

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
State Office Building, Room 95
St. Paul, MN 55155

To LSOHC Members

I am involved with a group of citizens that are concerned about the proposed conversion of forest areas to open landscape in the Sand Dunes State Forest in Sherburne County. On Feb 4, 2016 there was a meeting in Zimmerman where over 150 people showed up with questions and concerns about the proposal. Attached with this document is a summary of some of the concerns that the group has.

At the meeting I was discussing the costs of the proposed management with DNR personnel and was told that the DNR has plenty of money to implement the proposed plan. I am presuming he was talking about the two LSOHC grants (Looking on your web site I was unable to see any other funding requests that applied to this project):

FY 2015 trds 03427227 for \$250,000

FY 2017 trds 03427235 for \$477,100

There are two reasons for me writing. First, we wanted to make you aware of the growing concern over the implementation of this proposed project. Secondly, we would like to be able to address your group with our concerns before further consideration is given to funding this project.

In talking with your Executive Director, Mark Johnson, he mentioned that there was opportunity to address your group at the end of your regular meetings. I told him I would be interested in doing that and look forward to attending your 3/11/16 meeting.

Sincerely,
Bob Quady
DNR Forester - retired
Sand Dunes State Forest Work Group.

Summary of Concerns with the Proposed Management in the Sand Dunes State Forest

Citizens have concerns about this conversion in the SDSF citing the following points:

- There are rare and endangered species that need forested habitat as well.
- There is no other forested block to support those needs anywhere in the vicinity.
- There are higher concentrations of rare features in the township with forest than there are in the townships that are being managed as open landscape.
- Over an 80 year period the **cost** for managing open landscapes could be \$1000-1500/acre where as the **income** for managing for timber could be \$5000-6000/acre.
- The 30,000 acres of refuge, that is adjacent to the 6000 acres of forest, should be able to meet the open landscape management needs.
- Out of the 6000 acres of forestry lands, 600 have already been dedicated to rare feature management in the Uncas SNA.
- This plan will mean putting fire on the ground next to residential areas. Besides the nuisance and health concerns with smoke they recall the prescribed fire that the refuge had escape nearly burning several homes near Orrock.
- Many prefer the aesthetics of wooded landscapes to those of open brushlands.
- With the presence of oak wilt they question the ability to maintain the type of proposed oak forests (parts of the refuge look pretty rough).
- Since forests sequester far more carbon than prairies some question the wisdom of burning forests back to prairies. In fact some would suggest starting to replant the refuge.
- The citizens that fought for the White Pine Initiative in the mid 90's and the values it represented, which was supported by the legislature, are wondering why are the white pine that were established now being destroyed.
- With the trust fund land obligation to make money, they do not see how converting these lands is compatible to that goal (see bullet 4).
- The state has invested significant taxpayer money in the planting and care of these forests. It makes little sense to burn the unmerchantable planted pine or, if merchantable, clearcut them before maturity.
- Adjacent landowners like the screening from the wind and visual screening from the many forest recreational users.

The DNR has never held public input meetings into their proposed plans. Both an input process as well as a decision appeal process are required under the FSC certification documents. The DNR mission statement says in part, "*The mission of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is to **work with citizens**.....*". We will hold them to their certification obligation and their mission intent.

Sincerely,

Bob Quady

DNR forester – retired

Member of SDSF Work Group