

# DCR FOREST FUTURES TECHNICAL STEERING COMMITTEE (TSC)

Doyle Conservation Center  
325 Lindell Avenue  
Leominster, MA 01453

Meeting #4 - June 23, 2009; 9:30 AM – 1:30 PM

## MEETING SUMMARY

**Members present:** Matt Burne, Kate Connolly, Andy Finton, Keith Ross, Bruce Spencer, Charlie Thompson, Joe Zorzin

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

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

### Welcome and Introductions

Technical Steering Committee (TSC) and Advisory Group of Stakeholders (AGS) were welcomed by the Facilitators. The Agenda for Joint Meeting was reviewed.

1. **Presentation by Advisory Group of Stakeholders (AGS) to the Technical Steering Committee (See Joint Meeting Notes)**
2. **DCR Presentation**
3. **Questions from AGS and TSC to DCR and Presenters**
4. **TSC Meeting – Identification of Key Issues Raised at Joint Meeting**

Following the joint meeting of the TSC & AGS, the TSC reconvened on their own at 12:30 PM to debrief the presentations made by both the AGS and DCR. Key issues identified by TSC Members were:

- **The Role of the Chief Forester.** TSC members were in agreement that it would be helpful to the visioning process to speak to former Chief Foresters and current management foresters at DCR to gain their unique insights regarding management of DCR lands. Based on the facilitators' recommendation, the decision was made that the facilitators would request interviews with former Chief Foresters and management foresters. TSC members who have specific questions will forward them to facilitators to include in the interview protocol. In order to protect confidentiality, a summary of the interviews will be drafted without specific attribution to individuals.
- **Values.** It was suggested that for the next TSC meeting, it might be useful to go through some "values exercises" and to group those values in terms of where they want to see

DCR put more emphasis and less emphasis. Feedback from the public in terms of what their values are will also be helpful through the public forums and other methods.

- **Visioning Process “Framing Questions”.** TSC members discussed the need to revisit the framing questions at the next TSC meeting and to spend some time checking-in on where they stand on those questions. It was suggested that no presentations/lectures be scheduled for the next TSC meeting to allow the members the opportunity to focus on the framing questions/vision.
- **Forest Management Practices.** TSC members discussed what they heard from the AGS and DCR staff about forest management practices. The process by which DCR accepts bids for timber sales and other work on state lands was discussed. In building on questions raised during the earlier joint meeting, TSC members asked whether it was possible for higher standards to be adopted for loggers and whether the state had the ability to hold loggers accountable for poor work. The question was raised as to whether DCR feels it has access to enough high-quality “loggers” and whether there was a way to ensure a pool of loggers were adequately trained/mentored, e.g. “Master Logger Program”. Concerns were raised about considerable expenses associated with such a program and it was suggested that perhaps the state would be willing to consider some type of “cost share”.

One TSC member commented that if there are stakeholders who are advocating for active management - the TSC is not hearing from them. TSC members discussed whether there was more of a “movement” toward reserves. It was suggested that perhaps there should be a higher percentage of forests in reserves. A question was raised that if eminent scientists in the world believe there need to be more reserves – how will that be managed? Does the TSC need to “step back” and determine how much should be managed and whether it should be done on public land or private land? Bob O’Connor from EEA commented that the Wildlands & Woodlands initiative advocates that 50% of forests be in reserve. He stated EEA is actively buying land for that purpose.

Tom Walker, the TSC Technical Coordinator commented that the TSC originally framed the question as: What forestry needs to be done and are there things done on state lands that are not being done on private lands?

- **DCR Gaining Public Trust.** Several TSC members noted a “trust gap” between stakeholders and DCR. It was noted that that it was not enough for the stakeholders to hear DCR acknowledge past mistakes –the stakeholders seem to want more specifics about what went wrong and why. It was agreed it would be critical to the (visioning) process going forward for DCR to figure out how to conduct public comment and similar processes going forward in a manner that will effectively communicate what is occurring and build trust with the public. It was further noted that if the public is truly engaged and aware of what DCR is doing, there will not be a negative backlash when mistakes are made. Members felt that more transparency is needed.

One TSC member described a frustrating prior experience with the DCR public comment process and indicated the public comment process does not always work well and needs to be improved. Stephanie Cooper of DCR offered to provide a copy of DCR's current policy regarding the public comment process. It was suggested that, based on some of the frustrations that were expressed, DCR needs to take care in the future to clearly convey what they know factually or scientifically and also to be clear where there is uncertainty or a judgment needs to be or has been made. Also, if there are agency rules or special restrictions – DCR needs to be up front about that with the public so they do not create false expectations.

Bill Hill from DCR stated the department is taking a look at how they take public input and is trying to set policy going forward that take these concerns into account. For example, if there is a "high-level" silvicultural prescription, the public could be invited to view the prescription and talk about it "on the ground". There could be specific marking guidelines that would be familiar to the public. The public could then walk the stand after it is marked so there would be clear understanding of what was going to occur.

- **Legal Issues.** TSC members discussed a variety of ways to approach "legal issues" raised throughout this process. A question was raised as to whether the visioning process should operate with a clean slate – that is, whether the TSC should make recommendations without regard to current legal restrictions that exist and then take on the legal issues later. It was suggested that agency regulations and legislation can always be changed and that the TSC recommendations should be based on best science/practices and not be hindered by laws/regulations that may be outdated or irrelevant. It was also suggested that as the process unfolds the TSC will have the ability to ask DCR's legal team about DCR's scope of authority and about any inconsistencies that exist in law/regulation.

**5. Wrap-Up.** It was confirmed that the next TSC meeting would be held on July 21, 2009 at the Doyle Center in Leominster. Agenda to follow.