, increase timber harvest
- Increase the use of even age management on large land holdings (public & private)
- Emphasize/consider the spatial element of proximity.
- Give incentives to owners to revert or actually plant new growth
- Conflicting public perception of even age management benefits educate public to advantages of multiple habitats.
- Focus on older growth: off limits areas, old growth management areas, protection.
- Off limit areas for cutting.

Strategy 3: Develop corridors to connect isolated forest patches and enhance dispersal and genetic integrity - develop, create, restore forest where does not exist.

- Where do corridors exist? Develop a database
- Educate, provide incentives to keep, maintain and grow
- ID landowners
- Encourage buffer zones along streams so many become corridors: change IN drainage laws
- Target cost share \$ to connect patches, e.g. CREP
- ID significant corridors for development
- Political boundaries are a problem – look for opportunities to partner.
- Demonstrate advantages to local officials
- Statewide Forest Bank