

# **Cass County Forest Management Plan Update**

## *Public Comments and Response to Comments*

December 2020

### Background

In 2019, the Cass County Board approved development of a 10-year update to the county's forest resource management plan. The plan addresses the 255,000 acres of tax-forfeited land administered by the Cass County Land Department.

### Summary of Public Comment Process

The initial announcement of the launch of the project was provided in a news release to local papers on September 17, 2019 (Cass Lake Times, The Pilot-Independent, Brainerd Dispatch, Pine and Lakes Echo Journal, and Pine Cone Press-Citizen). A public meeting about the plan was held on December 10, 2019. The updated plan was made available at the Cass County website for a 30-day comment period on October 5, 2020. The announcement of the public comment period was distributed via email to the stakeholder contact list maintained by the Land Department (181 contacts). Contacts without email addresses were contacted by phone. The announcement of the public comment period was provided on October 5, 2020 as a news release to local papers. The plan updating and public comment process was supported by a contracted project manager, Katie Fernholz of Dovetail Partners.

### Summary of Results

A total of 10 individuals and organizations provided comments during the public comment period. One of the comments was accompanied by signatures collected from an additional 32 individuals. The comments that were received are summarized in Table 1. Some comments summarized in Table 1 were edited for length. The entire content of the comments that were received are provided in the Appendix. Also included in Table 1 is a written response to the comment that describes what if any changes were made to the drafted Forest Management Plan.

Table 1. Summary of Comments and Response to Comments

	Date received	Name/ Organization	Comment	Response
1	Oct 29	B. Schmidt	<p>There should be considerable improvements in communication, including: 1) Public hearings and requests for public input should be conducted during May through September; 2) An ongoing list of active and upcoming harvests should be available at the website and include the name of the Forest Resource Manager, logging company on the permit, estimated dates of active operations, as well as designated access points for logging trucks traveling in and out; 3) Development of a task force comprised of property owners (residential, seasonal/recreational, commercial, etc) to provide input to strategy and location and act as a buffer to field and explain objectives to various interested parties. The foal of the group would be to act as a liaison between the land department to allow two way communications; 4) Provide interpersonal communications skills training for the Land Department employees.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments.</p> <p>1)The initial announcement of the launch of the project was provided in a news release to local papers on September 17, 2019 (Cass Lake Times, The Pilot-Independent, Brainerd Dispatch, Pine and Lakes Echo Journal, and Pine Cone Press-Citizen). A public meeting about the plan was held on December 10, 2019. The updated plan was made available at the Cass County website for a 30-day comment period on October 5, 2020. The announcement of the public comment period was distributed via email to the stakeholder contact list maintained by the Land Department (181 contacts). Contacts without email addresses were contacted by phone. The announcement of the public comment period was provided on October 5, 2020 as a news release to local papers.</p> <p>2) An ongoing list of active and upcoming harvests is available on the County website. Please see Forestry Web Mapping <a href="http://cassweb3.co.cass.mn.us/link/jsfe/index.aspx?defaultRole=Forestry">http://cassweb3.co.cass.mn.us/link/jsfe/index.aspx?defaultRole=Forestry</a></p> <p>3) The Land Department is advised by the Cass County Natural Resources Advisory Committee comprised of the elected officials of the Soil &amp; Water Conservation District (SWCD) Board concerned about responsible private and public land management. The committee, which also serves other Cass County departments, provides advice to the Land Department on policy issues. It is utilized in planning efforts such as this strategic plan to facilitate public input and involvement.</p> <p>4) The Land Department provides annual continuing education opportunities to staff.</p>

2	Oct 29	B. Schmidt	<p>Harvesting concerns for encroaching on public and personal enjoyment: 1) There is a great inconsistency with the ability to harvest unlimited timber near any form of water and what property owners must follow for building restrictions in the form of setbacks. There should be a standardized expectation that each body of water should adhere to equal or greater setbacks that landowners are required to follow. The Land Department should respect the same guidelines. 2) Currently there is no required buffer for land harvested adjacent to public roads. A reasonable buffer strip of 50 feet from the road right of way is crucial to the aesthetics required for successful tourism in the area and preserving the visual impact of our forest roads. 3) Consideration made for select harvesting only aspen close to the buffers or developing a buffer subsection to harvest only aspen and leave hardwoods for a respectful area. 4) Logging can be done better and property owners should be seen as an additional resource and not an inconvenience. The ability to provide revenue for our area is greatly appreciated but there is definitely room for improvement in communication and respect to the needs of property owners.</p>	<p>1)The Cass County Land Department will continue to follow the MN Voluntary Site-Level Forest Management Guidelines for setbacks from water bodies. The recommended Riparian Management Zone (RMZ) for a non-trout lake greater than 10 acres is 120'. For more information on the Forest Management Guidelines, their development, training and outreach, please see the following website. <a href="https://mn.gov/frc/forest-management-guidelines.html">https://mn.gov/frc/forest-management-guidelines.html</a>. The difference in setbacks for private property owners compared to timber harvesting on public lands is due to the differing type and duration of impacts.</p> <p>2) Buffers along roadways are highly wind prone and, therefore, provide a maintenance issue for road authorities, especially for short lived species (Aspen, Birch and Red Maple) and shallow rooted species (Basswood, Spruce and Balsam Fir). Timber harvest sites can be perceived as unsightly at least until the regeneration is established in a couple of years.</p> <p>3) The Cass County Land Department will continue to follow the MN Voluntary Site-Level Forest Management Guidelines for setbacks from water bodies. If available, certain longer-lived species like pine and oak can be reserved from harvest when silviculturally correct.</p> <p>4) The County appreciates feedback on the forest plan and looks for opportunities to improve.</p>
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3	Nov 3	B. Schmidt	<p>In the area where I live there has been a very large amount of the land available for harvest that either has or will be harvested in a short period of time—less than 5 years. Instead of doing such a large section in a concentrated area, is there an efficient way to spread that out? Essentially, the harvesting would be more widespread throughout the county in any given year, but no single area would be overwhelmed with loss of mature trees. I’m not sure how to best determine a formula to follow on that, but the bottom line is that I would like to see limitations on how much harvesting can be done in a time span of about 5 years in a designated area. I understand that there is a large amount of land that is available for harvest, but being a bit more strategic would feel less invasive.</p>	<p>In large part, the size and location of timber sales is dictated by past land management activities and or environmental disturbances. For example, the 1969 tornado near Outing, MN created a large but geographically concentrated area of timber that is all the same age and ready for management. The size of individual harvest blocks is typically limited by adjacent younger stands and/or topographical features. Taking those issues into consideration, the Cass County Land Department disperses timber sale activities widely across county managed lands.</p>
4	Nov 5	R. Holzinger	<p>As a property owner in Cass County, I would appreciate careful consideration of the following issues. The timber harvest should respect the same setbacks as property owners do.</p> <p>When logging next to public roads, establish a buffer strip no less than 50 feet to protect the visual beauty of the area. Information should be available on active and planned logging as a public record that is easily accessible. Approved land use for parcels in a general area or township should be taken into consideration when deciding when to harvest.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments.</p> <p>1)The Cass County Land Department will continue to follow the MN Voluntary Site-Level Forest Management Guidelines for setbacks from water bodies. The recommended Riparian Management Zone (RMZ) for a non-trout lake greater than 10 acres is 120’. For more information on the Forest Management Guidelines, their development, training and outreach, please see the following website. <a href="https://mn.gov/frc/forest-management-guidelines.html">https://mn.gov/frc/forest-management-guidelines.html</a> The difference in setbacks for private property owners compared to timber harvesting on public lands is due to the differing type and duration of impacts.</p> <p>2) Buffers along roadways are highly wind prone and, therefore, provide a maintenance issue for road authorities especially for short lived species (Aspen, Birch and Red Maple) and shallow rooted species (Basswood, Spruce and Balsam Fir). Timber harvest sites can be perceived as unsightly at least until the regeneration is established in a couple of years.</p>

