

State Forestry Assessment and Strategy Summary

Montana

Overview:

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) was the lead agency for the Statewide Forest Resources Assessment and Strategy and coordinated with the Montana Statewide Assessment Working Group (SAWG), a consortium of over 40 interested stakeholders. Together they are responsible for the Assessment comprised of 11 sub-models based on the National Guidance objectives, and the strategy which identifies an action framework around five priority issues.

State Assessment of Forest Resources:

Montana's State Assessment of Forest Resources (SAFR) is a computer model fundamentally built on the national guidance provided through USDA Forest Service S&PF and National Association of State Foresters (NASF). The model is broken down into 11 different sub-models based on the proposed 11 national objectives. The 11 sub-models can be weighted together on a dynamic basis and modified to suit each different decision process.

Assessment Sub-models & National Priorities

A GIS sub-model, or spatial layer representing priority areas, was created for each of the 11 National Objectives by incorporating diverse sets of data. Nationally three consensus-based S&PF National Priorities and 11 subsequent Objectives have been identified by USFS and NASF. They include:

CONSERVE WORKING FOREST LANDS

1. *Identify and conserve high priority forest ecosystems and landscapes:*
2. *Actively and sustainably manage forests.*

PROTECT FORESTS FROM HARM

3. *Restore fire-adapted lands and reduce risk of wildfire impacts.*
4. *Identify, manage and reduce threats to forest and ecosystem health.*

ENHANCE PUBLIC BENEFITS FROM TREES AND FORESTS

5. *Protect and enhance water quality and quantity.*
6. *Improve air quality and conserve energy.*
7. *Assist communities in planning for and reducing wildfire risks.*
8. *Maintain and enhance the economic benefits and values of trees and forests.*
9. *Protect, conserve, and enhance wildlife and fish habitat.*
10. *Connect people to trees and forests, and engage them in environmental stewardship activities.*
11. *Manage and restore trees and forests to mitigate and adapt to global climate change.*

Critical Landscapes in Montana are defined as watersheds that meet a pre-defined set of criteria linked directly to the 11 National Objectives above. Although the 11 sub-models based on the National Objectives were designed to be used dynamically with different weighting methods for each need, Montana DNRC also developed an appropriate weighting system that incorporates all 11 sub-

models. They used the Delphi method which relies on panel of independent experts, the SAWG in this case, to weight the 11 National Objectives. After consecutive rounds of weighting with anonymous summary of expert findings, the group converges on "correct" answer. The result of this process is a map of Montana watersheds valued with unique, objective dependent scores that indicate relative priority. The areas with highest priority values were concentrated in western Montana.

Statewide Forest Resource Strategy:

The SAWG group identified five focus areas for the forests of Montana. The Strategy identifies indicators for each focus area, creates linkages between programs, defines strategies, action items, and eventual deliverables, and sets targets.

Focus Areas & Strategies

Forest biodiversity and resilient forests

- Manage ecosystem and biotic composition to achieve ecological integrity through recovery of species diversity, water quality and quantity, soil quality and function by implementing best available science, and adaptive management
- Engage community and interested parties in forest restoration and/or rehabilitation projects
- Increase terrestrial carbon sequestration on soil carbon sinks

Wildfire and public safety

- Mitigate the risk to people, property and infrastructure of catastrophic losses from fires in the wildland urban interface.
- Ensure effective fire response
- Ensure fuels reduction projects are implemented in priority areas to protect communities at risk
- Continue with wildland fire prevention programs

Forest products and biomass utilization

- Support forest products infrastructure in Montana
- Promote and facilitate development of woody biomass energy and non-energy infrastructure
- Provide supply of materials while emphasizing value of ecosystem goods and services obtained through sustainable land management

Sustainable urban forest landscapes

- Gain an enhanced understanding of urban forest resources in cities and towns across Montana
- Develop and provide educational resources and outreach opportunities to target audiences in critical landscapes
- Minimize catastrophic loss or threats to the urban forest resource
- Focus program resources on sustaining "managing" communities and assisting "developing" communities in critical landscapes

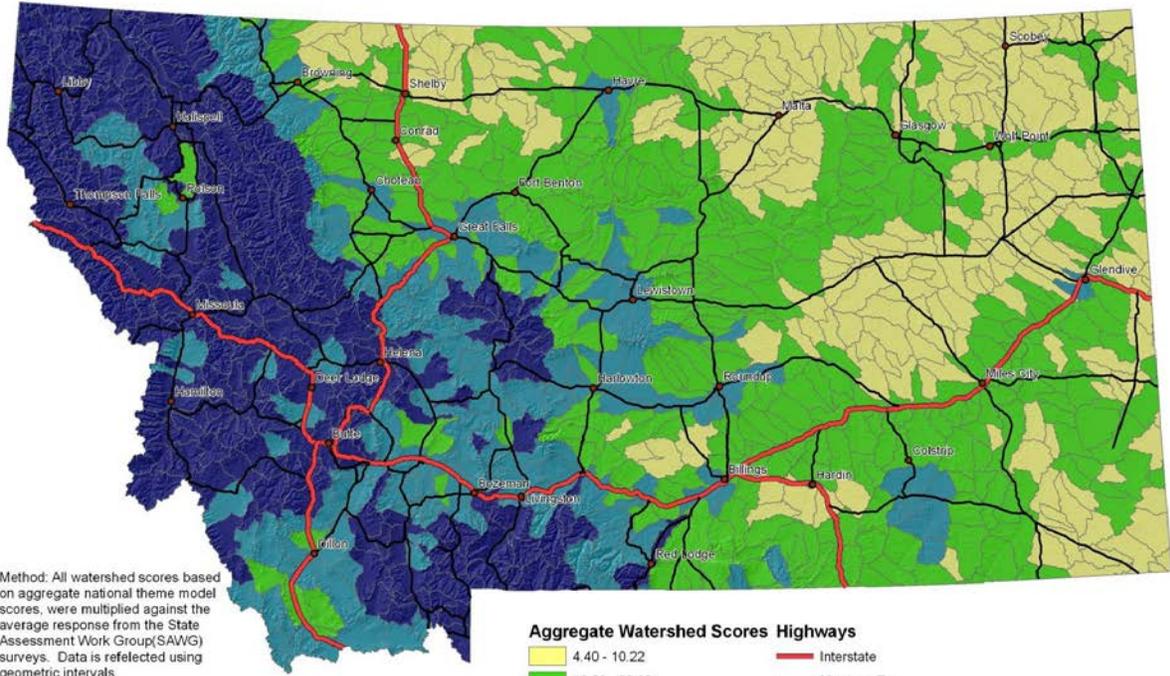
Changing forest ownership patterns

- Minimize fragmentation by prioritizing areas "at risk" for management

Strategy Implementation & Moving Forward:

Montana DNR intends to implement a decision support system that allows dynamic weighting of the 11 national objectives integrated within GIS. The system allows the State Forester or other decision-makers to modify the weighting of the 11 national objectives to customize the decision for a given funding criteria. In addition, the Strategy may become the planning mechanism to define landscape-level, cross-jurisdictional resource management opportunities across Montana.

Aggregate Watersheds based on 2010 SAWG Survey



Method: All watershed scores based on aggregate national theme model scores, were multiplied against the average response from the State Assessment Work Group (SAWG) surveys. Data is reflected using geometric intervals.

