



Policy Committee Meeting Materials

Timeline

The plan timeline is shown below with our current status.



Issues

The first step in the planning process was determining the most pressing issues facing the natural resources of the LFRW. An “issue” in this plan is a risk, problem, or opportunity in the LFRW that can impact any resource (e.g. streams). Resources provide habitat, food, recreation, drinking water, refuge, or a variety of other uses for the people, residents, or wildlife in the LFRW. The aim of this plan is to find the best ways to protect, enhance, and restore the resources of the watershed by identifying the important issues and creating actions that best accomplish this.

Watershed issues were developed over a course of topic meetings from August – November 2025. Each topic meeting focused on issues around particular resources such as forests, lakes, and streams. These issue statements were then put together and reviewed at the January Advisory Committee meeting. The Advisory Committee is recommending approval of the full issues list on the next page.



Table 1 Draft issue statements for lakes and streams in the LFRW.

Resources(s)	Issue Statement	Notes from Advisory Committee
 LAKES	Lakeshore alteration impacts water quality and shoreland habitat.	
 LAKES STREAMS	Nutrients have the potential to decrease water quality and impact aquatic recreation and aquatic life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sturgeon Chain of lakes protection priority (whitefish and cisco disappearing) • Includes septic system replacements
 STREAMS STORMWATER	Stormwater runoff in developed areas contributes pollutants to streams and lakes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes developed lakeshore • Congressional funds for stormwater
 LAKES STREAMS FARMS	Agricultural runoff and livestock access increases erosion, nutrients, sediment, and bacteria in streams and groundwater.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>E.coli</i> issues in the farming area around Cook
 LAKES STREAMS	Wild rice health faces risks from development, climate, pollution, and invasive species.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In WRAPS report, 1854 Treaty • There are sulfate impairments: Dark Lake, Sturgeon River (downstream of the lakes) • Important habitat resource for migratory waterfowl
 FORESTS	Managing forest health is vital to sustaining economic, ecological, and recreational benefits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example actions: climate assisted migration, forest stewardship plans, etc. • Coordination of forest management between different levels - federal, state, county, private • Reference the Northern Region Landscape Plan
 FORESTS LAKES STREAMS	Maintaining a forested landscape prevents conversion, and safeguards sensitive species, water quality, and habitat.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example actions: Sustainable Forest Incentive Act, easements • Landscape Stewardship Plan goals - protection to 75% • Combined language about preventing conversion and protecting sensitive species
 FORESTS STORMWATER	Forest and Recreational Infrastructure affect hydrology, runoff, and erosion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes roads cutting wetlands/peatlands in half and one half dries out • Includes ATV trail and forest road erosion issues
 WETLANDS STREAMS	Altered hydrology from culverts, ditching, and channelization has impacted stream flow, connectivity, and aquatic habitat.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes fish passage
 STREAMS	Eroding gullies and streambanks contribute to turbidity impairments and reduced habitat quality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effects from historical logging and geological setting (Lake Agassiz soils). • Geological system is young and still getting to an equilibrium
 STREAMS STORMWATER	Flooding along rivers can threaten economic and natural resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions: flood protection in Cook, floodplain mapping • Flood damage reduction and water quality (put different funding sources together)
 WETLANDS	Wetland and peatland health is impacted by invasive species, climate, ditching, and wildfire effects.	
 GROUNDWATER	Groundwater quality and sustainability need assessment and protection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the narrative - explain drinking water and groundwater. Everyone in the watershed uses groundwater for drinking water. • Canadian cities and First Nations use Rainy River as drinking water source.



Emerging Concerns

Additionally, emerging concerns were brainstormed by the Advisory Committee. Emerging concerns are concerns that will be mentioned in the plan, but cannot have their progress directly measured, or cannot be directly addressed with local projects. The emerging concerns brainstormed during the meeting are listed below:

- Invasive species
 - Emerald Ash Borer
 - Eastern Larch Beetle
 - Impact on hydrology, particularly in floodplains
- Contaminants of emerging concern
 - Chloride/salting
 - Radioactive radium
 - Manganese
 - Arsenic
 - PFAS
 - Pharmaceuticals
 - Estrogenic Compounds
- Mining
 - Groundwater flow
 - Sulfate impairments
- Recreation
 - ATV trails
 - Boardwalks



Vision Statement

Description

A vision statement is an inspirational statement of an idealistic emotional future of a company or group.

Elements of a good statement

1. Who/Where we are: what is uniquely identifiable
2. Our impact: changes for the better
3. Short and to the point

Brainstorming

At the January Advisory Committee meeting, participants brainstormed words and phrases for the vision statement of the watershed. Here are the initial ideas explored:

- Flows north
- Intense logging industry
- Low development density
- Extensive public land and government that will protect resources
- Designing activities that are a good fit for maintaining guardian/habitat as well
- Enjoyment of the river
- Big woods country
- Northwoods
- Semi-wilderness
- Lots of forests
- Logging/forest industry – economically important for jobs/industry and recreation
- Big watershed, small town feel
- Turbid water, but healthy biology
- Younger river, still cutting

Draft Vision Statement

"Forests and waters sustaining healthy northwoods communities."

