

*Turtle Mountain Region Landscape Forest Stewardship Plan*  
**Tour and Focus Group Summary**

Submitted: October 21, 2022

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This report provides a summary of the tour facilitation, survey, and focus group that was held on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022 in the Turtle Mountain Region (TMR) of Bottineau County. The report is broken down into three distinct parts: the pre/post TMR forest survey summary, tour stops facilitator summary, and TMR focus group discussion summary. A summary of each part is provided in this document.

The overall goal of the Turtle Mountain Region Forest tour was to gauge public awareness and perception of forest threats and current/future forest management. Information was obtained through tour facilitation, pre- and post-surveys, and a focus group held after the tour. Participants across North Dakota were invited to attend the TMR Forest tour and participate in the focus group. The focus group held after the tour provided a method of obtaining baseline data for a sample of the target population. The data will be used to measure the effectiveness of outreach and education provided during the tour.

Focus group attendees were asked to participate in a discussion and share their knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions about their experience with the Turtle Mountain Region Forest. The results of those discussions were recorded by the facilitator, and then used to create this summary report. This report presents the findings of the pre/post surveys, facilitated tour, and focus group. More detailed information about each of the three parts is presented in subsequent sections.

## **Turtle Mountain Region-Landscape Forest Stewardship Stakeholder Survey**

The pre- and post-surveys were provided to participants prior to and immediately after the full-day tour. Survey questions were the same except for the addition of two questions on the post survey:

- 1) Have your feelings about the Turtle Mountain Region Forest changed today? If yes, how?
- 2) Is there anything else we did not touch on today that you feel is important?

Survey results indicate that participants' knowledge and perceptions about the TMR forest changed after the tour. Most participants saw invasive tree pests as the number one threat to the TMR forest, whereas conversion to non-forest was the number one "greatest" threat to the TMR forest. Of the six threats to choose from, climate change was the least popular threat in both categories.

Comments made by participants on the survey indicated that they gained an increased appreciation and awareness of the TMR forest itself, the condition of the forest, and current/future management opportunities. Overall, participants enjoyed the tour and information provided by the facilitators and were surprised at the amount of forest management already in place. The opportunity to engage with North Dakota Forest Service (NDFS) and North Dakota Game and Fish (NDGF) officials was also seen as a positive.

Breaking down the survey responses into the five participant categories provided some interesting data points. Participants who own and/or manage (non-forest) land within the proposed project boundary site initially considered fire as a significant threat to the forest. After the tour, several participants no longer viewed fire as the predominant threat in the post-survey. The same results were found by participants who are interested in sustainable forest management. Out of six threats provided in the survey, the threat of fire was the most frequently changed answer from pre- to post-survey. Participants who chose climate change as a threat went on to identify a specific forest threat in the post-survey.

The data indicates that the public has a lack of education and/or awareness about forest threats and management. However, the post surveys indicate that engagement with NDFS and NDGF officials during the facilitated tour made a positive impact on their knowledge base. In addition, the variety of tour stops was extremely beneficial to participants as seen in the survey comments and notes kept by tour facilitators. Participants' ability to visually observe management areas using different forest techniques (fires, aspen regeneration, tree thinning) was effective and, again, mentioned in the survey and during the tour. According to one facilitator, ". . . it opened their eyes to how management can help a forest." A participant shared this comment, "The use of fire . . . controlled fire would be a good management tool as we have seen what the response of the wildfire was."

Although most participants believed that private forest landowners should have the right to do anything they want with their property, there were some caveats, e.g., “as long as it doesn’t affect others” or “within certain boundaries.” Most participants were receptive to some type of program for forest owners but wanted more details before fully supporting different programming ideas.

