

DCR FOREST FUTURES TECHNICAL STEERING COMMITTEE (TSC)

Doyle Conservation Center
325 Lindell Avenue, Leominster, MA 01453

Meeting #1 – April 21, 2009

MEETING SUMMARY

Members present: Lisa Vernegaard, Chair, Matt Burne, Heather Clish, Andy Finton, John Hagan, Bill Moomaw, Keith Ross, Bruce Spencer, Tom Stevens, Charlie Thompson, Joe Zorzin. **Members absent:** Kate Connolly

DCR/EEA Staff: Stephanie Cooper, Bill Hill, Celia Riechel

Facilitators: Bill Logue, Loraine Della Porta, MA Office of Dispute Resolution & Public Collaboration (MODR). **TSC Technical Coordinator:** Tom Walker

Observers Present: Charl Heller, David Gafney.

Welcome and Introductions

Technical Steering Committee (TSC) Chair Lisa Vernegaard welcomed TSC all present. The committee members, MODR team, TSC Tech Advisor, and DCR and EEA staff introduced themselves. The meeting agenda and documents were briefly reviewed.¹

I. Overview of Goals for TSC and Roles

- Stephanie Cooper, Chief of Staff for DCR thanked the TSC members on behalf of Commissioner Sullivan and DCR. Ms. Cooper discussed DCR's reasons for launching this visioning process and described DCR's role as sponsor and convener of this initiative. She further described the support DCR is dedicating to this initiative and their commitment to a robust public process. She noted that there have been a number of past studies and commissions related to forests, and that DCR has sought to take into account these recommendations and visions in its stewardship of state forests. She highlighted that forests are critically important resources for all residents of Massachusetts, and DCR seeks to ensure their current and future vitality. In doing so, she stated that the Department wants to ensure it respects and provides the different benefits of forests the public values – from habitat diversity to recreation to renewable forest products – while recognizing that science and conditions are constantly changing and evolving. For all of these reasons, DCR has determined that it is appropriate and timely to engage the public and stakeholders in developing a renewed vision for Massachusetts forest lands.
- Bill Logue walked the TSC through the visual “process map” which depicts the design of the DCR Visioning Process. Mr. Logue described the three parallel tracks that would be

¹The agenda and documents are available on the DCR website. The documents are listed at the end of this summary.

involved in the visioning process: 1) The TSC which will make recommendations to the Commissioner and Stewardship Council; 2) The Advisory Group of Stakeholders which is currently being formed; and 3) the public deliberative dialogue forums that will be held in conjunction with periodic site visits.

- Lisa Vernegaard described her role as the Chair of the TSC and briefly discussed anticipated work products for the TSC. A question was raised regarding the process for creating the vision for the forests in Massachusetts and if stakeholders or the TSC will initially draft the vision. The group discussed the need to address concerns/questions raised by stakeholders and to balance this stakeholder involvement with good science in making recommendations. The group discussed how the charge of the committee includes proposing a vision that will be commented on by the Advisory Group of Stakeholders and others.
- Tom Walker described various ways in which he as the Technical Coordinator could support the TSC by doing research, gathering information and acting as a liaison between the TSC and DCR. Mr. Walker also asked the TSC to think further about how he could support their efforts. DCR and EEA staff will participate in meetings for the purpose of answering TSC questions and providing timely information on policies, practices regulations and mandates.

Consensus Process Orientation

- MODR Facilitator Bill Logue gave a brief overview of how a consensus process works and discussed the importance of separating “positions” from “interests”. Mr. Logue described that during the process the group may reach a high level of agreement on some issues and disagree on other issues. The goal is to seek clarity, gain understanding, and reach agreement wherever possible. If agreement is not attained on an issue, the TSC should clearly articulate where the underlying rationales of remaining differences so that formal decision makers and the public may clearly understand the choices.

Ground Rules

Bill Logue reviewed the ground rules for both meeting conduct which were proposed by the process facilitators. The TSC adopted the proposed ground rules and agreed that additional ground rules could be introduced as the process unfolds. Bill Logue also reviewed the proposed ground rules for group decision making and again spoke briefly about achieving consensus and how the TSC will handle points of disagreement. The TSC asked the facilitators to set up a private group to email ideas and review documents prior to discussion at meetings and agreed on a ground rule that they would not forward or share these messages with others.

II. Draft Framing Questions for TSC

TSC Coordinator Tom Walker drafted a set of preliminary “framing questions” to help the TSC focus and organize its work. The TSC members discussed the questions.

In general, members agreed that the bulleted “framing questions” title be changed to reflect the fact that these were questions being posed to DCR by stakeholders, that additional framing questions be added and reorganized to better reflect the “key goals” established for the process and the phrasing be reexamined to ensure that they do not unintentionally narrow the discussion. They generally agreed that using the term “ecosystem services” would account for the full range of

possible uses and activities. They also discussed the implications for the TSC's charge and agreed that the work clearly take into account the role of DCR forest lands within the broader context of all Massachusetts forest lands. Thus the TSC might make recommendations specifically for guidelines and strategies for DCR to advance the vision and for steps DCR might take to influence what occurs on other public and private lands. They also agreed on the importance of defining terms to bring clarity to the discussion. They also emphasized for recommendations to be implemented, it will be important to include, where appropriate and possible, metrics and indicators. Several members noted the availability of existing studies and books (e.g., *Wildlands and Woodlands Study* and *Rewilding the Northeast*) that might inform the group's work.