			There should be attempts to minimize multiple uses in a short timeframe, i.e. pipeline construction and timber harvest at the same time.	3) The Enbridge pipeline project has been in process for close to a decade with many challenges with unknown outcomes making it difficult to impossible to schedule timber sales around the pipeline timeline.
5	Nov 5	Minnesota Forest Industries (MFI)	Page 8 - Consider removing the reference to a paper mill (Verso) in Duluth considering that they closed this year.  Page 10 – The colors on Map 2 are very difficult to interpret.	Thank you for reviewing the plan and providing your comments. Page 8 correction has been made.  County Tax forfeit lands are identified by a tan color while the State of MN is light green and USFS lands are dark green
6	Nov 5	Minnesota Forest Industries (MFI)	Page 35 - The Age Class Distribution section does an excellent job of telling the story of how we got here today. We have spent two decades racing to manage old early successional stands before they fall down. In the future we will be harvesting these species at much younger ages. This may present a different suite of challenges, including site level diversity, snag development, coarse woody debris retention and others. But there will also be much better forest health, resiliency to disturbance, increased carbon sequestration, and better quality fiber for mills.	Duly noted.
7	Nov 5	Minnesota Forest Industries (MFI)	Pages 36, 98 and Table D-4 – The County has done a very good job of addressing the backlog of old aspen before it converted or degraded. Looking at the current age class distribution by acres and it is readily apparent that in order to achieve a balanced age class distribution, essentially all aspen over current age 41 needs to be harvested in the next 10 years. Unless this is accomplished there will be a 10 year low that will carry forward for years to come. Table D-4 suggests that in 2030 there will be 4,931 acres that will not be harvested by then, which creates a 10 year age class of 17,770 acres. That is already 25% below the mean for the other age classes, and will create a timber output constraint for that decade that carries through time, as seen in the table.	The plan calls for harvesting approximately 20,000 aspen acres in the next 10-year period with a portion of those acres coming from ingrowth. Certain stands in the 31-40 year class will grow into a merchantable size and be harvested over the next 10 years. Primary candidates will be those on poorer sites.

8	Nov 5	Minnesota Forest Industries (MFI)	<p>We are concerned that the County will not be able to even harvest 17,770 acres. Our experience has been that there are many reasons why those last remaining first generation of second growth forests haven't been harvested yet. They often have very poor access, are small stands, have low volume, or have already been converted to other forest types. It will be difficult to sell many of them, and the more degraded they are the harder they will be to regenerate back to aspen.</p> <p>Consider making every effort to manage all of the 22,701 acres over current age 41 in the next decade and you may minimize the low decade. And then in the future additional attempts can be made to balance the age classes even further.</p>	<p>You are correct. Inoperability, no access, small acreages, low volume and conversion to other cover types has led to lack of management for some of those stands.</p> <p>If feasible, every effort will be made to manage those mature aspen acres per the forest plan.</p>
9	Nov 5	Minnesota Forest Industries (MFI)	<p>Page 57 – The Plan indicates that “All cross country ski trails are also hunter walking trails”. Other counties have experienced problems with this strategy. Hunters want a lot of young forest near hunter walking trails to attract grouse, but skiers want less management and an older forest condition. This has led to significant conflict. To prevent or address this we suggest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use signage to inform the skiers that active management attracts game for wildlife viewing and the enjoyment of other trail users.</li> <li>• Do not leave aspen buffers along the trails – it creates problems for trail maintenance when they fall. Clumped longer-lived trees and designing sales to limit their apparent size is preferable.</li> <li>• Consider putting any future skiing trails through longer-lived hardwood and conifer stands or reserve areas.</li> </ul>	<p>Cass County sponsors 36 KM of ski trails. Trail maintenance and grooming are completed by the volunteers of the Lake Country Nordic Ski Club. Funding for this trail system is through the Great Minnesota Ski Pass Program.</p> <p>Along with mowing the ski trails , the Land Dept also mows the 18.7 miles of the Vermillion, Thunder Hollow , Old Grade and Homebrook Hunter walking trails.</p>

10	Nov 5	Minnesota Forest Industries (MFI)	<p>Page 72 - General Timber Management Policy states that, “The County will implement this approach by managing for acres and not resource volume at both the stand and overall landscape levels”. While we understand that from the forest planning aspect, the forest products industry needs estimated volume data in order to make projections on future raw materials supplies. When analyzing the cost/benefit of mill investments we need to evaluate how much timber, and of what species, there will be in the future. Towards that end we ask that the County add a table to the plan using historic and projected cords/acre of management to provide an estimate of cords by species by decade for the planning period.</p>	<p>This data is available in the Cass County Land Department Annual Report. Reports for the last 10 years can be found on the Land Dept webpage <a href="http://www.co.cass.mn.us/government/county_directory/land_department/index.php">http://www.co.cass.mn.us/government/county_directory/land_department/index.php</a></p> <p>Over the last 10 years, aspen has averaged 20.4 cords per acre.</p>
11	Oct 22	M. Tauber	<p>On the ground conditions very obviously display an increasing lack of diversity in county managed forests, creating domino effects on health and integrity. Aspen is by far the dominant species now, most areas have been harvested too often. Shortened harvest intervals along with management goals for increasing poplar production serve only to exacerbate this problem as slower growing species cannot regenerate as quickly as the poplars. The optimistic “Anticipated changes” which tout increasing diversity are unrealistic as a result, and short term economic benefits to the County will likely maintain pressure to overharvest, long term goals and objectives notwithstanding.</p> <p>Clonal qualities of aspen make creation of larger homogeneous stands inadvisable because they become increasingly more vulnerable to disease pressure.</p>	<p>Thank you for reviewing the plan and providing your comments</p> <p>There are two different components used when evaluating forest diversity across the land base . The variety of tree species but also the variety of age classes within each species.</p> <p>An analysis of the forest inventory data shows the number of aspen acres decreased by 5% over the past 30 years. Further analysis shows that the percentage of aspen acres in 2020 is just 7% higher than the aspen acres in 1951. Aspen, red maple and birch are short lived species and reach maturity at 40-45 years old.</p> <p>The average stand size for all cover types is 12 acres.</p>