## Part I. Pre/post TMR Forest Survey Summary

### TMR Forest Survey questions

1. Which of the following are threats to the TMR Forest?
  - a. Invasive tree pests
    - i. **Pre** - 40
    - ii. Post - 40
    - iii. Change - 0
  - b. Lack of tree species diversity
    - i. **Pre** - 11
    - ii. Post - 20
    - iii. **+82% change**
  - c. Societal disconnect from forests
    - i. **Pre** - 16
    - ii. Post - 28
    - iii. **+75% change**
  - d. Conversion to non-forest
    - i. **Pre** - 29
    - ii. Post - 25
    - iii. **-16% change**
  - e. Wildfire
    - i. **Pre** - 27
    - ii. Post - 25
    - iii. **-8% change**
  - f. Limited wood utilization incentives
    - i. **Pre** - 17
    - ii. Post - 29
    - iii. **+71%**
  - g. Climate change
    - i. **Pre** - 18
    - ii. Post - 19
    - iii. **+6% change**
  - h. Other
    - i. **Pre** -
      1. Big side by side creating deep ruts - inappropriate vehicle use of trails.
      2. Lack of cleaning out dead material, inappropriate use of vehicles on trails

- ii. Post -
  1. Climate change - we didn't talk about it, but it is real
  2. Possible loss of diversity.
  3. Understand better..."custodial care" of our forest lands means - same as farming.
  4. Limited funds for personnel to carry out projects
  5. Weird ice storms
  6. All

**Order of TMR forest threats from largest to smallest**

**#1. Invasive tree pests (40)**

#2. Limited wood utilization incentives (29)

#3. Societal disconnect from forests (28)

#4. Wildfire (25) and conversion to non-forest (25)

#5. Lack of tree species diversity (20)

#6. Climate change (19)

2. Of the threats listed above, what do you think is the GREATEST threat? **Pre**

- a. Invasive tree pests
  - i. **Pre** - 11
  - ii. Post - 8
  - iii. -138% change
- b. Lack of tree species diversity
  - i. **Pre** - 1
  - ii. Post - 6
  - iii. +600% change
- c. Societal disconnect from forests
  - i. **Pre** - 1
  - ii. Post - 3
  - iii. +300% change
- d. Conversion to non-forest
  - i. Pre - 15
  - ii. Post - 10
  - iii. -150% change
- e. Wildfire
  - i. **Pre** - 13
  - ii. Post - 5
  - iii. -260% change

- f. Limited wood utilization incentives
  - i. **Pre** - 1
  - ii. Post - 6
  - iii. **+600% change**
- g. Climate change
  - i. **Pre** - 2
  - ii. Post - 0
- h. **Pre** Other
  - i. Conversion to industry, housing, not enough trees planted. old stands need to be cut down
  - ii. Age of forest
  - iii. Society
  - iv. Saving trees
  - v. Worry that future generation won't be able to have these forests/animals to enjoy.
- i. **Post** Other
  - i. How we know so little about managing this area. It needs help to stay healthy.
  - ii. People don't know and forests aren't being managed (costly).
  - iii. Society
  - iv. Greatest – uncontrolled growth – fires – etc. anything it too much.
  - v. It feels like it can vary quickly from year to year.
  - vi. Limited funds for personnel to carry out projects
  - vii. Too many overgrown forests and not enough equip to handle the cleanup
  - viii. If nothing is done, our aspens will die off from canker.
  - ix. Cutting without utilization.

**Order of greatest threat from largest to smallest**

**#1. Conversion to non-forest (10)**

#2 Invasive tree pests (8)

#2. Limited wood utilization incentives (6)

#3. Lack of tree species diversity (6)

#4 Wildfire (5)

#5 Societal disconnect from forests (3)

#6. Climate change (0)

3. True or False? “The best thing we can do for a forest is to leave it alone.”
  - a. True
    - i. **Pre** - 6
    - ii. **Post** - 0
  - b. False
    - i. **Pre** - 39
    - ii. **Post** - 43
    - iii. **+10% change**

**Summary:** Climate change did not appear to be a major concern or identified as a big threat to TMR Forest versus other threats. Climate change placed #6 in both questions about threats.

