

Minnesota Sustainable Foraging Task Force Charter and Operating Procedures

Adopted October 8, 2025

Background

Purpose

The Minnesota Sustainable Foraging Task Force ([Laws of Minnesota, 1st Special Session, Chapter 1, Article 4, Section 24](#)) is required to gather and review information on the impact of foraging on species resilience, ecosystem health, and other aspects of Minnesota's biomes, solicit public input when appropriate, and develop recommendations for foraging guidelines reduced-price foraging permits. Recommendations must be specific, actionable, and consistent with Indigenous and other cultural practices and traditions. The task force must submit a written report to the commissioner of natural resources and to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees with primary jurisdiction over natural resources policy. The recommendations must detail proposals for changes or additions to statute or rules.

Scope of work

The task force is tasked with the following six duties outlined within Laws of Minnesota, Chapter 1, Article 4, Section 24, Subdivision 2:

- (1) gather and review data and information, including traditional ecological knowledge, on the impact of foraging on species resilience, ecosystem health, and other aspects of Minnesota's diverse biomes;
- (2) review existing regulations governing foraging activities on state lands;
- (3) develop recommendations for science-based, including traditional ecological knowledge, foraging guidelines for state lands that balance public access and foraging opportunities with conservation needs. The recommendations must be in the form of draft statutory or rule language and must be consistent with Indigenous and other cultural practices and traditions;
- (4) develop recommendations for increasing public understanding of sustainable foraging practices that include safety and ecological considerations;
- (5) solicit public input, when appropriate; and
- (6) develop recommendations for reduced-priced foraging permits.

Participants

The task force consists of 19 members, including:

- (1) two members of the senate, one appointed by the majority leader of the senate and one appointed by the minority leader of the senate;
- (2) two members of the house of representatives, one appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives and one appointed by the speaker emerita of the house of representatives;
- (3) one member appointed by the Minnesota Mycological Society;
- (4) one member appointed by the Minnesota Foraging Alliance;
- (5) four members from conservation or outdoor recreation organizations, appointed by the commissioner of natural resources;
- (6) two scientists with expertise in botany, ecology, and environmental science appointed by the Board of Regents of the University of Minnesota;
- (7) three representatives of the Department of Natural Resources involved with managing state parks, forestry, fish and wildlife, and public lands appointed by the commissioner of natural resources;
- (8) one member of the Minnesota Ojibwe Tribe appointed by the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council;
- (9) one member of the Minnesota Dakota Tribe appointed by the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council; and
- (10) two representatives with expertise on local ecosystems, species recovery, or sustainable harvesting appointed by the Board of Regents of the University of Minnesota Extension.

Individual members may not be a registered lobbyist.

Operating procedures

Section 1: Meetings

- The task force will meet on average every three weeks for two hours, with additional meetings scheduled as needed.
- Meetings may be conducted hybrid or online, with a preference for in-person participation.
- Agendas will be developed by Management Analysis and Development (MAD) and LCC in consultation with the cochairs, and, when needed, in consultation with the members.
- Agendas will be distributed at least three business days in advance of all meetings.
- The task force is subject to Open Meetings Law under Minnesota Statutes Chapter 13D.

Section 2: Task force operating agreements

The task force has drafted operating agreements to guide behavior and interaction. Operating agreements are a tool to create an inclusive, participatory space and to foster shared accountability. These may be refined as the task force continues its work.

- Say your name before speaking
- If online, cameras on whenever possible
- Come to meetings prepared. Review agenda and materials in advance.
- Take space, make space
- Refrain from side conversations
- Show respect to members and presenters

- Be open-minded and curious about others' opinions, viewpoints, and lived experiences
- Recognize that time or research may be needed before questions are answered
- Focus on the issue, not the people
- Assume good intent but acknowledge harm

Section 3: Procedures to end discussion and reach closure

Task force discussions will seek consensus using a gradients of agreement scale, such as the [Fist to Five](#) tool to ensure the six duties of the task force are executed and for internal task force processes, such as approving this charter.

A formal process to finalize the complete list of recommendations developed by the task force will be followed:

- Voting will only take place if a simple majority of members is present.
 - As of the current draft of this document, 17 members have been appointed, and the presence of 9 members represents quorum.
 - When all 19 members have been appointed, the presence of 10 members will be a simple majority and represent quorum.
- Each member shall have one vote, regardless of their affiliation or role on the task force.
- There is no voting by proxy.
- Participants can choose to abstain from a vote.
- Decisions will be finalized when 80% of participants indicate agreement.
- Every effort will be made to address members' concerns before decisions are made.

While these recommendations are advisory, the task force's input will inform the decisions of DNR staff, the commissioner of natural resources, and legislative committees with primary jurisdiction over natural resources policy.

Section 4: Dispute and conflict resolution

Disputes often involve a specific disagreement over a particular issue that can be clearly defined and is usually quicker and easier to resolve. Conflicts are often more complex to resolve as they involve deeper, underlying issues and tensions.

Dispute resolution

In cases of dispute resolution within the task force, the following steps will be taken:

1. **Open communication:** Address dispute directly and respectfully within the task force.
2. **Facilitated discussions:** If dispute persists, MAD consultants will facilitate discussions to find a resolution.
3. **Mediation:** A neutral mediator may be appointed to resolve ongoing disputes.
4. **Removal:** Persistent disruptive behavior may result in removal from the task force after all efforts for resolution have been exhausted. A removal will result in an ineligibility to submit any future reimbursement claims.

