

PRIVATE LAND MANAGEMENT PLANS

A forest management plan is a written evaluation of a property that provides a description of the resource, its condition, and recommendations for applied management prescriptions along with a timetable for implementation.

Plans take many forms and fulfill different needs. Plans described in this chapter are the most commonly used ones but are not the only types available. These plans may address one specific management practice or encompass any number of practices. The form and type of plan used depends on the forester's judgement and the landowner's objectives, the amount of acceptance of the owner and the need to sell the owner on management. Forest management plans must should be tailored to the individual needs and objectives of the owner to achieve results.

Basic Plans

Basic plans address a specific management practice or practices and may be in the form of a letter or summary of prescriptions. They are often used as a follow-up to an initial contact when the interest and commitment of the owner is not well established. The basic plan is a tool to reinforce verbal recommendations and encourage action by the owner. As a general rule, basic plans contain a written prescription and/or recommendation for at least one action the landowner can take that supports their values and interests for the property.

Comprehensive Plans

Managed Forest Law plans and Forest Stewardship Management plans (sometimes referred to simply as a "forest stewardship plan") are comprehensive in nature. They should consider the management of the total forest resource for all benefits, dependent upon the land capability and the objectives of the landowner. They identify and describe activities that will enhance or protect soil, water, aesthetic quality, recreation, timber, water, and fish and wildlife resources based on the landowner's objectives for the land. The State Forest Stewardship Committee establishes the required elements of Forest Stewardship plans. Requirements for Forest Stewardship Plans are based on the [Forest Stewardship Program National Standards and Guidelines](#). Although there are many types of comprehensive plans, DNR Foresters should know the differences between the two plans listed below:

- **Managed Forest Law Plans**
 - For more information on requirements for Managed Forest Law (MFL) plans, refer to the [Tax Law Handbook](#).
 - Managed Forest Law Plans fulfill the elements of Forest Stewardship Management Plans while also conforming to additional MFL program requirements.
- **Forest Stewardship Management Plans**
 - The purpose of the Forest Stewardship Program is to encourage the long-term stewardship of important state and private forest landscapes, by assisting landowners to more actively manage their forest and related resources.
 - A Forest Stewardship Management Plan serves as the foundation for engaging forest landowners in a plan that addresses individual landowner objectives while adhering to National and State Forest Stewardship Management Plan guidelines.

General Considerations in Preparing a Basic or Comprehensive Forest Management Plan

1. **The plan should be specific to the landowner, specific to the land, and consistent with Department silvicultural guides and directives.**

Tailor the plan to the landowner's individual needs and objectives within the capability of the land. Be personal. Consider the landowner's goals, interest, motivation, and needs in relation to the potential of the woodland. Tell Describe to the owner how carrying out the plan will help reach their goals. Make prescriptions in accordance with the silvicultural guidelines in department handbooks and directives.
2. **Avoid technical forestry terminology or define all technical terms used.**

Use understandable terms and symbols. Use written (plain language) explanations rather than timber-type symbols.

Convey technical information in a non-technical manner.

3. **Base the plan on ecosystem considerations.**
Include an overview of regional landscape scale concerns as appropriate. Reference material can be found on the [Ecological Landscapes of Wisconsin](#) website. Any other considerations can be included in the stand conditions, special features, or characteristics section.
4. **Be concise.**
Assure that the included information is relevant to the parcel and accurate.
5. **Create a timeline.**
Actions and recommendations should include a year, season, or step-by-step order. Schedule all parts of the management process needed for success.
6. **Use an appropriate format for communication.**
Use WisFIRS Private Lands for comprehensive plans. Use DNR letterhead and/or simple emails for basic plans.
7. **Use publications or other attachments to describe routine, repetitive information technical assistance information.** Reference the supplemental information in the plan. Examples include: e. "How to Sell Timber"; "What is TSI"; "Tree Planting", etc. Reference the supplemental information in the plan. Resources can be found at: <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/publications>
8. **Explain how to obtain additional assistance.**
Explain services available from the DNR, Cooperating Foresters, county land conservation departments, Farm Service Agency, UW-Extension, Natural Resources Conservation Service, woodland owner organizations, wood cooperatives, private associations, private enterprise and others to help carry out the plan.
- ~~7. Determine a timetable with the landowner for accomplishing needed forestry practices.~~

Specific Plan Standards

The following [Wisconsin Forest Management Plan Standards](#) table and the [MFL Review Checklist](#) list are identifies recommended and required elements in basic and forest stewardship forestry plans. All plans shall adhere to the [Best Management Practices for Water Quality \(BMP\)](#) and silviculture principles established in [Publication FR-226, Wisconsin Forest Management Guidelines \(FMG\)](#).