4. **Have your feelings about the Turtle Mountain Region Forest changed today? If yes, how?** (post-survey only)

### Overall Summary

Participants commented on an increased appreciation and awareness of the TMR Forest itself, the condition of the forest, and current/future management opportunities.

- Didn't realize how much work is being done.
- Glad there are things being done to keep the forests going.  
... appreciate ... the energy and knowledge of the Forest Service.
- I think the controlled burns and what you are doing now is great.
- I see there are opportunities here that will improve the forest ...
- Never thought fire was a good thing in a forest but after seeing the 1-year regeneration.
- There are efforts being tried.
- Better managed than I previously thought.
- I observed some good management in places.
- Much more going on than I thought.
- The work of gov't agencies.
- There is more going on than the public is aware of.
- Really like to see all the different forest management tactics used.

5. **Is there anything else we did not touch on today that you feel is important?** (post-survey only)

### Summary

- Overall, participants really enjoyed the tour and information provided by the facilitators. They appreciated the opportunity to not only see but learn more about the TMR forest. Several participants commented on their surprise at the work being done to manage TMR forest. Physically being there was a plus for many.



- There was some indication that participants would be interested in additional tours to learn more about tree species, wildlife, and overall ecosystem functions.
- A few comments pertaining to the opportunity to interact with NDFS and NDGF officials. Participants appreciated observing cooperation between different government agencies.
- Additional topics of interest: carbon markets, potential restrictions to contain future commercial development, overview and future management tools within the TMR forest, etc.
- One interesting comment: “Discussion questions seemed very politically motivated?! Not a good end to a nice day.”

## **Breakdown of survey results by participant category**

### **Group 1 (#4 participants) - I own and/or manage forest land within the proposed project boundary.**

- No one threat changed significantly.
  - Same - 1
  - Different - 2
  - Answered only one of the two surveys - 1
  - Same/Different (kept original answer the same but added an additional threat in post-survey) - 0

### **Group 2 (#20 participants) - I own and/or manage land within the proposed project boundary, but it is not forested.**

- Fire as a pre-survey answer is the most frequently changed answer in the post survey.
  - Same - 9
  - Different - 6
  - Answered only one of the two surveys - 4
  - Same/Different (kept original answer the same but added an additional threat in post-survey) - 1

### **Group 3 (#26 participants) – I am interested in sustainable forest management.**

- Fire as a pre-survey answer is the most frequently changed answer in the post survey.
  - Same - 13
  - Different - 8
  - Answered only one of the two surveys - 4
  - Same/Different (kept original answer the same but added an additional threat in post-survey) - 1

### **Group 4 (0) – I own and/or manage a business that is dependent on the forest in this region.**

- None

### **Group 5 (#26 participants) – I visit the Turtle Mountain Region for recreation (hiking, hunting, birdwatching, etc.).**

- No one threat changed significantly.
  - Same - 12
  - Different - 9
  - Answered only one of the two surveys - 4
  - Same/Different (kept original answer the same but added an additional threat in post-survey) - 1

**Summary:**

If we look at the five groups together, we see “lack of education and management” as a frequent “other” response. This could be tied to societal disconnect. Societal disconnect in this situation may be a consequence of not understanding or appreciating the value of natural resources (i.e., forests). This can often be changed through education, training, and an opportunity to experience forests.

Climate change was only selected four times in the pre-survey and zero times in the post-survey. Those who selected climate change initially went on to identify a specific threat in the post-survey. Climate change may be used as a catch-all phrase or an answer due to a lack of participant knowledge on forest threats. We may be able to relate this back to a lack of education about forest threats and management as we saw a distinct move away from climate change in the post-survey.

## **Part II. Turtle Mountain Region Facilitated Tour**

Participant tours began and ended at Bottineau and included five different stops. Tour sites provided participants with examples of different forest management strategies and/or tree species diversity. Each stop included a brief explanation of the forest management strategy used as well as information regarding the history of that particular forest section. Facilitators were available to answer participant's questions at each site.

