

March 16, 2016

To the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Our group would very much like to thank you for the chance to address your committee last week.

We know that our work group will have to approach the DNR to address our concerns. Our main goal in meeting with you was to make known our concerns in Sherburne Co. I anticipate we will be interacting with your council in the future.

The council brought up some very interesting points. Our interaction was a bit intimidating for me and if I was a quicker thinker could have responded better to your comments. As I was out splitting wood the other day and dwelling about what you said I came up with the following thoughts.

I found one of the funniest comments came from member Schara. He commented that the SDSF was planted to pines because of the results of the dry 30's that caused the sand to blow round. This is true and part of the reason we are shaking our heads. Here is an actual and projected timeline:

Step 1 - 1940's Because of the environmental concerns with soil erosion in the open landscape the SDSF is established and planted to predominately Norway pine.

Step 2 – 1990's Because of environmental concerns about the lack of white pine in the state, the legislature gives funds to increase the amount of white pine in the forest through seedling planting.

Step 3 – 2010's Because of environmental concerns the decision is made to cut and burn the pine out of the forest to recreate an open landscape. What??

Step 4 – 2030's Because of environmental concerns of climate change and the need for additional carbon sequestration, the open landscape is replanted to white pine.

We are just suggesting that we skip step 3.

When dealing with forests, that have been established with tax payer dollars, there is a certain expectation that a management path will be followed long enough for the public to realize its return on the investment.

Another comment was made that, at times, management goals change. That is true. In the mid 90's it was determined to increase the amount of white pine on the landscape. This was a tweaking of our pine planting plans and the forest management that we were doing. I suspect less than 1% of the population even realized there was a change in management direction. However, when the management plans are a 180° change in management direction (clear cutting and burning a maturing forest back to prairie) you can be assured that 100% of the people will notice. That level of change needs public input and buy-in.

A third comment was made that, “we need to rely on the expertise within the DNR to set management direction”. I totally agree, but you have to realize, on this issue there are two types of experts with specific expertise. Those in Eco Services are experts in identifying rare features, mapping them and tracking population. Most all of them would agree with this plan. Foresters, on the other hand, are the experts in forest management and the how fire reacts in the environment. These are the experts that need to implement the plan. Most all of them would have many issues with the current plan. Also, realize you are only hearing from the set of experts that agree with this plan, unless you happen to interact with a retired forester. Even though the experts come up with a plan this still does not release the DNR from its goal as listed in its mission statement or its obligation as required by certification, to include the public in the process.

If you want to hear some more details on the plan and the public’s thoughts on this issue you are invited to our meeting on Monday, March 28th at 6:30 PM at the Big Lake High School Auditorium.

Again thank you for your time on this matter.

Best Regards

Bob Quady
Sand Dunes State Forest Work Group