

DCR FOREST FUTURES ADVISORY GROUP OF STAKEHOLDERS (AGS)

Doyle Conservation Center
325 Lindell Avenue, Leominster, MA 01453
Meeting #2 – June 23, 2009, 1:30 – 3:15 PM

MEETING SUMMARY

Members present: Whit Beals, Bill Boles, Mary Booth, Ted Cady, Dicken Crane, Alexandra Dawson, Nan Finkenaur, Dave Gafney, Fred Heyes, Claudia Hurley, Becky Kalagher, Michael Kellett, Cathy Kristofferson, James McCaffrey, Heidi Ricci, Mike Ryan, Jim Sherman, Bill Van Doren, Jane Winn.

Members Absent: Jay Belanger, Carrie Saldo, Peggy Sloan, Nathan L'Etoile, Tim Fohl.

DCR/EEA Staff: Stephanie Cooper. **As Observers:** Anne Fiesinger, Bob O'Connor.

Facilitators: Bill Logue, John Goodrich, Loraine Della Porta.

Welcome and Introductions

The group reconvened after the joint meeting with the TSC. The facilitators noted that the former chief foresters and several management foresters would be interviewed and a summary provided to the TSC and AGS.

General Discussion

AGS members expressed interest in meeting directly with the TSC in the near future and having input in a draft vision statement. Bill Logue noted that documents such as the vision statement or recommendations will be made available in draft form to the AGS and public for comment and review. Stakeholders were encouraged to compile any comments from their constituents and concisely give them to the facilitators for the TSC. Several members expressed concern that the TSC not develop a vision statement before additional input.

In reflecting on the morning's presentation and discussion members made a number of suggestions including:

- DCR shift from a presumption of active forest management except for fire and pest control.
- That Department of Fish and Wildlife management practices be used as a model and steps be taken to improve the communication and culture within the Bureau of Forestry. Including:
 - Making documents more publically available on the web. Several experiences were cited where some people were able to get information informally that others were not.
 - Allowing local management foresters more latitude in communication rather than have requests forwarded through Boston offices.
 - Finding mechanisms to assure that public involvement is heard and understood with respect to wildlife issues.
- An AGS member noted the interrelationship between management plans, goals and funding. He noted that having contractors perform maintenance as part of a cutting contract was not necessarily the most efficient method. He also noted that lack of oversight due to lack of funding was part of the issue.

- The need to focus on Regional Management Planning as specified by the statute where forestry is balanced with other values. A number of people felt that forestry appeared to be the main objective of planning and structural changes in the Department would help rectify this where the focus would be on landscape ecology. Several members from the forestry community suggested that DCR be subject to the same plan approval requirements and timelines as private forest owners. Other members felt that until written plans are in place that cutting should not occur.
- The need to balance minimal management with the need for forest products and support for local economies was raised by several members. The issue of Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) as support for local communities and how this has diminished was raised. How PILOT payments relate to reserves will need to be examined.
- Several members suggested larger reserves and a higher percentage of land should be in reserves. One member noted that there are de facto reserves that create more limited areas to manage when areas devoted to buffers, slopes, wetlands, recreation are accounted for. He felt that these should be accounted for.
- Several members expressed concern that biomass would influence decision making and that biomass plant owners would fund studies and work to assist the Department in planning which would allow harvesting to move forward.
- Several members expressed a desire for a financial analysis of forestry activities.

Trust Discussion

The AGS brainstormed ideas for steps that might build trust between their constituents and DCR. Those ideas are listed below with minimal editing and in the order listed.

- Revisions to Freedom of Information Process in MA – should presumptively provide info
- Clarification from DCR what management could (if any) happen in reserves
- State parks should not have harvesting/cutting
- Use model of Department Fisheries & Wildlife for public transparency (pre-harvest & post-harvest)
- Model of Quabbin
- Clarification as to why certain areas are named what they are (forest, park) – re-examine?
- DCR and other agencies completely re-assess response to climate change. (informed by best available science)
- Documents should be easily available on the web in PDF including: vision, Regional Management Plan, site plans, cutting plans, pre-cut public visit, approved cutting plan, bid specs, final inspection.
 - Each forester should be able to post documents.
 - Email contact for management plans
 - Integrate with MA GIS website (point & click Ch. 61) - integrate
 - Any interested party may be placed on the mailing list for timber sale bidding
- Integrated planning/transparency all info available
- Address mistakes publicly and correct/accountability
- National Heritage reports should be made available
- DCR should hold themselves to the same standards as Chap. 61 enrollees
- Meet FSC standards or better
- Resource management plan done before any more cutting (consider all ecology)
- Site-specific plans are needed for meaningful public input
- FSC draft – how much will be public?
- Respectful behavior both sides

Possible Recommendation Topics

The group brainstormed specific ideas that they might try to achieve consensus on to move forward as recommendations. The facilitators will do a survey of AGS members to determine the level of support for these ideas among the group.

- Planning and ecology unit in DCR to create a comprehensive and integrated approach (resource protection, recreation, and sustainable forestry)
 - Ensure wildlife, plants and water are considered in the planning process
 - Ensure all forms of recreation are considered in the planning process
 - Factor local economies into planning
 - Jobs
 - Natural resources based economy (wood production, tourism, etc.)
- Improve public access to plans etc. by making them available on the web
- Defer any cutting until a unit plan is in place
- Place a cap on all public land cutting
- Add a 4th category of zoning (significant properties) to the planning process e.g. Parkland
- Add definitions and cap on “clear cutting” to cutting regs (descriptive)
- Place a cap or prohibition on cutting in parks
- Increase the number of acres or percentage of areas designated as reserves - based on science (wildlands vs. woodlands)
- Encourage further study and understanding of implications of special needs of Biomass before assuming biomass will be available from state lands
- Establish conservation areas similar to New York State
- Develop a process for raising perceived errors in planning or implementing a cut/harvest and mechanisms to correct errors when they occur

Work Groups

AGS members identified four Work Groups to draft recommendations for consideration of the AGS as a whole. They are:

1. List of docs to go on website – Fred Heyes(Lead), Jane Winn, Claudia Hurley
2. Reserves and parkland - Mike Ryan (lead), Dave Gafney, Heidi Ricci, Mike Kellett, Mary Booth, & Nan Finkenaur
3. Concepts of reorganization (Bureau of Planning & Ecological Management) – Heidi Ricci (lead), Jay McCaffrey, Cathy Kristofferson, Jane Winn
4. Moratorium issue – Alexandra Dawson(lead), Mary Booth, Claudia Hurley