A primary objective of the tour was to gauge the public's reaction to and perceptions of different forest management programs. Many of the participants acknowledged their lack of knowledge about forest management and were surprised at the positive outcomes. There was an opportunity for participants to view forest that had sustained fire and forest that did not.

Notes taken by facilitators during and after the tour indicate a high level of engagement by participants. Many wanted to know more not only about forest management but also wildlife habitat, tree species, and ecosystem functions. Comments were made about wanting to participate in future tours that were more specific in nature.

**Facilitators provided information and encouraged participant engagement during the tour. Comments made by each facilitator have been summarized and correspond to a specific tour stop.**

*Stop 1 - Butte St. Paul – Oak Savanna (with fire disturbance)*

- This stop helped participants recognize the influence of fire – regardless of their current knowledge, perceptions and/or beliefs about fire as a management tool.
  - Few of the participants had paid attention to the forest understory until it was pointed out.
  - This stop resulted in a better understanding of fire and the use of controlled burns as a management tool. Participants were also surprised at the resilience of the forest after fire along with its associated benefits.

*Stop 2 - Pelican Sandy Lake – Upland Hardwoods (undisturbed site)*

- Overall, participants noticed the difference between the first and second stops – size of the oaks and the different look of the forest.

*Stop 3 - Willow Lake WMA (aspen management area)*

- A recognition by participants at the positive impacts of forest management in this site.
- Lack of understanding about aspen regeneration.
- The questions asked by participants demonstrated the need for additional public education about forest (aspen, hazel, and understory) management.
- Participants were impressed with, surprised at, and supportive of this type of management.
- “. . . it opened their eyes to how management can help a forest”

*Stop 4 – Wakopa burn vs. non-burn drive thru*

- Participants were surprised at how quickly the forest came back after the fire.
  - “Everyone was just in awe of what it looked like after the fire.”
- Participants expressed their support for controlled burns.
  - “One local said this was the best thing to happen to the land.”
  - “The use of fire . . . controlled fire would be a good management tool as we have seen what the response of the wildfire was.”
- Saw for themselves the positive effects of fire in the regeneration of aspens, less dense understory, thinning of the forest, and an overall healthier forest.
- A realization by participants that the lack of forest management (fire, tree thinning, clearing of understory, etc.) and low public understanding of forest management is detrimental to a healthy forest.

### *Stop 5 – Tribal Natural Resources*

- Participants were impressed with and surprised by timber work done by the Tribe.
- Excellent opportunity to demonstrate wood utilization and forest management by the Tribe.
  - Participants wondered what other incentives could be developed to encourage more wood utilization.

### *Trip back to Bottineau*

#### **Who should pay for management of the forest resources?**

- Answers varied: state/federal taxes, forest landowner, user fees, legacy funds, etc. There was no consensus.

#### **Should private landowners have the right to do anything they want with their property?**

- Yes, as long as it doesn't affect others.
- Some regulations/within certain boundaries.
  - No gravel, coal use.
  - Don't subsidize to remove native forest.
  - Who defines these *boundaries*?
- Be a good custodian of your land.
- Limit who the land can be sold to.

#### **Cost-share funding is available for management activities performed by Minnesota landowners to improve their woods.**

- Could be used as an incentive similar to agriculture.
  - On the flip side, this type of policy is sometimes abused by producers.
- Viewed as government meddling.
- Some restrictions to development needed.
- Several of the participants supported cost-share programs but needed more information – what strings are attached, length of contract?

#### **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)**

- Depends on easement lengths.
  - What is the definition of easement? Who defines it?
  - Use the word *lease* instead of easement.
- Need options.
  - Short- and long-term, not permanent.
  - Use on working forests with active management.
- Takes land off the tax base.

### **Forest Legacy Program (FLP)**

- Not a lot of resistance to this program by participants.
- One option for a certain segment of the population.

### **2c Managed Forest Land**

- Landowner costs?
- Is there a similar plan already available?

