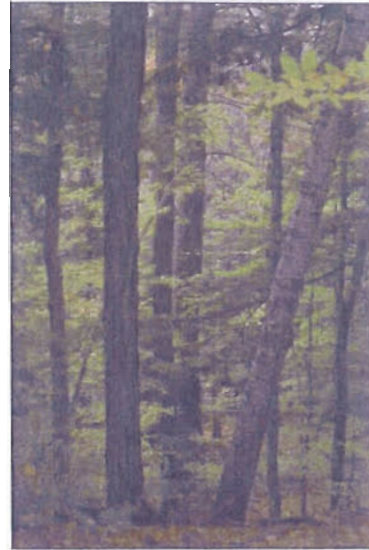




Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy & Environment

Forest Resource Management on State-owned Lands

Massachusetts forestlands cover 55% of the state and are the backbone of our environment, providing clean water, clean air, carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, renewable wood products, energy resources, and employment opportunities for the six million residents of the Commonwealth. Massachusetts is fortunate to have a greater proportion of its “green infrastructure” under state ownership than any other state in the nation; 530,000 acres out of the total of 2.9 million acres (>18%) of forestland in Massachusetts is under the care and control of the Executive Office of Energy & Environment (EEA), and is managed by the EEA Departments of Conservation & Recreation and Fisheries & Game (DCR and DFG). These agencies use professionally trained foresters, ecologists, and wildlife biologists to achieve the legislative missions for state forestlands, including drinking water protection, wildlife habitat enhancement, outdoor recreation, and production of renewable wood products. DCR and DFG also protect additional forestlands through public acquisition from willing sellers using open space bond funds administered through EEA, thus insuring that the green infrastructure of Massachusetts will be conserved to support future generations.



DCR and DFG have conducted detailed landcover mapping and forest inventories on their respective properties, and have partitioned state forestlands into active and passive management zones. Active management zones are open to harvesting of renewable wood products, while passive management zones support less harvesting, or no harvesting. Passive management areas comprise about 30% (?) of EEA lands, and include forested wetlands, intensively used recreation sites, sensitive environments, and forest reserves. More than 20% of EEA lands (about 120,000 of 530,000 acres) are identified as reserves where no commercial harvesting of wood products will occur. Small (patch) reserves conserve sensitive, localized resources such as steep slopes, fragile soils, and habitat for certain rare species that benefit from intact forest canopies. Large (matrix) reserves represent the diversity of relatively un-fragmented forest landscapes remaining in Massachusetts today. Matrix reserves will ultimately support unique structures and processes associated with extensive accumulations of large woody debris that are typically absent from harvested areas. Reserves provide reference sites for objective assessment of the sustainability of forest harvesting practices, and are essential for practicing adaptive resource management.

While it is important to have the majority of forestland open to the sustainable harvest of wood products in order to support human society, it is equally important to retain portions of our forested landscapes in a condition where natural disturbance processes are the dominant influence on the ecosystem. Reserves will provide valuable late-seral forest habitat for wildlife that may ultimately support species assemblages and abundances that do not occur on harvested sites. Long term ecological monitoring is planned on reserves to document the composition of plant and animal communities over time. To learn more about forest reserves on EEA lands, visit http://www.mass.gov/envir/forest/pdf/whatare_forestreserves.pdf.



Active management sites comprise about 70% (?) of EEA lands, and are open to sustainable harvesting of renewable wood products that provide fiber and energy to the Massachusetts economy. Harvesting provides employment opportunities in rural communities, and is used to diversify forest structure and tree species composition on state lands. Harvesting fosters a resilient, multi-layered forest that insures water quality, provides recreational opportunities, and creates valuable, early-successional habitat for declining wildlife species.

All harvesting activities on EEA lands are certified by the independent Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) as sustainable forest management. FSC sets high standards that ensure forestry is practiced in an environmentally responsible, socially beneficial and economically viable way. FSC standards are endorsed by environmental organizations such as Greenpeace, National Wildlife Federation, The Nature Conservancy, Sierra Club, and World Wildlife Fund. FSC is also the only certification system used in the LEED Green Buildings program. To learn more about green certification of EEA lands, visit <http://www.mass.gov/envir/forest/pdf/forestgreencertificationhandout.pdf>.



A 0.5 acre patch cut at the DCR Quabbin Reservoir in 1996 (left), 2001 (middle), and 2008 (right) (DCR photos by Thom Kyker-Snowman).



Picture will be taken from same location and pasted here by end of July 2008 to show vegetation response.

Part of a 30 acre seed tree regeneration harvest completed in February 2008 on the DFW Phillipston WMA in March (left) and July (right) 2008 (DFW photos by John Scanlon).

For more information on forest management on DCR Forest & Park lands, visit <http://www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/forestry/index.htm>. To learn more about forest management on DCR watershed lands, visit <http://www.mass.gov/dcr/waterSupply.htm>. For information on forest management of DFG lands, visit http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/habitat/management/bdi/forest_mgt/forest_mgt_home.htm.