12	Oct 22	M. Tauber	<p>Table 1. Distribution of Cover Types on Cass County Tax-Forfeited - The county-generated numbers should be enough to evince a need to re-evaluate harvest intervals and address inconsistent management of pine stand regeneration. Poplar now makes up over 2/3 of the harvestable timber in the county. White Pines are found at the opposite end of the spectrum, and at 0.2% it would seem that this part of the management plan should have MUCH more emphasis.</p>	<p>The County always favors planting the most appropriate tree species on the most appropriate site. This is the primary benefit of the native plant community data.</p> <p>Challenges with planting conifers includes competition from grass and brush as well as damage from deer browse. An effective management tool to control grass and brush competition is through the use of herbicides, but the County has made an effort to minimize herbicide use. See Comment #17</p>
13	Oct 22	M. Tauber	<p>Ordinance addressing motorized vehicle operation on County-administered lands - These are perfectly sensible Ordinances but are meaningless without enforcement. The unwillingness to address damage created by 4-wheelers has allowed the Foothills and Spider Lake areas to become perfect examples of the need for increased enforcement. If the general public were to ever see the extent of the damage there would be appropriate outrage. USFS and the state use enforcement effectively to protect resources, the county must also.</p>	<p>The Spider Lake Trail System and the Foothills State Forest are managed and maintained by the MN DNR . Cass County managed forest lands are intermingled within the State ownership.</p> <p>Total off highway vehicle (OHV) registrations in Minnesota for 2019 are 329,275. New OHV registrations through September 3, 2020 are approximately 24,000 machines.</p> <p>There is no doubt the forests in Cass County have seen increased motorized recreation use. Resource managers from both agencies have had onsite meetings to discuss the issues caused by this increased use and will continue to collaborate on management and enforcement strategies.</p>
14	Oct 22	M. Tauber	<p>The Tax Forfeit Settlement allowing up to 30% retained by the Land Department to finance reforestation - This 30 % figure amounts to roughly a half million dollars every year, more of which should be put to efficient use to rectify the lack of diversity in the county's forests. It is critically important to increase diversity, and encouraging non-aspen type regeneration more often will aid forest health and resilience.</p>	<p>Per Minnesota Statute 282.08 (4)(1) "The county board may annually by resolution set aside no more than 30 percent of the receipts remaining to be used for forest development on tax-forfeited land and dedicated memorial forests, to be expended under the supervision of the county board. It must be expended only on projects improving the health and management of the forest resource."</p>

				<p>The forest development fund covers the costs of seedlings, site preparation, planting, brush control, bud capping as well as forest road maintenance and aerial photography.</p> <p>Regeneration surveys are showing the aspen stands are more diverse than one might think. If a stand contains more than 51% aspen, it is typed as aspen, but could contain up to 49% of other species like birch, maple and oak. Species diversity is important to overall forest health.</p>
15	Oct 22	M. Tauber	<p>Undivided Ownership - This is another astonishingly brazen modern-day taking of treaty resources, apparently enabled by poor legal advice. In addition, it is a conflict of interest for the county to ever identify these owners when to do so will almost certainly place the county into litigation. It is amazing FSC would certify Cass County forestry with this policy in place. Any legal review of the Treaty of 1855 will eventually reaffirm the signatory tribes retention of the right to hunt, fish and gather on the land that Cass County now claims the right to manage. This management directly affects these issues. Best to plan to quickly modify this Management Plan when these rights are reaffirmed. It may be advisable to create a fund to pay for possible legal liabilities.</p>	<p>Hunting and fishing rules and regulations are administered and enforced by the Minnesota Dept Of Natural Resources. The county manages for habitat.</p>
16	Oct 22	M. Tauber	<p>Under Habitat and Wildlife Policy: "No person or group of persons shall destroy native aquatic or upland vegetation, create erosion problems, or cause an increase in sediment deposition into lakes, rivers, or type 1-8 wetlands." It would be interesting to see how this policy applies to irrigated agricultural interests. A good case in point would be Byron Township. Again, this is a good policy but worth little without enforcement.</p>	<p>This policy applies to Cass County managed forest lands.</p> <p>In 2017 the County acquired nearly 2000 acres of Potlatch land in Byron and Poplar townships. The acquisition was funded by an Outdoor Heritage grant through the Minnesota Deer Hunters Association. The primary goal of this project was to prevent conversion of these lands to an agricultural use and permanently protect water quality and wildlife habitat in this area. The project received strong support from locally elected leaders.</p>

17	Oct 22	M. Tauber	<p>In the Reforestation segment of the plan, no consideration is given to the effects herbicides and like chemicals have upon the soil biology. As seen with chemical agriculture, soil fertility is continually diminished due to depletion of soil microbial diversity, which directly affects organic matter. All foresters understand that the development of a particular forest type is heavily dependent on the soil conditions, and that some species will not regenerate without their associated microbial and native plant communities.</p>	<p>Through the County's forest certification program, the use of herbicides has been minimized on county managed forest lands. The County does not aerially apply herbicides.</p> <p>Herbicides are used for site preparation to control grass and brush competition on conifer sites. In the last several years, Resource Managers have moved away from a chemical release to control brush competition towards a mechanical or hand release using brush saws. This strategy results in a more targeted release of the seedling verses a broadcast herbicide application and will allow species to retain their associated microbial and native plant communities. It will take a few more years before results are determined.</p>
18	Nov 2	S. Reed	<p>As a property owner in Cass County, I would appreciate careful consideration of the following issues. The timber harvest should respect the same setbacks as property owners do. It seems only fair to everyone that this be consistent in the county.</p> <p>When logging next to public roads, establish a buffer strip no less than 50 feet to protect the visual beauty of the area. Information should be available on active and planned logging as a public record that is easily accessible. Approved land use for parcels in a general area or township should be taken into consideration when deciding when to harvest. There should be attempts to minimize multiple uses in a short timeframe, i.e. pipeline construction and timber harvest at the same time.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments. The Cass County Land Department will continue to follow the MN Voluntary Site-Level Forest Management Guidelines for setbacks from water bodies. The recommended Riparian Management Zone (RMZ) for a non-trout lake greater than 10 acres is 120'. For more information on the Forest Management Guidelines, their development, training and outreach, please see the following website. <a href="https://mn.gov/frc/forest-management-guidelines.html">https://mn.gov/frc/forest-management-guidelines.html</a> The difference in setbacks for private property owners compared to timber harvesting on public lands is due to the differing type and duration of impacts.</p> <p>2) Buffers along roadways are highly wind prone and, therefore, provide a maintenance issue for road authorities especially for short lived species (Aspen, Birch and Red Maple) and shallow rooted species (Basswood, Spruce and Balsam Fir). Timber harvest sites can be perceived as unsightly at least until the regeneration is established in a couple of years.</p> <p>3) The Enbridge pipeline project has been in process for close to a decade with many challenges with unknown outcomes making it difficult to impossible to schedule timber sales around the pipeline timeline.</p>