### **Sustainable Forest Incentive Act (SFIA)**

- Yes, it appears similar to CRP.

### **Green Acres (2a Productive Agricultural Land) and Rural Preserve (2b Nonproductive Agricultural Land)**

- No significant feedback on this question.

Overall, there was positive support for some type of program for forest owners.

Participant quote: *“Turtle mountains have a special place in my heart.”*

## **Summarized facilitator comments at each tour stop.**

### ***Arrive at Stop 1 Butte St Paul – Oak Savanna @ 8:30 am***

#### **Cody -**

- No one noticed any major devastating impacts from the fire. I did point out a few trees that I saw that died but they all agreed that historical fires would have done the same and that those trees had other factors that weakened them, and the fire finished them off.
- I was asked at the stop about succession and what would succeed oaks in this site. I helped explain that with the removal of fires it would turn into a more closed canopy like it has and the understory would also change like it has. I explained that oaks typically are a late succession/climax species and pre-European settlement this site would have been at a climax for its setting.

#### **Kevin -**

- The group noticed the open understory from fire; many never really recognized the oak savannah complex until it was pointed out. After our stop, they easily recognized the transition from prairie to forest, especially on our way north to stop 2.
- We had a particularly good conversation about fire. I was pleasantly surprised to hear that most of them supported controlled burns. They were all knowledgeable about wildfire and what can happen if a forest is not managed, fire can be out of control and more devastating vs. controlled. They felt it should be a tool for management. They were also interested to know how fire interacted on the oak-savannah region differently than on an upland site.

#### **Noah -**

- Talk about all the poison ivy
- Talk about the Juneberry crop/harvest
- On the steep hiking trail... someone noticed an aspen “patch” near the trail with about 50 new shoots.
- An attendee mentioned the hike is something he hasn’t done in over 40 years...enjoyed the opportunity... took him back to his younger day
- As we left Butte Saint Paul we talked about the impacts of the fire on the understory and how some species were knocked back, but many people were surprised how good the forest looked after experiencing the fire
- People were interested in the size of the fire

#### **Liz -**

- If humans are natural, aren’t we part of the overall system?



- If we have removed fire from management practices, isn't that the new normal and the forest will "natural" change without it?

**Jodi -**

- Participants were surprised at the differences between the burned and unburned sections, particularly the understory amount.

***Arrive at Stop 2 Pelican Sandy Lake – Upland Hardwoods @ 9:45 am (undisturbed site)***

**Cody -**

- They all noticed the larger sized oaks and we talked that some of them potentially predate the large 1866 fire but that the majority are after the fire.

**Kevin -**

- They all noticed the size of the oak here and a different look to the forest, particularly the lack of open savannah.
- One person mentioned he grew up here and sees less aspen. Its "dying out" and needs some management. He thinks there used to be much larger aspen in this area, but they are all dying out and being replaced by ash.

**Noah -**

- Attendees from another van that have a forest stewardship plan with Cody had asked about a moth that attacks oak trees... not sure if we have more information for them.
- Attendees that hiked the entire trail that we waited for were the talk of the van.

**Jodi -**

- Participants did notice the conifers and wanted to know if that was natural. They were not surprised when I said that the conifers had been brought in and I pointed out that they were not doing well.
- Participants did notice the bigger size of the hardwood trees in comparison to the previous stop once it was pointed out to them.
- We discussed how different types of trees were growing here and the environmental factors that might influence the differences.

**Arrive at Stop 3 Willow Lake WMA – Aspen Management @ 10:30 am**

**Cody -**

- We talked about the Pando aspen clone and how it is all connected to the same root system and is the largest organism ever found and alive.
- We talked about the goals for how many stems per an acre are considered successful in regenerating aspen.
- We talked about the past dozing as some of the participants were around during that and that it made it difficult for utilizing the wood.
- I was also asked at this stop if mowing and controlling the hazel would have the same regeneration effect. I said I believe it would from some evidence I have recently seen.