Integrated foresters should are authorized to write forest stewardship plans for landowners, but attention should be paid to based on the prioritization in administrative code (Priority (2)(e) in [s. NR 1.212, Wis. Adm. Code](#)) as well as the annual Division of Forestry work plan. Foresters should work with their supervisor if they are unclear on whether they should write a plan for a landowner. For any plans not written by a DNR Forester, the landowner should be referred to a Cooperating Forester using the Forestry Assistance Locator. Forest stewardship plans developed for non-tax law landowners cannot be used to satisfy the management plan requirement for an MFL application, unless all MFL management plan requirements are met (see Tax Law Handbook for more information).

All forest stewardship plans should be developed using the WisFIRS Private program. The WisFIRS program will help plan writers enter the proper data necessary to complete the plan to its required standards. Completed forest stewardship plans must be submitted to a DNR Forester for review. **The DNR Forester should complete plan review within 45 calendar days of receiving notification.** Any plans not reviewed within 45 days will be sent to the corresponding supervisor for notification and review.

WISCONSIN FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN STANDARDS			
	Managed Forest Law Plan¹	Forest Stewardship Management Plan¹	Basic Plan²
Plan Component			

1.	IDENTIFICATION			
A.	Landowner name and address with necessary signatures and dates	Required	Required	Required
B.	Landowner signature of approval	Required	Required Not Required	As Appropriate
C.	Plan preparer name, address, and phone number	Required	Required	Required
D.	Plan preparation date	Required	Recommended	Required Recommended
E.	Legal description of property (T,R,S minimum)	Required	Recommended Required	Required
F.	Planned acres	Required	Required	Required
G.	Plan length (shows number of years covered by the plan)	Required	Required Recommended	As Appropriate
H.	Overall landowner goals and objectives for the property	Required	Required	Recommended
I.	The pages are numbered sequentially/ order # on all pages	Required	Recommended/NA	As Appropriate
2.	DESCRIPTION (may be presented in a narrative or tabular format as appropriate)			
A.	Map with property boundaries, cover types, water, roads, adjoining land use, acreage, etc., clearly and adequately labeled	Required	Required	Recommended
B.	General property description	Required	Required	As Appropriate
C.	Regional landscape overview	Required	Recommended	As Appropriate
D.	Interaction with surrounding properties	Recommended	Recommended	As Appropriate
E.	Soils information (can be generalized over entire property when soils are uniform; may be included in a data table)	Required	Required	As Appropriate
F.	Stands by cover type and area (acres)	Required	Required	Required As Appropriate
G.	Descriptive overview of the timber type including current forest stand conditions and past management activities if known	Required	Recommended Required	Recommended
H.	Stand silvicultural objective prescription (what you are trying to grow and how you intend to achieve it: indicate target timber type or land cover and the even-age or all-age technique that will be used to get there). Provide a link to landowner's objectives where practical.	Required	Required	Required As Appropriate
I.	Forest characteristics: Land Exam Form 2450-128 Part A (and part B for MFL) or similar stand-based table, such as the one found in WisFIRS private. (Providing a copy to the landowner is recommended, though not required.)	Required	Required	As Appropriate
		Managed Forest Law Plan¹	Forest Stewardship Management Plan¹	Basic Plan²
J.	Plan addresses known threatened and endangered species and cultural/historical resources	Required	Required	Required

