



Peat & Other Non-Timber Resources

II.I

Assessment

There are several non-timber related natural resources of value in Carlton County and which are found on tax-forfeited lands. The most important is horticultural grade peat.

Map 8 uses the Carlton County soil survey to indicate the location of potential primary and secondary peat resources in the county. Primary peatlands are identified as the Waskish soil type while secondary areas are Greenwood and Lobo soil types. There are approximately 2,278 acres of potential prime peatland in the county with 1,050 on County-administered land. There are roughly 41,009 acres of potential secondary peatlands of which 12,180 are on County-administered land.

There are two peat harvesting operations in the County. The older is Michigan Peat located east of Cromwell. This operation covers roughly 800 acres. While this site can produce compressed bales of sphagnum moss, currently its primary product is a loose-bagged reed-sedge peat.

The other operation is Peatrex located west of Cromwell. This operation covers 320 acres of land although a phased expansion is being planned. Peatrex produces compressed bales of sphagnum moss. Its production facility also handles raw material trucked in from Peatrex's parent company's operations in Canada.

Currently, 120 acres of the 1,050 acres of potentially prime peatlands controlled by the County are leased. That leaves 930 acres available for future development. It is less likely that the secondary resource will be considered for development in the foreseeable future.

Development of peatlands is complex and under close environmental regulation by the Minnesota DNR, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, the US Environmental Protection Agency, and the US Army Corps of Engineers. Gravel deposits are another valuable resource which the County closely monitors. There is sporadic interest in commercial grade clay deposits which lie on County lands. In the case of peat and gravel, the plan recommends the County to continue its support for research of the potential resource and its value to the County.

Harvesting of other non-timber resources such as maple syrup, nuts, and plants may occur at non-commercial levels by individuals. As long as these efforts remain non-commercial and do not harm the resource, the County will allow them to continue without requiring permits.

Map 7: peat resources

II.2 Policies

Objective: *Carlton County desires to understand the economic potential of its non-timber resources and, as ecological and market conditions allow, realize that potential.*

The following are the policies of Carlton County regarding peat and other non-timber resources:

1. Support research into the location, amount and characteristics of marketable peat and peat moss on County managed lands.
2. Support research into alternative methods of peat extraction including renewable peat cropping.
3. Evaluate gravel resources on County managed lands for retention for use by the County. Extraction of gravel is to be done in accord with County zoning guidelines for private gravel operations including site design plans, operating plans, and reclamation.
4. Consider seasonal leases for hay harvesting. Lease payments or royalties are to be commensurate in value to the value of the resource being removed or service rendered (example: cropping may retain site for future tree planting).
5. Consider annual leases for commercial clay mining. Extraction of clay is to be done in accord with County zoning guidelines for private gravel operations including site design plans, operating plans, and reclamation. Lease payments or royalties are to be commensurate in value to the value of the resource being removed.
6. Support, but not necessarily with funding, the preparation of enhanced soil surveys and similar resource data for all land within Carlton County.

II.3 Strategic Actions

Carlton County will undertake the following actions relative to non-timber resources to implement this strategic plan:

Respond to requests for information on peat, gravel, and other non-timber resources.