**Kevin -**

- We had a good discussion on management. They were extremely impressed with the work done here and it opened their eyes to how mgmt. can help a forest.
- Many had driven by this area and thought it was being cleared for pasture, until now.
- They understand the need for management, had a lot of questions about why the oaks and other species were not being managed, why only the aspen. Questions about the dead, downed trees, how long it takes to break down, why we leave some standing, etc. The takeaway for me was that we can do a better job explaining aspen regen and why we do it.
- Overall, a lot of support for this and they felt that private landowners would be interested in doing this on their land, whether through a program or simply just through education. I.e., if they knew more about it, they might do it.

**Noah -**

- By far seemed to be the most interesting site among people that I visited with
- The old way of using a dozer with a shear blade sparked conversation in the van about memories a private landowner had when he was a child and would go harvest some of the wood.
- A wood turner was interested in knowing where he could get more of the unique species for projects... Peter referred him to Fargo Blvd. (city of Fargo)
- Lot of questions about the forestry head
  - Capabilities of the machine
- Questions regarding how the hazel will respond to the management
  - Timing of when the under story was managed
  - Timing of when the aspens are managed

**Jodi -**

- Participants were very impressed with the management site and surprised how well the aspens have responded. They expressed support for this type of management.

- We discussed the potential advantage to wildlife habitat when clearing out some of the bigger trees. I think they notice the pile of logs as something unattractive or unnatural to the area, but once the possibilities for wildlife habitat and free firewood are pointed out, their attitude changes.
- A lot of interest shown with the dozer and attached shear blade. I think this stop made quite an impression on participants. A realization that management can have a positive impact and not just through fire.

***Stop 4 – Wakopa burn vs non-burn DRIVE THRU – 11:15 am***

**Cody -**

- Everyone was just in awe of what it looked like after the fire. I think everyone thought the fire would have had more negative effects on the site like we see on TV.

**Kevin -**

- More fire and management discussion and it was all positive. Support for Rx fire.
- One local said this was the best thing to happen to the land.
- The group noticed the difference between the understory but also noticed the new regen of aspen on the burned site.

**Noah -**

- General discussion of the impact of the fire
  - Lucky the road was there as a fire break
  - Smoked the tops of some aspen good to see them come back
  - Questions about the response of the local fire teams involved
    - Did the tribe respond
    - Did NDFS fire team respond
  - Talk about the landowner that started it
  - Talk about the owners of Shepard's Hill and who owns it now
- On the way to Tribes Natural Resources office
  - Talk about management
    - The use of fire... controlled fire would be a good management tool as we have seen what the response of the wildfire was
    - Questions about if it is hard to get buy in from the public to cut down trees

**Jodi -**

- This was a great visual example for participants to see the stark differences between burned and unburned forest side by side. I think they began to understand how appropriately managed fire can be a positive for forest health.

- The differences between uncontrolled fire vs. controlled fire was discussed.
- This stop also provided participants an opportunity to see new aspen growth after the fire.

***Arrive at Stop 5 - Tribal Natural Resources @ 11:30 am***

**Cody -**

- Some other wood utilization we talked about was pulp for heating and OSB. Furniture and animal bedding.
- To encourage wood utilization incentives were mentioned as a possibility.

**Kevin -**

- Many didn't know the tribe was doing this much management, logging and didn't know they had a functioning sawmill.

**Noah -**

- Impressed with the feller buncher
- Tribe needing more lumber

**Jodi -**

- Most had never seen a feller buncher and were impressed with what it could do.
- Fascinated by the sawmill and what the Tribe was doing with the logging.

***Trip back to Bottineau***

**Cody -**

- In response to who should pay for management everyone said the State or its tax money.
- Yes, landowner should have the right but as long as it doesn't affect others.
- Overall, yes everyone was receptive to cost share programs but were curious what strings were attached and the length of time that they would be signed up for.