19	Oct 30	B. Tutch	<p>I am a property owner on Andrus Lake in Cass County. I found out that there has been a contract awarded to harvest timber very near our lake. After some research I have found that the setbacks are intended to be very small. This will destroy the natural beauty of the area surrounding Andrus.</p> <p>There are public roads throughout the area and I want to make sure that we keep a buffer width between the roads and logging area to no less than 50 feet as is customary in previous logging efforts.</p> <p>Also, I would like to see the buffer from the lakeshore to the logging area at least 50 feet, and hopefully 100 feet to maintain the view from the lake and to minimize erosion caused by the diminished tree and brush cover.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments. The Cass County Land Department will continue to follow the MN Voluntary Site-Level Forest Management Guidelines for setbacks from water bodies. The recommended Riparian Management Zone (RMZ) for a non-trout lake greater than 10 acres is 120'. For more information on the Forest Management Guidelines, their development, training and outreach, please see the following website. <a href="https://mn.gov/frc/forest-management-guidelines.html">https://mn.gov/frc/forest-management-guidelines.html</a> The difference in setbacks for private property owners compared to timber harvesting on public lands is due to the differing type and duration of impacts.</p> <p>Buffers along roadways are highly wind prone and, therefore, provide a maintenance issue for road authorities especially for short lived species (Aspen, Birch and Red Maple) and shallow rooted species (Basswood, Spruce and Balsam Fir). Timber harvest sites can be perceived as unsightly at least until the regeneration is established in a couple of years.</p>
20	Nov 3	V. Williams	<p>How can loggers have a different timber harvest set back? The timber harvest should respect the same setbacks as property owners do. It seems only fair to everyone that this be consistent in the county.</p> <p>When logging next to public roads, establish a buffer strip no less than 50 feet to protect the visual beauty of the area.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments. The Cass County Land Department will continue to follow the MN Voluntary Site-Level Forest Management Guidelines for setbacks from water bodies. The recommended Riparian Management Zone (RMZ) for a non-trout lake greater than 10 acres is 120'. For more information on the Forest Management Guidelines, their development, training and outreach, please see the following website. <a href="https://mn.gov/frc/forest-management-guidelines.html">https://mn.gov/frc/forest-management-guidelines.html</a> The difference in setbacks for private property owners compared to timber harvesting on public lands is due to the differing type and duration of impacts.</p> <p>Buffers along roadways are highly wind prone and, therefore, provide a maintenance issue for road authorities especially for short lived species (Aspen, Birch and Red Maple) and shallow rooted species (Basswood, Spruce and Balsam Fir). Timber</p>

			<p>Don't log woods surrounding our Andrus lake its small enough. Logging that area will ruin our view and there's no way to get rid of the image that we have in our mind how beautiful it was if you log it.</p> <p>Information should be available on active and planned logging as a public record that is easily accessible. Approved land use for parcels in a general area or township should be taken into consideration when deciding when to harvest.</p> <p>There should be attempts to minimize multiple uses in a short timeframe, i.e. pipeline construction and timber harvest at the same time.</p>	<p>harvest sites can be perceived as unsightly at least until the regeneration is established in a couple of years.</p> <p>In large part, the size and location of timber sales is dictated by past land management activities and or environmental disturbances. For example, the 1969 tornado near Outing, MN created a large but geographically concentrated area of timber that is all the same age and ready for management. The size of individual harvest blocks is typically limited by adjacent younger stands and/or topographical features. Taking those issues into consideration, the Cass County Land Department disperses timber sale activities widely across county managed lands.</p> <p>An ongoing list of active and upcoming harvests is available on the County website. Please see Forestry Web Mapping <a href="http://cassweb3.co.cass.mn.us/link/jsfe/index.aspx?defaultRole=Forestry">http://cassweb3.co.cass.mn.us/link/jsfe/index.aspx?defaultRole=Forestry</a></p> <p>The Enbridge pipeline project has been in process for close to a decade with many challenges with unknown outcomes making it difficult to impossible to schedule timber sales around the pipeline timeline.</p>
21	Nov 2	D. Tull	<p>Impact on Wildlife Under the Current Management Plan - There is widespread logging of much of the non-privately owned land in Crooked Lake Township, located in the SE corner of Cass County. My observations are anecdotal, yet profound. Wolf populations have disappeared. Five years ago we had at least two active wolf populations in our area. At night their howls became an iconic symbol of where we lived. One pack was located west of Andrus Lake and the other pack was East of Snowshoe Lake. Both areas have been logged and the wolf population is gone.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments. Per the Minnesota Wolf Population Update 2020, the estimated 2019-20 mid-winter wolf population is 2,700 while the minimum population goal is 1,600.</p> <p>Wolves are more likely to inhabit an area because of an available food source like whitetail deer. When the deer leave, eventually the wolves will leave. When the deer come back, the wolves will follow. Timber harvesting does not negatively impact wolf populations. Timber harvest does positively affect whitetail deer populations which is good for wolves.</p>

22	Nov 2	D. Tull	<p>Blue Heron population has been displaced by the logging. We had two historically active Heron rookeries near Andrus Lake. They choose the tops of Norway Pines for their rookery. Even though the loggers leave the pine trees, we have observed that within two years of logging the Heron abandon their locations due to the exposure. Additionally, we observe much fewer Heron feeding along the shore of Andrus Lake. The local population of Heron appears to have been significantly impacted by logging.</p>	<p>The Land Department staff noticed what appeared to be a heron rookery on the east side of Co Rd. 155 when setting up a timber sale in April 2019. That location was originally to be part of the timber sale but was not included because of the herons.</p> <p>Land Department staff contacted DNR Non-game Wildlife out of Bemidji to ask them about this apparent rookery and they did not have it in their records. The DNR was then given the GPS coordinates for the rookery. Land Department staff then asked the DNR what kind of protections from timber harvesting they had for heron rookeries and were told that there were no formal protections.</p> <p>However, the Land Department staff decided to leave that portion of the timber sale as a reserve and restricted harvest operations to after July 1st to avoid disturbance during the nesting season and the DNR agreed with that decision. In April of 2020 Land Department staff inspected the rookery location and found it to be vacant. The operations on this timber sale did not commence until September 17th of 2020 which is well past the nesting season.</p>
23	Nov 2	D. Tull	<p>Dangers of a Monoculture Forest - The current logging strategy is to remove all tree species except the pines. Because of their competitive advantage the forest regrowth becomes a dense thicket of poplar. They repopulate the area on a 12" spacing - in fact so closely spaced that even the deer have a tough time moving. This is no longer a healthy forest, instead a wildfire danger.</p>	<p>There are two different components used when evaluating forest diversity across the land base . The variety of tree species but also the variety of age classes within each species.</p> <p>Regeneration surveys are showing the aspen stands are more diverse than one might think. If a stand contains more than 51% aspen, it is typed as aspen, but could contain up to 49% of other species like birch, maple and oak. Species diversity is important to overall forest health.</p> <p>An analysis of the forest inventory data shows the number of aspen acres decreased by 5% over the past 30 years. Further analysis shows that the percentage of aspen acres in 2020 is just 7% higher than the aspen acres in 1951. Aspen, red maple</p>

