

DCR FOREST FUTURES VISIONING PROCESS

Walk in the Woods and Public Forum

Leominster State Forest and Doyle Conservation Center
June 23, 2009; 4:00 PM – 8:30 PM

SUMMARY

Walk in the Woods

Chuck Pirnaa, Management Forester for the Leominster State Forest lead a group of about 35 people to several timber sale sites in the forest. At the outset he provided a brief overview of the forest, its history and answered questions. The forest is 4,100 acres with the initial purchase of land in 1922. The area was largely field farmland early in the 20th century. Civilian Conservation Corps worked in the area in the 1930 conducting forestry activities, gypsy moth control, and building recreational facilities and roads. He led the group to several cuts including thinning cuts, shelterwood cuts and home cordwood cuts. He answered questions during the walk.

Public Forum

Following the Walk in the Woods many participants reconvened at the Doyle Conservation Center for a public forum.

Forum Participants: Peter Alden, Walden Woods Project; William Ashton, MA Forest Fire Council; Rex & Janeen Baker; George Barnes, Telegram & Gazette; Bill Boles, NEMBA and Friends of Wompatuck; Ted Cady, FRCOG, Planning; Elisa Campbell, DCR Stewardship Council; David Dobrzynski, CRWA; Barbara Earley; Anne Fiesinger, DCR; Roberta Flashman, Ashby Conservation Commission, Mt. Watatic Management Comm.; Mike Fleming, DCR; Al Futterman, NWRA; Mike Gildesgame, AMC; Elizabeth Hammond; Steve Kaiser, Association of Cambridge Neighborhoods; David Letters; Thom Kyker-Snowman, DCR; Sam Lovejoy, F&W; Thomas F. Lynch, Princeton Con. Commission; Paul Lyons; Joanie MacPhee; Laura Mattei, Sudbury Valley Trustees; Laurie Nehring, People of Ayer Concerned about the Environment; Larry Olasky, Hauer Hill Trail; Art O'Leary, Boy Scouts, Leominster Sportsmen's; Mason Phelps, Whetstone Wood Wildlife Sanctuary; Chris Pryor, New England Forestry Foundation; Margaret Robinson, Sherborn Town Forestry Committee; Mike Rohr, Leominster Sportsmen's Association; Peter N. Rotando, MA Forest Fire Council, Worcester West Forest Warden's Assoc.; Mike Ryan; Paul Sebring; Deborah Smith, Friends of Willard Brook State Forest; Liz Sorenson, DCR; Don Stoddard, Friends of Willard Brook State Forest; Beth Suedmeyer, ACEC Program; Ben Urquhart; Joan Wotkowicz

DCR/EEA Staff: Stephanie Cooper, Bill Hill, Bob O'Connor

Facilitators: Bill Logue, Loraine Della Porta, John Goodrich, MA Office of Dispute Resolution & Public Collaboration (MODR)

Welcome and Introductions

Facilitator Bill Logue welcomes the group of about 40 people and provided a brief overview of the vision process and the plan for the evening. Stphanie Cooper of DCR described why DCR had chosen to engage in the process and Bob O'Connor of EEA provided a brief overview of DCR planning and a possible vision going forward. Each person introduced themselves and asked a number of questions about issues including: the appearance and definition of different kinds of cuts; how forest reserves are determined and the relationship to the National Forest initiative and the purposes for engaging in the vision process.

Following this the group divided randomly into five small groups for discussion. Following the discussion, each group reported out (summarized below). The discussion was framed by the following topics:

Discussion 1:

People associate a number of values with forest lands, some of those values are listed alphabetically below. Please look at these values and discuss the questions.

- Aesthetics
- Climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Habitat diversity
- Local economies
- Landscape ecology
- Recreation
- Tourism
- Renewable forest products
- Watershed management

Questions:

1. Are any values missing?
2. What do you associate with these values?
3. Thinking about *all* Massachusetts forests (including the 78% that are privately owned) are some values more important than others to society as a whole? To you personally?
4. Thinking about *DCR forests*, which are the values or attributes that should be emphasized more (relative to what is being done today) and why? Less? Are there things that DCR is uniquely positioned to advance or protect on DCR lands? Private lands?

Discussion 2:

DCR forest lands provide economic, ecological, social and other values to local communities, the Commonwealth, nation and the world. To protect and enhance certain values DCR must make decisions about how to manage the forests – for example what land to place in reserve, what land to actively manage, and how to address things such as storm damage, infestations, and past management decisions such as plantations.

1. How might DCR improve the management of its forests in the future?
2. How will these improvements protect the values you see as most desirable?
3. What purposes do you see as appropriate for cutting on DCR forest lands? Are there types of cutting that should not be permitted?

The small groups reported out the results of their table discussion:

Table #1:

Discussion Topic 1

Question #1

- Wildlife homes
- Recreation definition?
 - Motorized vs. passive?
wheeled? hunt, fish, fun, not work
- Education & research
- Oxygen regeneration
- Wildflower seed bank/deer fence

Question #2

- Fabric of rural life
- Spiritual
- Aesthetics
- Economic values
- Wood sales to fund local forest expenses
- People don't realize their environmental-impact
 - Forest products from afar

Question #3

- Peace & tranquility/spiritual
- Economic gain
 - Wood, tourism

Question #4

- Local economies & renewable forest products
- Holistic vision of wildlife management
- Change name of DCR
- Volunteer opportunities and service projects

Discussion Topic 2

Question #1

- Planning
- Implement plans
- Publicize plan
- Proactive, selling, outreach
- Explain the reasons of plans
- Invasive alien plant species
- Public education