3.	MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES			
A.	Recommendations consider landowner’s available time, interest, money, and energy based on landowner’s objectives.	Recommended	Recommended	Recommended
B.	Plan identifies and describes actions (practices) to be taken by the landowner as applicable to protect soil, water, range, agroforestry, aesthetic quality, recreation, timber, and fish and wildlife resources in a manner that is compatible with landowner objectives.	Required	Required	Recommended As Appropriate
C.	MFL Mandatory Practices ³	Required	N/A	N/A
D.	MFL Non-mandatory Practices ³	Required	N/A	N/A
E.	Year practices should/must be completed (A chronological summary of mandatory or non-mandatory activities is also desirable, but not required.)	Required	Recommended Required	Recommended
F.	Enforceable language: As included in the plan template language. Specific requirements (i.e., basal area residuals, trees per acre, follow-up requirements, etc.) are covered when preparing the cutting notice.	Required	N/A	N/A
G.	Prescriptions are consistent with WI DNR approved silvicultural standards	Required	Required	Required
H.	Forest health considerations	Required	Recommended Required	As Appropriate
I.	Fire: Include considerations for wildfire protection and planning.	Required	Required	As Appropriate
J.	Carbon Cycle: Include considerations for sequestering carbon.	Required	Required	As Appropriate
4.	PRESENTATION (IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES IS UNACCEPTABLE, THE PLAN MAY BE RETURNED FOR REVISIONS.)			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The plan information is presented in a logical format that is easy to follow. • The writing style is easy to read and understand and presented in a professional manner. • The writer reasonably avoids wordiness, jargon, and mistakes in grammar, spelling, and formatting. • The plan meets the landowner’s needs and provides useful advice in a skillful way. 			
	<p>¹ Requirements for forest stewardship plans are based on the Forest Stewardship Program National Standards and Guidelines as well as state guidelines. (https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/forest-stewardship-program-standards-guidelines.pdf). MFL plans are Forest Stewardship plans and must include the same requirements. All required elements for MFL plans are included the plan template.</p> <p>² Foresters should include components in addition to those designated in the chart as appropriate to the situation for each individual basic plan.</p> <p>³ Mandatory and non-mandatory (optional) practices are required to be included in MFL plans to the extent needed to address sound forestry and the landowners' objectives listed in the plan.</p>			

Forest Management Plan Forms

Non-tax law stewardship plans should be prepared on the Forest Stewardship Management Plan forms 2400-111, 2400-111A, and 2400-111B. The MFL Forest Stewardship Plans should must be prepared through the online WisFIRS program.

Detailed instructions regarding forest reconnaissance techniques, mapping terms and symbols, timber type and species codes, maps and plan styles can be found in the following sources: Chapter 100, Public Forest Lands Handbook (2460.5); Forest Tax Law Handbook (2450.5) and Manual Code 8625.2. Avail yourself of the many other resource management handbooks and databases produced by the Department and partner agencies.

Difference Between Refining Landowner Goals and Objectives and Silvicultural Objectives

The most difficult parts of plan writing often involve:

- **Identifying and expressing the landowner's goals and objectives** (1H in the preceding Plan Standards Table). Keep in mind that the owner might not have clearly articulated objectives goals or might not have been aware of opportunities on the land property. Look for opportunities throughout the planning process to educate the landowner and better define both their goals and objectives. The owner's statement on an MFL application or other initial material is just a starting point. Don't be afraid to restate. Be sure to include the owner's objectives goals in the plan. Encourage the owner to carefully consider the goal/objective statements written in the plan. Refine the statement if it does not capture their concerns.

Occasionally, landowner goals objectives might not be consistent with sustainable forestry or be compatible with site capabilities. Foresters should discuss incompatible or impractical goals objectives with landowners and try to help them develop realistic ones objectives. A landowner's goals and objectives will typically include forest management goals and objectives as well as wildlife, economic, ecological and recreational ones. Goals are broad, general statements that express a desired state, while objectives are more time-specific statements of measurable planned results that correspond to pre-established goals.

- ~~Identifying the silvicultural objective for each stand and how the objective will be reached~~ (2H in the Plan Standards Table). Identifying the silvicultural objective for each stand and how the objective will be reached (2H in the Plan Standards Table). Silvicultural objectives for a stand are usually more specific than a landowner's overall objectives. Silvicultural objectives refer to particular regeneration harvest techniques, timber types and stand quality or structure the prescription is trying to achieve.
- **Identifying silvicultural prescriptions for each stand.** Foresters should recognize the difference between landowner goals and silvicultural prescriptions. Identifying the desired future condition is good place to begin the process of accomplishing landowner and forest management objectives. The desired future condition is a description of the land or resource conditions that are believed to be necessary if goals and objectives are to be fully achieved. This desired future condition can be accomplished through a silviculture prescription for each stand. The silvicultural prescription is a planned series of treatments designed to change current stand structure to one that meets management goals and objectives. The prescription should consider ecological, economic and societal constraints.