			<p>Furthermore, I have observed areas with poplar regrowth to be vastly more susceptible to Tent Caterpillar infestations. We never had a serious problem with tent caterpillars until the poplar reforestation.</p> <p>There is no natural regeneration of the White and Red Pine trees because little light reaches the ground.</p> <p>Other slower growing species, i. e. oak and maple will never reestablish if the plan is to harvest every 30 years. Any forest resources plan that results in a monocultural forest is seriously flawed.</p>	<p>and birch are short lived species and reach maturity at 40-45 years old.</p> <p>Per the Forest Health section of the MN DNR: Forest Tent Caterpillars “primarily feed on aspen, birch, basswood and oak, populations peak very 10-16 years, defoliation causes little damage, because a second set of leaves develop by mid-July”.  <a href="https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/assistance/backyard/treecare/forest_health/ftc/ftc-FactSheet-2014.pdf">https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/assistance/backyard/treecare/forest_health/ftc/ftc-FactSheet-2014.pdf</a></p> <p>Hazel brush is the biggest inhibitor to the natural regeneration of White and Red Pine.</p> <p>There are no species in this plan that are harvested every 30 years.</p>
24	Nov 2	D. Tull	<p>The Widespread Logging Strategy has Subjected Us to an Esthetic Atrocity - When we retired from our careers in the Twin Cities we moved fulltime to Andrus Lake, in large part due to the "North Woods" environment. Our daughter traveled from North Carolina to enjoy the beauty of the forest, notably a fantastic stretch of maple forest on the ATV trail between Andrus Lake and Outing. That forest has been replaced by a poplar thicket.</p> <p>The current forest management plan has robbed us of something irreplaceable and turned us into sharecroppers for the forest products industry and the Cass County Land Department.</p>	<p>The 1969 tornado near Outing, MN created a large but geographically concentrated area of timber that is all the same age and ready for management.</p> <p>The tax forfeit lands in Cass County are managed in trust for the taxing districts which include the County, Cities, Townships and School Districts. While there certainly is an economic component of tax relief to those taxing districts coming from these lands through timber sales. Other benefits of this public forest include habitat, clean water and recreational opportunities.</p>

25	Nov 2	D. Tull	<p>Logging Strategy Violates State &amp; County Environmental Standards - A logging strategy which allows clear cutting down to the shore of Andrus Lake, or any other lake in Cass County which the Minnesota DNR has classified as a "Natural Environment" is the epitome of hypocrisy.</p> <p>The Forest Resources Plan must adhere to the intent of the DNR lake classifications. In fact, the Management Guidelines should require a logging setback on Natural Environment lakes to be greater than the 150' setback required by the DNR.</p>	<p>The Cass County Land Department does not have a logging strategy that allows clearcutting down to the shore of Andrus Lake or any other lake in Cass County. The Land Department will continue to follow the MN Voluntary Site-Level Forest Management Guidelines for setbacks from water bodies. The recommended Riparian Management Zone (RMZ) for a non-trout lake greater than 10 acres is 120'. For more information on the Forest Management Guidelines, their development, training and outreach, please see the following website. <a href="https://mn.gov/frc/forest-management-guidelines.html">https://mn.gov/frc/forest-management-guidelines.html</a></p> <p>The difference in setbacks for private property owners compared to timber harvesting on public lands is due to the differing type and duration of impacts.</p>
26	Oct 23	D. Wardell	<p>Deep Portage lake abuts to the Deep Portage Reserve, over 7200 acres of state and county land. About 15 years ago gates were installed to prevent motorized vehicles to have access to the land. Contracted loggers had access and used the roads and built new roads to remove their product. Once the logging was completed the gates were put back in place. This year we have had several large rainfalls. This caused erosion in the roads that the loggers had made and used. The erosion is still visible today making many of the roads impassable still today for emergency responders.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments.</p>
27	Oct 23	D. Wardell	<p>The good news is that some of the roads that were used for logging 15 years ago have grown back with grasses and flowers. These areas look nice now, but future logging is on the way and these roads will be damaged again. We need the logging companies to repair and return the roads to the condition they were in before they logged.</p>	<p>A standard regulation in every Cass County Land Department timber permit is that "Roads and trails are to be left in as good or better than presale condition".</p>

28	Oct 23	D. Wardell	<p>I have collected over 30 signatures from hunters, landowners and taxpayers that would like to see the gates opened. We understand the possible misuse of the roads in the reserve by ATVs in the spring and summer time. We are asking that the gate be opened two weeks prior to hunting season. Having them open to ATV and trucks would help several of us hunters that are not as mobile as we use to be but still love to hunt and enjoy the land. Many of these hunters are veterans and some are disabled vets. The DNR regulates the times we can drive our ATV's during the deer hunting season and most of the time is in the dark and are not able to drive at a high rate of speed which is the main cause of damage to the roads. Closing the gates after the snowmobile season would be a good compromise. We would appreciate any help you can give us, and I'm sending you a copy of the signatures that I collected for your viewing if needed.</p>	<p>In 2011, the Deep Portage Learning Center was designated as an area with limitations and as non-motorized. Public consultation was conducted to seek input from local property owners, the Town Board, area land managers and neighbors. Letters of notification were sent to landowners who own property within a half mile of this property as input to the process is very important. The County Board considers designation requests and neighborhood decisions. In September of 2018, 157 acres in Section 35 of Birch Lake Township were designated as non-motorized following public consultation and County Board consideration.</p> <p>There are 20 miles of designated hunter walking trails on Cass County managed lands. All cross country ski trails are also hunter walking trails and non-motorized. Further, except for designated use by hunters with disabilities, most of Deep Portage is set aside for non-motorized trail use. Approximately 28,000 acres lie within these various non-motorized areas; this is 11% of the entire tax forfeited land base or 15% of the forested lands.</p>
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## **Appendix, Full Text of Comments**

## **Comment 1.**

Thu, Oct 29, 2020 at 4:36 PM

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts, concerns and suggestions regarding the Forest Resources Management Plan for Cass County. Please accept the following comments. You are welcome to contact me for clarification or if there is a need to elaborate.

From the Executive Summary:

“Human values and ethics play a dominant role in directing management initiatives and setting goals.” However, it seems that property owners are being left out of the equation. I believe that there should be considerable improvement in communication, including, but not limited to the following:

- 1) Due to unique land ownership demographics in the county with a high percentage of nonresidential properties, all public hearings and requests for public input should only be conducted during May through September.
- 2) An ongoing list of active & upcoming harvests should be available on the website and include the name of the Forest Resource Manager responsible, the logging company on the permit, estimated dates of active logging operations, as well as designated access points for logging trucks traveling in and out of handing areas.
- 3) Development of a task force comprised of property owners (if possible of all property classifications; residential, seasonal/recreational, commercial, etc.) to provide input to strategy and location, and act as a buffer to field and explain objectives to various interested parties. The goal of the group would be to act as a liaison between the land department and the public, and would allow two way communications.
- 4) Provide interpersonal communication skills training for the Land Department employees as they are working with the public and need to represent the county in a courteous and professional manner. Skills training will equip employees to handle a variety of situations confidently and reduce friction with the public.

## **Comment 2.**

Harvesting concerns for encroaching on public and personal enjoyment:

- 5) There is a great inconsistency with the ability to harvest unlimited timber near any form of water and what property owners must follow for building restrictions in the form of setbacks. We rely on each Forest Manager to use their best judgement or apply various methods to determine proximity to the water. I think there should be a standardized expectation that each body of water should adhere to equal or greater setbacks that land owners are required to follow. It seems that the Land department should respect the same guidelines and this would reduce a great amount of frustration.
- 6) Currently there is no required buffer for land harvested adjacent to public roads. I would like to see a reasonable buffer strip of 50 feet from the road right of way. This is crucial to the aesthetics required for successful tourism in the area. Due to a large portion of jobs in the Leisure and Hospitality industry, it seems they should receive consideration of preserving the visual impact of our forest roads.