Question #2

- If plans are good and implemented values will improve
- Planning, public buy-in, brainwashing ("outreach") will lead to plan implementation

Question #3

- Any of the values are a good reason
- Disaster preparedness – hurricane, bugs
- Leave options open
- Match tools to goal
- Location specific

Table #2: Discussion Topic 1

Question #1

- A. Accountability of care takers
- B. Wild life

Question #3

- Environmental and human health and legacy

Question #2

- A. Responsible stewardship
- B. Sustainability (Biomass)

Question #4

- (more) public education
- Accountability of public resources
- No (less) or little (limited) Involvement in local private operations (Conservation Commission)
- Ecological, economic and social harmony

Discussion Topic 2

Question #1

- Purchase land
- More land in reserves
- Aggressive attention to invasive species
- Dedicated funding – consistency

Question #2

- Sustain management programs and reverse negative results

Question #3

- A. To eliminate invasive species (plants and insects), to protect wildlife habitat, public safety, water quality
- B. Those deemed necessary as accepted forest management practice, no clear cut for general revenue

Table #3:

Discussion Topic1

Question #1

- Local fuelwood is “local economies”
- Water quality is “watershed management”
- Historic and cultural values/Archeological
- Endangered species

- Historic resources

Question #2

- Need to look at the resources as a whole before you apply the values to create the management plans
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Question #3

- Accessibility/right of access – public
- Water quality
- The fields are getting lost in the forest

Question #4

- More: recreational uses, mixed-use
- More: DCR is uniquely positioned to be the exemplar to teach the private forester
- Fair distribution of resulting income

Discussion Topic 2

Question #1

- Need to be looking at the resource as a whole then create the plan, publish and take input, then refine the plan
- More sensitive to the other users of the forest

- Post-harvest management, especially unintentional outcomes

Question #2

- Public acceptance and support of forest programs

Question #3

- Health of the forest
- Economic income shouldn't drive cutting
- Unsustainable cutting for biomass/sustainable energy

Table #4:

Discussion Topic 1

Question #1

- Education – youth, adult's = users
- Management of fire control
- Large intact forest blocks (not been cut for long time), (little or no management)
- Value determined by type of agency that "owns" it.
- Drinking water protection
- Spiritual, investment, pollution abatement
- Wildlife
- Personal rejuvenation

Question #2

- Recreation: active & passive
- Sustainable/certified wood products

Question #3

- Hard to rank, all are important
- Varies by region
- Personal values*
- Watershed/water supply*
- Privacy*
- Climate change*
- Energy/fuel
- Economy tied to forest products
- Stewardship/citizenship

Question #4

- Tough to balance
- Emphasize more:
 - Conservation more than recreation (which will lead to more recreation)
 - Habitat diversity/large forest blocks
 - Simple form of educational "tools"
 - More MA wood products sold in state
 - Values not gotten from/on private land
- Less emphasis:
 - Recreation
 - Squeaky wheels being listened to
 - Tourism and climate change mitigation
 - Inside I-495

Discussion Topic 2

Question #1

- Performance standards need consistency
- Stick with good science and not react to complaints – due to lack of education
- Facility specific resource management plan **
- Resources outside of 495 same as inside 495
- Bring in younger minds for fresh ideas. Add to consistent science *
- Determine values that DCR will use science to manage the implementation
- Open-mindedness, mentorship, staff development (state-wide) **
- Inform the general public/community*
- Keep educating the public*

- DCR serves as role model/benchmark for private land owners*

Question #2

- Current management plans that reflect public values
- Needed resources to implement goals
- Shift from management to planning, then go back to management...shift limited resources*
- Put right people in right job/position

Question #3

- Appropriate:
 - Economic
- Not permitted:
 - Site dependent not blanket policy
 - Anything not part of a larger plan

Table #5:

Discussion 1

Question #1

- Educational
- Financial gain – value (\$) to the state, who gets money from tree cuttings?
- Historical value
- Spiritual renewal
- Health/connecting people (especially kids) to land and out-of-doors
- Where does our food come from? Not Shaws! Natural resources?
- Main focus and value is with natural succession (i.e. unmanaged forest)

- Forest diversity

Question #2

- Social values
- Economic values
- Ecosystem – plants and animals

Question #3

- Our List:

- Spiritual/Aesthetics – defines “New England”

- Educational
- Recreational –motorized, non-motorized (need to be separated)
- Preserving and protecting the environment and not fragmented
- Water Protection
- Society List:
 - Higher focus on economics and making/not spending money
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- Higher percentage DCR properties should be set aside as reserves, lightly managed after storm events and other needed cutting to demonstrate “best practices.”
- Balance #2 above, not skewed overall. Appropriate plan for each area.

Question #4

- Mixed response

Discussion 2

Question #1

- Improve outreach – increase p.r.
 - (ex) ATV vehicles – trail guidance when they’re sold, newspaper notices, town notices, email list – locally and generally
- Mark trees designated for removal with lots of advance notice, so people who walk the trail and know forestry can offer feedback. Guided walks? Signs?
- Ability to mark a “favorite” tree to save.
- Manage program “cut a cord” better to reduce damage

- Keep large buffer areas around “cuts”

Question #2

- We can object/respond to DCR’s management plans in advance and effect/save land.
- Save our favorite trails and trees
 - Enable the DCR’s decisions for a cut to be clear and transparent. Citizens won’t feel “dumped” on.

Question #3

- No cutting in areas that impact trails and trailheads
- Managing these in demonstration areas
- Production of forestry products
- If there is a clear-cut over 2 acres, it must be ecologically justified to public
- “Biomass” is a term that is not clear; mixed definitions. Be more clear with terms used.