During the discussion members offered the following questions, comments and suggestions:

A. Questions for possible consideration:

- What about the broader question of forests in Massachusetts (including private land)?
- What role should DCR play in the broader context? (New England)
- What is the role of DCR in managing biodiversity, wildlands and watersheds? What are the ecosystem services that DCR should be managing?
- What are the roles of active/passive management on DCR lands?
- How do the forests impact the lives of citizens? (examine the societal, cultural, recreational aspects)
- How will the forests function and how will they look (recreation and other uses)? These should be taken together – not separately.
- What functions/products come out of the forest? Need to look at the “full suite” of services DCR can provide (including aesthetics, recreational, etc.). Look at size, geography and view in the broader context of “public good”
- Is the state providing the necessary eco-services? What was DCR hearing about this?
- New framing question: What is the role of DCR (Forester) in the management of forests in Massachusetts? Should make recommendations for government, private landowners, etc.
- Does TSC need to design a process/procedure for updating the vision as it is likely to evolve over time?

B. Comments/Suggestions

- TSC should be determining criteria for determining what the appropriate amount of wood is to harvest.
- TSC needs to examine the benefits the public derives from the forests.
- The framing questions as posed look very specific – we need to go broader.
- Need to expand our scope and look at ALL forests in MA – not just DCR. DCR needs to expand their role to both public and private forests. (Response: Need to also be conscious of what is “do-able, practical and manageable”).
- We should also be making “recommendations” for private land owners.
- Suggestion: TSC should create a “matrix” of values. People should be asked what they value most about forests.
- Forest land protection. Is that part of our (TSC) purview? For example, DCR acquiring land for protection.
- Concerned about how long it took Ch. 132 regs to get out for public comment.
- Need to connect TSC key goals with more specific framing questions.

- Additional areas to address: 1) Relationship with other agencies; 2) Education; 3) "Site-specific plans" need to be addressed; and 4) Should TSC recommend that certifications be used (e.g. FSC)
- Forest and land management (expand to include land management, recreation, etc.)
- Suggestion: Need to advance vision to encompass private lands
- Support to private sector is important (cost sharing, etc.) (Does this relate to question #6??)

C. Framing Questions – next steps

Chair Lisa Vernegaard, Technical Coordinator Tom Walker and the facilitators will revise and reformat the Framing Questions in light of the discussion and circulate them electronically to TSC members. These may be confirmed at the next meeting and provided to the Advisory Group of Stakeholders.

Other Item of Note from Framing Question Discussion

The draft Ch. 132 regulations should be released for comment this spring or summer.

III. Suggested Work Plan for TSC

Facilitator Bill Logue walked the TSC through the suggested work plan and proposed the following meeting dates which were accepted by the TSC:

- **TSC Meeting #2 – Monday, May 18, 2009 (10:00 a.m. start)** – A day-long forum at the Harvard forest for the TSC, Advisory Group of Stakeholders and, as space available, the public. There will be several presentations made at the forum including an overview of the history, present state and possible future of MA forests. The Forum will give the TSC and others the opportunity to gain perspective which should inform their work in advising DCR in months to come. For those interested – there will be a walk following the forum either at the nearby Federated Women's Club State Forest or in the Harvard Forest. There are some overnight accommodations available at the Harvard Forest for TSC members who are encouraged to stay over.
- **Tuesday, May 19, 2009, 9:00 a.m.** – (Continuation of TSC Meeting #2) at Harvard Forest.
- **Joint Meeting TSC/Advisory Group – 1st Half - Tuesday, June 9, 2009 followed by TSC Meeting #3** at Doyle Conservation Center, Leominster, MA (9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.)
- **TSC Meeting #4 – Tuesday, June 23, 2009** at Doyle Conservation Center, Leominster, MA (9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.)
- **TSC Meeting #5 – Tuesday, July 21, 2009** at Doyle Conservation Center, Leominster, MA (9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.)
- **TSC Meeting #6 – Wednesday, September 16, 2009** at location to be determined (**9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.**)
- **TSC Meeting #7 – Tuesday, September 29, 2009** at Doyle Conservation Center, Leominster, MA (9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.)
- **TSC Meeting #8 – Wednesday, October 21, 2009** at Doyle Conservation Center, Leominster, MA (9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.)

Note: Some TSC meetings may be scheduled jointly with the Stakeholder Advisory Group and/or in conjunction with site visits/public forums.

IV. Parking Lot Items for Future Consideration

- Establish a running glossary to define commonly used terms (non-native, invasive, sustainable)
- Need to agree on how to measure complexity/diversity (see Montreal model)
- Construct a "Values Matrix"
- Need to bring in additional experts in biodiversity
- Need a history of FSC certification
- FSC/Site-specific plans?
- Discussion of limitations on full tree chipping and types of equipment on DCR lands

V. Meeting Evaluation (Plus/Delta)

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- Having a document to react to was helpful – continue to create "guiding documents"

- Prepare questions in advance regarding "Vision"

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- List desired outcomes/outputs for meeting on agenda

VI. Action Items

- Provide bio TSC Coordinator Tom Walker to TSC Members (MODR/Walker)
- Find alternative location for TSC Meeting #6 on Wednesday, September 16, 2009 (DCR/MODR)
- Set up electronic group for TSC to communicate via e-mail (MODR)
- Schedule a briefing by DCR on regulations (MODR/Walker/Vernegaard)

Meeting Materials

The following materials we distributed to TSC members and observers at the meeting:

- Meeting Agenda
- Process Goals
- Process Map
- Proposed Ground Rules
- Proposed Framing Questions
- TSC Suggested Work Plan

In addition, TSC members received a binder of background information, much of which is available on the DCR website. The Table of Contents for the binder is available with the meeting materials on the website.