Conflict resolution

Conflict between people is a situation where the needs, values, and interests of two or more people appear to be incompatible. The task force will experience conflict as it is found everywhere people interact. Conflict involves an emotional response as our brains perceive conflict as a threat. Conflicts within the task force will tend to occur when members make assumptions about other members or get defensive. While there is no single way to address conflict, task force members may use the following techniques to navigate conflict:

- Use reflective listening by listening for facts, feelings, and values.
- Use non-reactive statements that seek understanding. In addition to using “I” statements, ask open-ended questions like, “Can you tell me more about...” or “Can you help me understand X?” Also, reflect back what you are hearing asking questions like, “I’m hearing XYZ, is that correct?” or “It sounds like you’re saying XYZ, can you elaborate on that?”
- Ensure others feel valued and respected by validating diverse thoughts and perspectives.
- Focus on behavior(s) and the impact of those behaviors. Avoid labelling or judging the person.
- Define the problem in a way that is mutually acceptable. Identify and discuss each person’s needs, values, and interests before determining next steps.
- Find common ground and solutions to move forward.

Task force members commit to navigating conflict internally with intention and will use a problem-solving mindset. Resolving conflict effectively will help the task force to strengthen relationships, solve problems more effectively, and realize the task force’s purpose.

A [problem-solving toolkit](#) created by the State of Minnesota’s Office of Collaboration and Dispute Resolution offers specific guides and resources.

Section 5: Subcommittees

- The task force may establish subcommittees to address specific issues or tasks. These subcommittees will operate under the guidance of the task force.
- Subcommittee members will be selected through an open and voluntary process. The task force will issue a call for volunteers. If interest exceeds quorum, participants shall be selected through consensus.
- Subcommittees shall report back to the full task force on their findings and recommendations.

Responsibilities

Section 1: Task force members

In accepting their appointment to the task force, members are expected to:

- Attend all task force meetings with positive intentions.
- Prepare for active participation in discussions by reviewing meeting materials in advance.
- Seek to understand opinions, perspectives, and lived experiences of others.
- Proactively engage and communicate with others who are invested in the work of the task force, including, community partners, and if applicable, the nominating association or council.

- Review and provide feedback on the agendas, meeting notes, and other documents when requested.
- Participate in drafting materials aligned with Laws of Minnesota, Chapter 1, Article 4, Section 24 for LCC review and editing.
- Abstain from voting where a conflict of interest may exist. Conflicts of interest occur when a member's individual personal interests or loyalties compete with or compromise their ability to faithfully fulfill the purpose of the task force and loyalty to the public interests. (Note: The State of Minnesota's Code of Ethical Conduct (HR/LR Policy #1445 includes a non-exhaustive list of conflicts of interest.)
- Serve on subcommittees if expertise, interest, and time allows.
- Refrain from writing letters or engaging in other kinds of communication in the name of the task force unless the Chair specifically authorized such communication.
- Respect the Task Force Operating Agreements (to be refined by task force members).

Section 2: Co-Chairs

In accepting their role, co-chairs are expected to uphold all task force member responsibilities as well as the following additional responsibilities:

- Guide task force activities, including agenda development with MAD, to ensure the task force purpose and six duties are fulfilled.
- Attend all planning meetings and consult in agenda development.
- Ensure task force meetings engage all participants effectively.
- Support and advise on any potential dispute and conflict resolution.
- At the request of the appointing body, be the spokesperson and representative for the task force.

Section 3: Legislative Coordinating Committee (LCC)

- Ensure compliance with Laws of Minnesota, Chapter 1, Article 4, Section 24
- Ensure compliance with Minnesota Open Meeting Law under Minnesota Statutes, chapter 13D.
- Guide task force activities, including agenda development with MAD, to ensure the task force purpose and six duties are fulfilled.
- Coordinate appointments of task force members.
- Task force and meeting logistics, including scheduling and administration of per diems and coordinating guest speakers (e.g., subject matter experts).
- Arrange and administer remote meeting technology; ensuring compliance with open meeting requirements; coordinate requested accessibility and accommodations for task force members, other participants, and guests; post and distribute meeting materials; ensuring timely related communication with the task force and other meeting participants as needed.
- Produce official meeting minutes and track roll-call votes.
- Manage meeting recordings and online broadcasts.
- Coordinate and conduct research and data collection, in collaboration with MAD as needed.
- Facilitate tribal engagement and public engagement as necessary.
- Serve as author of the final task force report, managing final report content and logistics, including creating report outline, tracking drafts and edits of task force recommendations, preparing drafts of final report and making edits as directed by co-chairs, managing task force input and comments, and as needed, coordinating development of legislative language.
- Speak on behalf of the task force if needed.

- Submit a copy of the final report to legislative and executive branch leaders and the Legislative Reference Library at the close of the project.
- Keep relevant parties informed on task force progress.

Section 4: Management Analysis and Development

- Facilitate task force meetings.
- Facilitate planning meetings.
- Facilitate subcommittees.
- Ensure all meetings are productive, engaging, and reflect the Task Force Operating Agreements and ensure public members announce themselves and their affiliation in in-person meetings.
- Support and advise on any potential dispute and conflict resolution.

Charter revisions

While this charter can be revised or expanded at any time, there will be a planned review of the charter during the task force's November meeting which will serve as a mid-point pulse check. Approval requires the affirmative votes of 2/3 of task force participants, not 2/3 of those present on the day of the vote.

Proposed amendments or revisions shall be distributed to all participants at least one week in advance of the meeting.