**Kevin -**

- We discussed some of the program options, in a more general sense. I didn't read over each description but asked their thoughts about things like cost share programs, tax incentives/reductions, and easements. Generally, they do feel we need some cost share programs. Tax reductions were not so popular simply because they didn't think it was a

big enough incentive. Easements or long-term agreements were supported but I also mentioned this would be working forests, with active mgmt. There was support for this.

**Noah -**

- Was extremely hard to get people to express their opinions
  - Who should pay for the management of forest resources of the TMR?
    - ❖ Legacy fund
    - ❖ Feds
- Should private landowners have the right to do anything they want with their property?
  - Can't sell to whoever they want
    - Already can't do whatever they want
      - ❖ No, It's their land
      - ❖ Don't want to be told what they must do
      - ❖ Don't be subsidized to remove native forest
      - ❖ Some regulations
        - Actions may affect someone else or another property
- Programs
  - Interest in implementing some sort of program for forest landowners
    - ❖ It's a good idea
    - ❖ Interest in the pilot program and the details

**Jodi -**

- Discussion about the different types of programming.

### **Part III. Turtle Mountain Region Focus Group Summary**

Eleven participants voluntarily joined the focus group which was held after the tour at the Molberg Forestry Center in Bottineau. There was a wide diversity of participant backgrounds and experiences which allowed for an in-depth and focused conversation. The focus group began at 4pm and ended around 5:30pm. There was much discussion centered around TMR forest threats. Participants were particularly concerned about conversion of forest land to non-forest use. The nature versus development debate is seen as a Catch 22 – most participants understand the need for growth but want restrictions to control it. Societal disconnect was especially troubling to participants as they worry the next generation will have little to no connection with nature. Participants also shared threats that were not on the survey, such as removal of windbreaks, drought, and lack of species diversity.

Participant comments about forest conservation, preservation, restoration and management were positive. Collectively, they agreed that conservation, preservation, and restoration fall under management. In addition, there was consensus that forests need some type of protection not only today but for future generations. Several participants, however, wondered if preservation was even possible anymore as there are no more “untouched spaces.”

When participants were asked about different types of forest funding programs in North Dakota, there was limited discussion. Most agreed that some type of cost-share funding could be used as an incentive similar to what is done with agricultural land. Several commented that they needed more information before seriously considering or committing to a program. That said, participants had already been asked this question by facilitators after the tour.

#### **Suggested comments for future tours:**

- More interaction with participants.
- Integrate focus group questions into the tour.
- Education about forest management is needed in addition to forest succession information. People do not understand what would happen without forest management.
- Discuss the historical significance of forest management.
- Although diversity of audience is good for discussion, we may want to consider breaking participants into specific groups according to their self-selection (landowner, recreational user, etc.). In this way, we can tailor our questions.
- Offer evening educational opportunities throughout the fall/winter months.
- Field tours could target specific groups.
- Encourage participants to fill out both the pre- and post-surveys. 13 individuals completed only one of the two.

**Focus Group Facilitator: Jodi Delozier**

**11 TMR tour participants**

**North Dakota Forest Service and Game & Fish facilitators**

1. Can you give examples of how you interact with TMR or other ND forests?
  - a. Landowner of 160 acres
  - b. Tourists
    - i. Recreation
    - ii. Appreciation of the natural environment
    - iii. Acknowledging and embracing the peacefulness of the forest
    - iv. North Dakota's "best kept secret"
    - v. Hunting/fishing
  - c. Self-interest
    - i. Keeping the forest in its natural state
    - ii. Keeping development out, i.e., more cycling trails, camp sites, etc.
  - d. Make a living from the forest
    - i. Energy interests
    - ii. Wood products
    - iii. Hunting
  - e. Hunting
  - f. Educational opportunities
    - i. All ages
    - ii. Myself
  - g. Partnerships
  - h. Logging
  - i. Multi-use
    - i. Farmers and ranchers
  
