

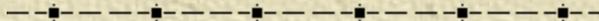


The Road to Forest Sustainability

The Gogebic County Experience



by Dick Bolen
Director of Forestry and Parks
Gogebic County, Michigan



History of Project



- Mid 1980s - County leaders met to begin the effort to define strategies for progress as a ongoing approach to economic development

History of Project



- 1991 – Natural Resources were top priority
 - Goal – Develop awareness of natural resources and management practices
 - Action to develop understanding of natural resources and environmental issues for successful tourism/recreational industry
 - Strategy too broad – could not identify or measure - no positive outcome

History of Project

- 1998 – Multi-year strategic planning by Gogebic County Economic Development Commission identify's forestry as number 1 development issue
 - National Forest Planning triggers interest/discussions
 - EDC brings together broad cross-section of community leaders to define a vision for the county
 - ◆ Project adopted to define sustainable Forestry for the county
 - Initiative driven by desire of community leaders to ensure local voices are heard concerning local forestry issues including ways to influence public awareness, education, conflict resolution and empowerment of the community to deal with outside influences

History of Project

- 1999 – February – as a first step a steering committee on natural resources was established to serve primarily as the data gathering and coordinating group
 - Committee agreed that the economic, ecological, and social aspects of forestry were to be considered within the scope of sustainability
 - Committee also agreed that a large diverse community based organization was needed to provide continuous input and feed back from the larger community
 - Group to be called (FACT) Forest Advocacy Coordinating Team
 - Key responsibility of FACT was to educate public on role of forestry and inform community about the need to sustain the value of forests for the future of the county

History of Project



- 1999 – FACT first meets in June
 - 1st step develop definition for sustainable forestry for county
 - Definition reached by consensus was:

“Sustainable forestry in Gogebic County is [**Forest Management**] that contributes to the [**Economic Health**] of Gogebic County while maintaining the [**Ecological and social/cultural values**] for the benefit of present and future generations in Gogebic County”
 - In order to further define these four terms, FACT decides to use Montreal Process for Criteria and Indicators (MPC&I)

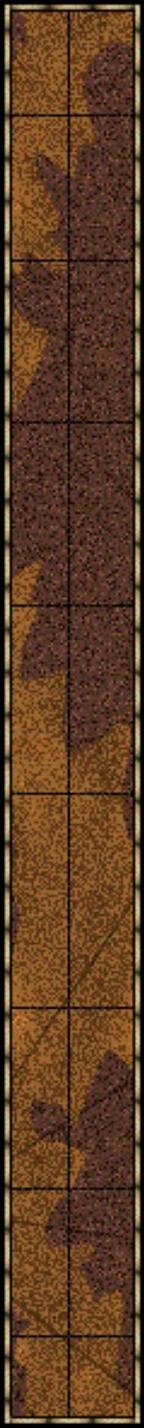
Milestones 2000 to 2002

- Develops resolution of support for on-going work on Forest Sustainability for Gogebic County and gains county-wide governmental support for definition (2000)
- Work recognized and considered as one of three communities for assistance by American Forests
- FACT developed “long list” of indicators with grant from USDA – Nov. 2001
- FACT Steering Committee refined list to present “short list” – Jan. 2002
- Brackets removed from definition upon finalizing small set of indicators for each bracket term (April 2002)

Indicators



- Purpose of indicators was to further define [Forest Management], [Economic Health], [Ecological Values], [Social Values], and [Cultural Values] in ways that are technically sound, clearly understood, uniformly interpreted, and measurable



Forest Management

- Number of acres of forest in Gogebic County in each use category
- Number of forest acres in Gogebic County with written forest management plan
- Percent of forested land in Gogebic County that is certified by a third party
- Percent of volume of forest harvested relative to volume growth in Gogebic County

Economic Health



- Acres of forest that allow timber harvest (aka, working forest) in Gogebic County
- State equalized value of land in Gogebic County
- Changes in labor statistics and employment patterns in Gogebic County
- Value and volume of value-added products of forest industries in Gogebic County



Ecological Values

- Change in water quality in Gogebic County
- Changes in forest structure and composition in Gogebic County
- Proportion of forests in Gogebic County that are affected by disturbance and damaging agents
- Number of forest species in Gogebic County that are classified as threatened, rare, vulnerable, endangered, or extinct
- Average parcel size in Gogebic County



Social and Cultural Values

- Changes in ownership of land in Gogebic County
- Changes in quality of life in Gogebic County
- Changes in population in Gogebic County
- Percent of Gogebic County population under the poverty level
- Changes of infrastructure of Gogebic County

Where are we now?

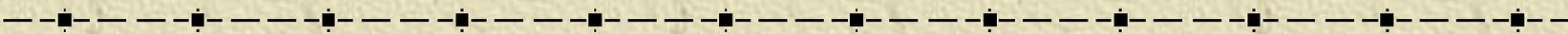


- Raise funding for base line data collection
- Retain resources to conduct data collection and to teach local champions how to replicate data collection efforts
- As issues having an impact on Sustainable Forestry in Gogebic County arise, the definition will be used by FACT to inform the public and provide useful input into resolving those issues

Lessons Learned

- There is no one set of indicators that will apply to every community (one size fits all). Depending on their resources and key issues communities should be able to select the most relevant indicators to measure their sustainable forestry efforts
- Workshops in Gogebic County demonstrated that community indicator projects are processes and not endpoints
- There is a clear need to identify data and information sources that communities can use in measuring and tracking indicators
- Indicator projects should include a wide group of people representing diverse interests in the community
- Importance of media “buy in”
- Maintain a local champion of the project

Acknowledgments



The work done to date would have not happened without the leadership and perseverance of Jerry Murphy and Clyde Eilo who championed this project from its beginning. Others that gave greatly of their time and expertise were: Bill Cook (M.S.U. Extension), Al Steege (Keweenaw Land Assn.), Wendy Hinricks Sanders (Great Lakes Forestry Alliance), and Marla Kangas (Gogebic Community College). A special thank you also goes to Maureen McDonough and graduate student Leanne Spence who helped the group to begin to understand the importance of the social aspects of sustainable forestry and finally to the citizens of Gogebic County who embraced the role and value of what sustainable forestry should and can be in their lives, that can help to provide for sustainable communities and ultimately for a sustainable future.