

## **H. Employee Relations**

### **H.1. Training and Education Policy**

#### **H.1.A) Introduction**

The Land Commissioner, in consultation with the Human Resources Director, shall establish, whenever possible, programs for the training and further education of employees to assure that the quality of service rendered by employees in the classified service may be improved and that employees may be prepared to take advantage of promotional activities. Determination of the need for training programs shall be the responsibility of the Land Commissioner subject to the following Training Evaluation:

1. What are land department priorities for training?
2. How much funding is approved for training in the budget?
3. What is each employee's identified needs for training?
4. What kind and amount of training and/or education will the county board approve?
5. What is the benefit/cost of available or customized training sessions?
6. Who should attend any given training session?

#### **H.1.B) Departmental Direction**

The Land Commissioner is appointed by the county board as a department head to carry out county board policy and to manage the land department. The department is made up of professional employees that follow direction of department head, exercise good professional judgment, and work together as a team to comply with county policies and to accomplish department goals and objectives.

The Land Department is a strong proponent of professional development of employees and is responsible for providing opportunities in support of that development. Each employee is accountable and responsible for applying viable new techniques and procedures gained from Department's employee development efforts. Training sessions will be analyzed, evaluated or developed by Department staff for integrated prescriptive forest management efforts designed for supporting the Department's goals and objectives. Such an analysis and evaluation is necessary knowing that selected techniques and procedures learned at a specific training session might not be applicable or appropriate for supporting Department goals and objectives. Not all employees will be sent to any given training session. Attendee(s) are required to provide a written report back to the department and present the report at the next regularly scheduled staff meeting. It is a goal of the department to provide each employee equal opportunity for training and education relative to their job duties.

#### **H.1.C) General Training**

The Land Department has the following categories for training and education:

1. **Integrated prescriptive forest management** is intuitively applied in the context of being a professional and includes a wide variety of considerations. The Itasca County Biophysical Project provides a customized training program that provides a sound foundation for the development of prescriptions, understanding the forest environment and communicating that understanding with the public.



Silviculture training is also important. While silviculture and the biophysical program provide the core training regimen, other programs that can contribute to comprehensive prescription writing will be used if applicable.

**2. Special management** category includes but is not limited to such topics as natural areas, sharptail habitat, wildflowers, balsam boughs, birch bark, cultural resources, special species and rare, threatened and endangered species.

**3. Recreation management** category includes such topics as parks, trails, landscaping, tree and shrub care, Grant-in-aid program and interaction with volunteer recreation groups.

**4. Real estate management** category applies to Land Commissioner and Real Estate Specialist and the training necessary to maintain a registered real estate license as required by Itasca County.

**5. Technology** category includes such topics as GIS, GPS, computer software, data recorders and various other kinds of forestry equipment. This category requires extra persistence by both the county and the employee to keep up with continuous advances in technology

**6. Health, safety and personal development** category includes a wide range of topics that would include access to EAP program, county sponsored personal development sessions, search and rescue missions, monthly staff meetings, lymes disease awareness, CPR certification, fire extinguisher use, chainsaw use, defensive driving and monthly safety meetings.

#### **H.1.D) Individual Training**

Individual training plans will be developed based on Training Evaluation and through one-on-one conversations between each employee and the Land Commissioner. The individual training plan will become a part of each employee's annual performance review.

## **H.2. Employee Dispute Resolution**

### **H.2.A) Introduction**

Dispute resolution procedures can be classified as legal and organizational. Legal procedures exist in state and federal law and in Itasca County union contracts and collective bargaining agreements that have been in existence for a very long time. Organizational dispute resolution procedures are more informal and occur in various ways discussed in part C of this section.

### **H.2.B) Legal Procedures**

- A. United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) enforces adherence to federal laws that protect human rights. The EEOC has policies and procedures that individuals can access to file a charge of employment discrimination. [US-EEOC Minneapolis Area Office, 330 South Second Avenue, Suite 430, Minneapolis, MN 55401] <http://www.eeoc.gov/>



- B. Minnesota Department of Human Rights (MN-DHR) enforces adherence to state laws that protect human rights. The MN-DHR has policies and procedures that individuals can access to file a charge of employment discrimination. [MN-DHR, 190 East 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 700, St. Paul, MN 55101] <http://www.humanrights.state.mn.us/>
- C. The Land Commissioner, Assistant Land Commissioner and Real Estate Specialist belong to a collective bargaining unit of supervisory employees called the Itasca County Employee's Association (ICEA).  
The ICEA and Itasca County enter into an agreement that covers rates of pay, hours of work and all other conditions of employment to be observed between the parties. The provisions of this agreement constitute the sole procedure for the processing and settlement of any claims by an employee or the Association of a violation of this agreement by the Employer. Itasca County Employees Association contract can be found at: [www.co.itasca.mn.us](http://www.co.itasca.mn.us) , go to: County Offices, then to: Administrative Services, then to: Itasca County Contracts, then to: Itasca County Employees Association
- D. All other ICLD employees belong to The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, District council #65 and Local Council #1626 (Union). The Union and Itasca County enter into an agreement that covers rates of pay, hours of work and all other conditions of employment to be observed between the parties. The provisions of this agreement constitute the sole procedure for the processing and settlement of any claims by an employee or the Union of a violation of this agreement by the Employer. ACSFME Local 1626 contract can be found at: [www.co.itasca.mn.us](http://www.co.itasca.mn.us) , go to: County Offices, then to: Administrative Services, then to: Itasca County Contracts, then to: Local 1626 (Courthouse)

### **H.2.C) Organizational Procedures**

- A. Open and respectful communication between individuals is the fundamental means of preventing disputes.
- Monthly safety/staff meetings are held to encourage and document communication.
  - It is the responsibility of every employee to engage in open, respectful and professional communication with others on a daily basis.
- B. Annual performance appraisal (PA) goal-setting establishes expectations for working relations that are “on the same page”.
- [Example] Annual PA goal setting for Land Commissioner was held on February 7, 2008
  - [Example] Goals review session with County Board/Land Commissioner held on May 13, 2008
  - [Example] Goals review session with County Board/Land Commissioner held in August 2008.
  - All employees have an annual PA and goal setting session.



- C. Coop sessions occasionally occur between County Board of Commissioners and department manager, department employees and external individuals or organizations. Coop sessions encourage communication and provide an opportunity to talk over topics of interest in greater detail and in a group setting
- [Example] County Board/Land Commissioner coop session held on March 27, 2008.
  - [Example] County Board/Land Department coop session held April 1, 2008.
  - [Example] County Board/Forest Legacy Partnership coop session held April 22, 2008
- D. Mediation services are available to provide an opportunity to have 3<sup>rd</sup> party professional help to resolve differences.
- E. Itasca County has an Employee Assistance Program available to all employees to use upon request.