7) If modification to buffer zones aren't feasible, I would ask that consideration is made for select harvesting only aspen close to the buffers, or developing a buffer subsection to harvest only aspen and leave hardwoods for a respectful area.

I feel I need to stress that I am not fundamentally opposed to logging. However, I do think that it can be done BETTER and the property owners should be seen as an additional resource and not an inconvenience. The ability to provide revenue for our area is greatly appreciated, but there is definitely room for improvement in communication and respect to the needs of property owners. Thank you for providing the format to share my ideas.

**Comment 3.**

Tue, Nov 3, 2020 at 2:00 PM

I would like to add one additional item to my concerns. Honestly, I'm not quite sure the best way to describe it in terms for a suggestion to future harvesting. In the area where I live, near Andrus lake, there has been a very large amount of the land available for harvest that either has or will be harvested in a short period of time—less than 5 years. Instead of doing such a large section in a concentrated area, is there an efficient way to spread that out? The Land Department Supervisor indicated that the age of the trees is solely their determining factor in selecting parcels for harvest. If each forest is earmarked for harvest every 30 or 40 years, why not space that out every 5 years so a parcel is harvested in xxx number of square miles. It would push the harvest out a bit on some stands until a new schedule could be in place, but harvesting would begin in sections that haven't been harvested in a while. Essentially, the harvesting would be more widespread throughout the county in any given year, but no single area would be overwhelmed with loss of mature trees. I'm not sure how to best determine a formula to follow on that, but the bottom line is that I would like to see limitations on how much harvesting can be done in a time span of about 5 years in a designated area. I understand that there is a large amount of land that is available for harvest, but being a bit more strategic would feel less invasive.

Respectfully,  
Barb Schmidt  
5138 Andrus Lake Road  
Outing, MN 56662

**Comment 4.**

Thu, Nov 5, 2020 at 7:58 AM

Hi, We are located at 5172 Andrus Lk. Rd, Outing, MN. Our home is in Brooklyn Park, MN. My wife and I have been property owners on Andrus Lake for over 20 years and are very concerned about all the logging that is taking place. As a property owner in Cass County, I would appreciate careful consideration of the following issues. The timber harvest should respect the same setbacks as property owners do. It seems only fair to everyone that this be consistent in the county. When logging next to public roads, establish a buffer strip no less than 50 feet to protect the visual beauty of the area. Information should be available on active and planned

logging as a public record that is easily accessible. Approved land use for parcels in a general area or township should be taken into consideration when deciding when to harvest. There should be attempts to minimize multiple uses in a short timeframe, i.e. pipeline construction and timber harvest at the same time. Sorry that this has arrived late, as we both had been in hospital.

Thank you  
Rudolph G. Holzinger

**Comments 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.**

November 5, 2020

**RE: Cass County Forest Resources Management Plan**

Minnesota Forest Industries, Inc. (MFI) is an association representing Minnesota's primary forest product companies. MFI and its member companies encourage conservation, proper forest management, and industry development that foster sound environmental stewardship, multiple use of timber lands, and sustainable, long-term timber supply.

MFI members include Bell Timber Inc., Boise Paper a subsidiary of Packaging Corporation of America, Hedstrom Lumber Company, Louisiana-Pacific Corporation, Minnesota Power, Molpus Timberlands and Management LLC, Norbord Minnesota, PotlatchDeltic Land and Lumber, Sappi Fine Paper North America, Savanna Pallets and UPM Blandin. MFI members are part of a nearly \$10 billion per year forest products industry which provides livelihoods for more than 30,000 families.

MFI supports active forest management by the Cass County Land Department. The Department and Dovetail Partners have done a commendable job of drafting the 2020 Cass County Forest Resources Management Plan. Please consider the following specific input from MFI:

- Page 8 - Consider removing the reference to a paper mill (Verso) in Duluth considering that they closed this year.
- Page 10 – The colors on Map 2 are very difficult to interpret.
- Page 35 - The Age Class Distribution section does an excellent job of telling the story of how we got here today. We have spent two decades racing to manage old early successional stands before they fall down. In the future we will be harvesting these species at much younger ages. This may present a different suite of challenges, including site level diversity, snag development, coarse woody debris retention and others. But there will also be much better forest health, resiliency to disturbance, increased carbon sequestration, and better quality fiber for mills.
- Pages 36, 98 and Table D-4 – The County has done a very good job of addressing the backlog of old aspen before it converted or degraded. Looking at the current age class distribution by acres and it is readily apparent that in order to achieve a balanced age class distribution, essentially all aspen over current age 41 needs to be harvested in the next 10 years. Unless this is accomplished there will be a 10 year low that will carry forward for years to come. Table D-4 suggests that in 2030 there will be 4,931 acres that will not be harvested by then, which creates a 10 year age class of 17,770 acres. That is already 25%

below the mean for the other age classes, and will create a timber output constraint for that decade that carries through time, as seen in the table.

We are concerned that the County will not be able to even harvest 17,770 acres. Our experience has been that there are many reasons why those last remaining first generation of second growth forests haven't been harvested yet. They often have very poor access, are small stands, have low volume, or have already been converted to other forest types. It will be difficult to sell many of them, and the more degraded they are the harder they will be to regenerate back to aspen.

Consider making every effort to manage all of the 22,701 acres over current age 41 in the next decade and you may minimize the low decade. And then in the future additional attempts can be made to balance the age classes even further.

- Page 57 – The Plan indicates that “All cross country ski trails are also hunter walking trails”. Other counties have experienced problems with this strategy. Hunters want a lot of young forest near hunter walking trails to attract grouse, but skiers want less management and an older forest condition. This has led to significant conflict. To prevent or address this we suggest:
  - Use signage to inform the skiers that active management attracts game for wildlife viewing and the enjoyment of other trail users.
  - Do not leave aspen buffers along the trails – it creates problems for trail maintenance when they fall. Clumped longer-lived trees and designing sales to limit their apparent size is preferable.
  - Consider putting any future skiing trails through longer-lived hardwood and conifer stands or reserve areas.
- Page 72 - General Timber Management Policy states that, “The County will implement this approach by managing for acres and not resource volume at both the stand and overall landscape levels”. While we understand that from the forest planning aspect, the forest products industry needs estimated volume data in order to make projections on future raw materials supplies. When analyzing the cost/benefit of mill investments we need to evaluate how much timber, and of what species, there will be in the future. Towards that end we ask that the County and Dovetail Partners add a table to the plan using historic and projected cords/acre of management to provide an estimate of cords by species by decade for the planning period.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Cass County Forest Resources Management Plan. We look forward to working with the county on plan implementation in the future.

Sincerely,

Rick Horton  
Director of Forest Policy

## Comments 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.

10-22-20

Comments on Cass County Forest Resources Management Plan

Overall this is a beautiful document and can be a fine management plan if modified... and if the managers have the fortitude to follow it.