Forest Management Guidelines and Exceptions

Under the framework established in DNR policy and NR 1.213(3)b, Wis. Adm. Code, all forest management and timber harvesting assistance provided by the DNR and Cooperating Foresters shall be consistent with BMPs and the silviculture sideboards in Table 2-1, Wisconsin Forest Management Guidelines (Publication FR-226) 2011). The table summarizes the regeneration harvest systems that are generally recognized as acceptable and widely applied in Wisconsin. The designations are substantiated in forestry research literature and elaborated in the Wisconsin Silviculture Guide DNR Silviculture Handbook (2431.5).

Exceptions to the standards in FMG Table 2-1 will be granted only if a science-based management commitment describing an alternative method is submitted to and approved by the DNR in advance. Such management commitments shall describe the alternative method, measurable performance criteria and corrective measures that will be taken if the alternative fails. Management commitment variances to FMG Table 2-1 shall be evaluated locally between a DNR forester and cooperator or between a DNR forester and his supervisor, with progression to regional additional review if needed. (Resolution of management commitment exceptions at the local and regional District level would usually occur in situations where the DNR Wisconsin Silviculture Guide Handbook notes other possible management techniques which might not have been included as generally accepted practices in FMG Table 2-1.)

~~In the event that a management commitment issue is not resolved at the region level, the Director of the Bureau of Forest Management shall review the proposal with the assistance of central office staff as assigned. (Sending a request for a~~
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silvicultural exception to the central office is required for precedent changing methods not described in the Silviculture Handbook or other authoritative publications.) *This system of exceptions does not supersede landowner eligibility or compliance requirements under MFL, cost sharing or other statutory programs.*

Follow-up On Management Prescriptions

Though often neglected due to other workload, periodic follow up is an important activity. The Department's goal is to support sustainable forestry for multiple benefits on private lands. Follow-up activity and accomplishment reporting is an integral part of the primary forestry objective on private lands is integral to achieving this goal: that of providing the maximum yield of forest benefits. Without it, the program becomes a one-time contact with little continuity, and minimum potential for realizing long range forest management benefits. An organized follow-up system provides the forester with (1) a method to obtain feedback, (2) a way to improve relationships with the public, landowners and timber processors and, (3) an important opportunity to review and confirm silvicultural decisions, and (4) provides further encouragement for management activities.

A. Short Term Follow-Up

Landowners should be provided with written follow-up within one month of a walk-through. The detail of the follow-up will depend on the nature of the walk-through and what was discussed. Additionally, as time permits, efforts should be made to visit sites of ongoing or recently completed practices. Such visits are valuable in determining if recommendations were proper and practical and give the forester a better understanding of on-the-ground limitations and conditions. All timber sales should be visited sometime during or after the cutting operation. Required performance checks for cost-sharing practices provides opportunity for good follow-up.

One effective system for short-term range follow-up on recommendations is to locate timber sales, tree planting and TSI projects on a county map that can be carried in the vehicle record accurate landowner management activities in WisFIRS Private Lands or in the appropriate file or database and then to provide an email or letter with accurate management recommendations. Such a map makes an excellent reference to locate areas to check as you make your rounds. Projects could be color coded to show type of practice, when set up, and if completed or underway.

B. Long Term Follow-Up

Once a landowner has begun action on a basic or comprehensive forestry plan, the forester has a responsibility to encourage continued management on the land. This ensures the greatest return to the public on the initial investment of the forester's time and maximizes potential for sustainable forest management, already made and the full benefits of sustained yield management. Again, accurate landowner management activities should be recorded in WisFIRS Private Lands and/or in the appropriate file or database in order to keep accurate records for long-term management of the property.

Foresters are encouraged to use the PlanTrac program for both tax law and non tax forest management plan follow up.