2. What do you see as the biggest threats to our forests? *(Provide examples of threats if stakeholders don't see any threats: invasive tree pests, lack of tree species diversity, societal disconnect from forests, conversion to non-forest, wildfire, limited wood utilization incentives, climate change, etc.)*
  - a. Conversion to non-forest use
    - i. Ag land
    - ii. Logging
    - iii. Nature vs. Development
      1. Housing developments that have moved from cabins to mansions
      2. Increased tourism
      3. Recognize there is a catch 22 to growth

- b. Fire
    - i. Unintentional
  - c. Invasive species
    - i. Insects, fungus, non-native tree species
  - d. Lack of species diversity
  - e. Increasing temperatures (highs and lows)
  - f. Drought
  - g. Societal disconnect
    - i. Urban vs. rural
    - ii. Generational change in attitudes toward the forest/natural resources
  - h. Removal of windbreaks
  - i. Use of the term “wasteland” to describe forests
3. What are your feelings about forest conservation versus forest preservation?
- a. Conservation
    - i. Necessary
    - ii. Considered survival for the forests
    - iii. Recognizes the value of the forest which should be passed down to the next generation.
    - iv. We have a responsibility to be stewards of the land.
    - v. Land ethic.
  - b. *Preservation*
    - i. Is preserving the same as neglect? Thoughtful question posed by one of the participants.
    - ii. Nature does what it needs to do.
    - iii. A need for some “untouched spaces.”
    - iv. Question by a participant, “Is there an untouched space anymore?”
  - c. Restoration
    - i. Viewed as a big punch followed by an appropriate forest response (regrowth).
    - ii. We have moved past preservation to restoration.
    - iii. Can we restore ecosystem function in order to preserve it?
    - iv. Who will pay for this?
      - 1. Monetarily
      - 2. Spiritually
      - 3. Human-wise
  - d. Management
    - 1. The group looked at the above three as falling under the management category. Someone said, “Isn’t that what conservation, preservation, and restoration is?”



4. Would you like to see the following programs in North Dakota? Very little discussion on this as it was asked during the tour by facilitators.
- a. **Cost-share funding** is available for management activities performed by Minnesota landowners to improve their woods.
  - b. **Sustainable Forest Incentive Act (SFIA)** – This legislation provides annual incentive payments to encourage sustainable forest management and keep forests as forests on the landscape. Private landowners can receive a payment for each acre of qualifying forest land they enroll in SFIA. In return, they agree not to develop the land and to follow a forest management plan while they are in the program. All enrolled land must remain in SFIA for at least 8, 20, or 50 years depending on the recorded covenant length.
  - c. **2c Managed Forest Land** –2c is a property tax designation that offers woodland owners a reduced rate of 65 percent on actively managed woodland. Requirements include a minimum enrollment of 20 qualifying acres and a Woodland Stewardship Plan that was written in the last 10 years, is registered with the DNR, and includes a schedule of planned activities.
  - d. **Green Acres (2a Productive Agricultural Land) and Rural Preserve (2b Nonproductive Agricultural Land)** –These programs provide reduced taxes on woodland that produces agricultural products (maple syrup, biomass) or is adjacent to a landowner's farmland.
  - e. **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)** –Administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), ACEP protects agricultural and nonindustrial private woodlands from development through agricultural conservation easements. The easements can be temporary (30 years) or permanent. The program also offers wetland conservation easements that are purchased and then maintained by NRCS. Easement plans are required.
  - f. **Forest Legacy Program (FLP)** program is administered by the Minnesota DNR to protect important private working forests and prevent the conversion of forests to non-forest uses. Working forests provide an array of public benefits including habitat, clean water, recreational opportunities, timber, and other forest products. The FLP is a national program administered in partnership with the USDA Forest Service. The program is intended to conserve and protect private forests that provide economic, recreational, and economic benefits to the state and its citizens. Conservation easements are permanent and easement rights are either purchased or donated.

5. Are there any other points you would like to make about forest management?

N/a

6. Is there anything else we did not touch on that you feel is important?

○ Cost-share funding

- Yes, use it as an incentive.
- We see it being used successfully with ag land.