While there are many good and sound strategies in this plan, the point of this particular commentary is to draw attention to areas with deficiencies. Areas of the plan with little to no conflicting opinion are not generally included, for brevity.

“ strategic principles: • Long-term forest integrity is the foundation of all management: Retaining forest stability, defined as maintenance of forest integrity, is essential to the ongoing health, diversity, and productivity of the forest.”

- On the ground conditions very obviously display an increasing lack of diversity in county managed forests, creating domino effects on health and integrity. Aspen is by far the dominant species now, most areas have been harvested too often. Shortened harvest intervals along with management goals for increasing poplar production serve only to exacerbate this problem as slower growing species cannot regenerate as quickly as the poplars. The optimistic “Anticipated changes” which tout increasing diversity are unrealistic as a result, and short term economic benefits to the County will likely maintain pressure to overharvest, long term goals and objectives notwithstanding. Clonal qualities of aspen make creation of larger homogeneous stands inadvisable because they become increasingly more vulnerable to disease pressure.

“It is the mission of the Cass County Land Department to: “professionally manage the County’s forest land base within the confines of Minnesota Statute 282 and to improve the quality and value of the County’s forest land resources.””

- The mission statement here is above reproach

From : Table 1. Distribution of Cover Types on Cass County Tax-Forfeited Land

Aspen 120,675 acres - 46.8% - almost half of all “managed lands” are now Poplar

Red Pine 10,391 acres - 4.0% - the next most populous species - less than one tenth of Poplar

Industrial Development 933 acres - 0.4% - twice as many acres as the White Pine left standing

White Pine 596 acres - 0.2%

- The above county-generated numbers should be enough to evince a need to re-evaluate harvest intervals and address inconsistent management of pine stand regeneration. Poplar now makes up over  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the harvestable timber in the county. White Pines are found at the opposite end of the spectrum, and at 0.2% it would seem that this part of the management plan should have MUCH more emphasis.

“B. It shall be a violation of this Ordinance for any person to operate a motor vehicle on County-administered land within fifty (50) feet of a lake, river or type 1-8 wetland except on county administered forest trails.

C. It shall also be a violation of this Ordinance for any person to destroy native aquatic or upland vegetation, create erosion problems, or cause an increase in sediment deposition into lakes, rivers, or type 1-8 wetlands.

D. It shall be a violation of this Ordinance for any person to operate a motor vehicle on County-administered forest trails that are posted: “CLOSED TO MOTORIZED VEHICLES”. E. This Section may be enforced by Cass County enforcement personnel or other jurisdictions by mutual agreement.”

- These are perfectly sensible Ordinances but are meaningless without enforcement. The unwillingness to address damage created by 4-wheelers has allowed the Foothills and Spider Lake areas to become perfect examples of the need for increased enforcement. If the general public were to ever see the extent of the damage there would be appropriate outrage. USFS and the state use enforcement effectively to protect resources, the county must also.

“The Tax Forfeit Settlement is the amount remaining after expenses have been subtracted from annual income. The County is required by law to distribute the Settlement as follows: up to 30% can be retained by the Land Department to finance reforestation;”

- This 30 % figure amounts to roughly a half million dollars every year, more of which should be put to efficient use to rectify the lack of diversity in the county’s forests. It is critically important to increase diversity, and encouraging non-aspen type regeneration more often will aid forest health and resilience.

#### “Undivided Ownership

A small portion of county administered tax-forfeit lands include what is known as undivided ownership. In nearly all cases these are lands formerly owned by members of the Leech Lake Band of Chippewa in which multiple descendants of the original owners now share increasingly small percentages of ownership in the entire parcel. Many of the subsequent owners are not known. After securing legal advice, the county is managing these lands as part of its overall forest management program. At some point, if and when the undivided interest owners are identified, any revenues generated by management of these lands will be shared, based on ownership percentage, with these owners.”

- This is another astonishingly brazen modern-day taking of treaty resources, apparently enabled by poor legal advice. In addition, it is a conflict of interest for the county to ever identify these owners when to do so will almost certainly place the county into litigation. It is amazing FSC would certify Cass County forestry with this policy in place.

“Cass County has been continuously FSC® certified since 2001 and is audited annually to assess conformance with the FSC® standards.”

Forest Stewardship Council has a mission statement that includes:

- PRINCIPLE #3: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES’ RIGHTS - The legal and customary rights of indigenous peoples to own, use and manage their lands, territories, and resources shall be recognized and respected.

- Any legal review of the Treaty of 1855 will eventually reaffirm the signatory tribes retention of the right to hunt, fish and gather on the land that Cass County now claims the right to manage. This management directly affects these issues. Best to plan to quickly modify this Management Plan when these rights are reaffirmed. It may be advisable to create a fund to pay for possible legal liabilities.

#### Under Habitat and Wildlife Policy:

3. No person or group of persons shall destroy native aquatic or upland vegetation, create erosion

problems, or cause an increase in sediment deposition into lakes, rivers, or type 1-8 wetlands.  
- It would be interesting to see how this policy applies to irrigated agricultural interests. A good case in point would be Byron Township.  
- Again, this is a good policy but worth little without enforcement.

In the Reforestation segment of the plan, no consideration is given to the effects herbicides and like chemicals have upon the soil biology. As seen with chemical agriculture, soil fertility is continually diminished due to depletion of soil microbial diversity, which directly affects organic matter. All foresters understand that the development of a particular forest type is heavily dependent on the soil conditions, and that some species will not regenerate without their associated microbial and native plant communities.

If modifications concerning the above topics are made, and if the plan can then be followed, this document can become an admirable forest management plan. It will be key to stave off economic demands on the Land Department by local governments in the short term to see the resources preserved and enhanced for future generations. Also of high importance will be due diligence on the part of the managers, since a nice plan is only pretty paper without follow through in the field.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment.  
May the Creator bless you All,  
Mike Tauber

### **Comment 18.**

Nov 2, 3:20 PM

As a property owner in Cass County, I would appreciate careful consideration of the following issues. The timber harvest should respect the same setbacks as property owners do. It seems only fair to everyone that this be consistent in the county. When logging next to public roads, establish a buffer strip no less than 50 feet to protect the visual beauty of the area. Information should be available on active and planned logging as a public record that is easily accessible. Approved land use for parcels in a general area or township should be taken into consideration when deciding when to harvest. There should be attempts to minimize multiple uses in a short timeframe, i.e. pipeline construction and timber harvest at the same time.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the plan.

Sincerely,  
Scott M. Reed  
Owner - 5306 Andrus Lake Road, Outing, MN 56662

**Comment 19.**

Oct 30, 8:18AM

I am a property owner on Andrus Lake in Cass County. I found out that there has been a contract awarded to harvest timber very near our lake. After some research I have found that the setbacks are intended to be very small. This will destroy the natural beauty of the area surrounding Andrus. There are public roads throughout the area and I want to make sure that we keep a buffer width between the roads and logging area to no less than 50 feet as is customary in previous logging efforts. Also, I would like to see the buffer from the lakeshore to the logging area at least 50 feet, and hopefully 100 feet to maintain the view from the lake and to minimize erosion caused by the diminished tree and brush cover. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Bradley & JoAnne Tutch  
5314 Andrus Lake Road  
Outing, MN 56662

**Comment 20.**

Nov 3, 10:32 AM

As a property Resident in Cass County, How can loggers have a different timber harvest set back, the timber harvest should respect the same setbacks as property owners do, does environmental dept. services know this is being done I will cc: them. It seems only fair to everyone that this be consistent in the county. When logging next to public roads, establish a buffer strip no less than 50 feet to protect the visual beauty of the area you just let them log co 155 by the creek my god it looks like a farm field we live up north for a reason. There's 85 acers behind me that is tax forfeited and so much more, log that don't log woods surrounding our Andrus lake its small enough. Logging that area will ruin our view and there's no way to get rid of the image that we have in our mind how beautiful it was if you log it. Information should be available on active and planned logging as a public record that is easily accessible. Approved land use for parcels in a general area or township should be taken into consideration when deciding when to harvest. There should be attempts to minimize multiple uses in a short timeframe, i.e. pipeline construction and timber harvest at the same time.

Residents  
Vernon & Colleen Williams  
5312 Andrus lake Rd NE  
Outing MN 56662

## **Comments 21, 22, 23, 24, 25.**

Nov 2, 11:37AM

My name is Doug Tull. My wife, Lois and I are full time residents on Andrus Lake, Cass County, Minnesota. I understand that your organization has been contracted by Cass County as the Consultant to develop the next Land Management Plan. I would like to offer my input.

**Impact on Wildlife Under the Current Management Plan** - There is widespread logging of much of the non-privately owned land in Crooked Lake Township, located in the SE corner of Cass County. My observations are anecdotal, yet profound. Wolf populations have disappeared. Five years ago we had at least two active wolf populations in our area. At night their howls became an iconic symbol of where we lived. One pack was located west of Andrus Lake and the other pack was East of Snowshoe Lake. Both areas have been logged and the wolf population is gone.

Blue Heron population has been displaced by the logging. We had two historically active Heron rookeries near Andrus Lake. They choose the tops of Norway Pines for their rookery. Even though the loggers leave the pine trees, we have observed that within two years of logging the Heron abandon their locations due to the exposure. Additionally, we observe much fewer Heron feeding along the shore of Andrus Lake. The local population of Heron appears to have been significantly impacted by logging.

**Dangers of a Monoculture Forest** - The current logging strategy is to remove all tree species except the pines. Because of their competitive advantage the forest regrowth becomes a dense thicket of poplar. They repopulate the area on a 12" spacing - in fact so closely spaced that even the deer have a tough time moving. This is no longer a healthy forest, instead a wildfire danger. Furthermore, I have observed areas with poplar regrowth to be vastly more susceptible to Tent Caterpillar infestations. We never had a serious problem with tent caterpillars until the poplar reforestation. There is no natural regeneration of the White and Red Pine trees because little light reaches the ground. Other slower growing species, i. e. oak and maple will never reestablish if the plan is to harvest every 30 years. Any forest resources plan that results in a monocultural forest is seriously flawed.

**The Widespread Logging Strategy has Subjected Us to an Esthetic Atrocity** - When we retired from our careers in the Twin Cities we moved fulltime to Andrus Lake, in large part due to the "North Woods" environment. Our daughter traveled from North Carolina to enjoy the beauty of the forest, notably a fantastic stretch of maple forest on the ATV trail between Andrus Lake and Outing. That forest has been replaced by a poplar thicket. The current forest management plan has robbed us of something irreplaceable and turned us into sharecroppers for the forest products industry and the Cass County Land Department.

**Logging Strategy Violates State & County Environmental Standards** - A logging strategy which allows clear cutting down to the shore of Andrus Lake, or any other lake in Cass County which the Minnesota DNR has classified as a "Natural Environment" is the epitome of hypocrisy. The Forest Resources Plan must adhere to the intent of the DNR lake

classifications. In fact, the Management Guidelines should require a logging setback on Natural Environment lakes to be greater than the 150' setback required by the DNR.

I hope the next Forest Resources Management Plan you develop and submit to Cass County will consider my input. Any Forest Resources Plan must consider the interests of everyone - not just the interests of the forest industry and the County Land Department.

Thanks,  
Doug Tull  
Andrus Lake, Cass County

**Comments 26, 27, 28.**

Oct 23, 2020

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Doug Wardell. My wife and I along with our four children and now four grandchildren have enjoyed for many years coming to our cabin on Deep Portage Lake. We have not taken up full residence here.

As you may know, Deep Portage lake abuts to the Deep Portage Reserve, over 7200 acres of state and county land. We enjoy walking the roads and hiking through the woods of the reserve and my son and I hunt Portage Reserve each fall. Our hunting party has also used the reserve for over 50 years. During that time, we have seen great changes in the landscape. For years we were able to drive our trucks through the reserve causing little or no damage to the roads. Many times, we would clear the downfalls trees which it made it more accessible to the DNR and emergency vehicles when responding to fires or injured parties.

About 15 years ago gates were installed to prevent motorized vehicles to have access to the land. Contracted loggers had access and used the roads and built new roads to remove their product. Once the logging was completed the gates were put back in place. This year we have had several large rainfalls. This caused erosion in the roads that the loggers had made and used. The erosion is still visible today making many of the roads impassable still today for emergency responders.

The good news is that some of the roads that were used for logging 15 years ago have grown back with grasses and flowers. These areas look nice now, but future logging is on the way and these roads will be damaged again. We need the logging companies to repair and return the roads to the condition they were in before they logged.

I have talked to several hunters in the area that live and pay taxes in Cass County over the pass years. I have collected over 30 signatures from those hunters, landowners and taxpayers that would like to see the gates opened. We understand the possible misuse of the roads in the reserve by ATV in the spring and summer time. We are asking that the gate be opened two weeks prior to hunting season. Having them open to ATV and trucks would help several of us

hunters that are not as mobile as we use to be but still love to hunt and enjoy the land. Many of these hunters are veterans and some are disabled vets.

The DNR regulates the times we can drive our ATV's during the deer hunting season and most of the time is in the dark and are not able to drive at a high rate of speed which is the main cause of damage to the roads. Closing the gates after the snowmobile season would be a good compromise. We would appreciate any help you can give us, and I'm sending you a copy of the signatures that I collected for your viewing if needed.

Sincerely,  
Doug Wardell  
2017 Deep Portage Dr. Backus, MN 56435

Request to Cass County Board from Homeowners

As homeowners, tax payers, hunters and voters of Cass County, we request the county open the three gates to motorized vehicles entering from Deep Portage Dr. NW., into the Deep Portage Reserve two weeks prior to the annual deer rifle season.

Owners Names

J. Muelter	D. Tuchtenhagen	T. Keep
A. Lucas	E. Bergman	D. Keep
T. Lucas	J. Petschl	R. Keep
G. Lucas	A. Petschl	T. Jopp
D. Wardell	M. Bouchonville	B. Jopp
S. Wardell	P. Deibal	R. Schaefer
M. Wardell	L. Schuelke	S. Schaefer
S. Dellwo	D. Eckardt	W. Taylor
B. Dellwo	B.Lodin	J. Hughes
P. Dellwo	J. Lacho	

Other Hunters Signatures:

J. Petschl  
R. Petschl  
I. Petschl  
P. Bachman