

# DCR FOREST FUTURES ADVISORY GROUP OF STAKEHOLDERS (AGS)

Doyle Conservation Center  
325 Lindell Avenue, Leominster, MA 01453  
Meeting #3 – June 29, 2009, 1:15 – 5:00 PM

## MEETING SUMMARY

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

**DCR/EEA Staff as Observers:** Anne Fiesinger, Bill Hill, Bob O'Connor. **Facilitators:** Bill Logue, Loraine Della Porta.

**Observers:** Steve Kaiser

### Welcome and Introductions

Facilitator Bill Logue noted those who had said they could not attend, reviewed the proposed agenda and suggested changes based on pre-meeting discussions among some AGS members. A revised agenda will be posted to the DCR website. To be responsive, Technical Steering Committee Chair Lisa Vernegaard changed her schedule to meet briefly with the AGS.

1. **Discussion with TSC Chair Lisa Vernegaard.** Lisa Vernegaard spoke about concerns she has heard that the TSC work is being driven by the Bureau of Forestry. She acknowledged the concern and stated that she is asking the TSC to look carefully at *all* services DCR forests provide, including ecological, societal, etc. The TSC is trying to review the services systematically to try to understand the current situation and where gaps exist. A joint meeting will be held between AGS and TSC to look at ecological services. She will be working with the facilitators to ensure the appropriate technical advisors are present. TSC is looking to move forward toward preliminary recommendations and she encouraged the AGS to identify the questions it believes the TSC should address.

To shed light on prior public comment, Claudia Hurley shared a document showing where the public has provided input regarding forestry over the last several years and noted that the comments predominantly and consistently address social and ecological concerns; many of which have not been implemented.

AGS members are concerned that the TSC is disconnected from the AGS discussions and input. A number of steps will be taken to address this. To better inform the TSC, the facilitators will have the email exchange among AGS members concerning the discussion questions for the meeting summarized and compiled. The facilitators will also remind those who have not completed the survey to do so and will provide the results to the AGS and TSC. Ms. Vernegaard asked the AGS to succinctly summarize for the TSC any areas of

strong agreement among the group and, where there is not agreement, to articulate the different perspectives and why differences remain. Issues might include: visitor services, forestry industry, and environmental services, for example. Bill Logue will investigate a central way of storing and accessing articles and papers people may be sharing among themselves.

A joint meeting of the TSC and AGS will be held in September with a goal of hearing about ecological and wildlife issues while reserving sufficient time for discussion. Bill Logue will work on the format which may include written materials in advance in response to specific questions, and limited or no presentation at the meeting but Q&A with the technical experts.

AGS members suggested a number of potential topics or presenters including:

- Old growth – Bob Leverett; Wildlands - Christopher Klyza; Natural Heritage perspective - Pat Swain.
- DCR's planning/engineering division. Ms. Vernegaard stated that the TSC is working to understand organizational structure/behavior at DCR, i.e., how decisions are made, what is working, what is not. She noted that a strength of the TSC is that they do not have a preconceived idea of how it should be.
- Others encouraged Ms. Vernegaard to ensure that:
  - International impacts of Massachusetts decisions be considered, i.e., if there is no timber harvesting on public lands this could increase degradation of forests on other continents.
  - Recreational issues be considered. Ms. Vernegaard noted that she and Heather Clish bring this expertise to the TSC.

An AGS member reminded the group to represent their interests without trying to replicate the work of the TSC. Another member noted that several of the AGS members could assist in bringing relevant scientific information forward. Ms. Vernegaard excused herself, and the AGS continued with the meeting. The facilitators will provide a draft schedule of future meetings in the near future.

**2. Public Forums and Other Meetings.** Public Forums – Bill Logue gave brief updates on the public forums in Leominster and Savoy. Summaries for the public forums are posted online. AGS members strongly encouraged the facilitators and DCR to provide more notice of future forums and walks. Future site walks were suggested for the public to educate and display older forests not being managed and demonstration areas such as Petersham and Mt. Holyoke. Bob Leverett gives an annual tour of Mohawk Forest and Joe Zorzin has offered to do the Gould Forest. DCR is considering informational walks not associated with the vision process.

Bob O'Connor provided a brief update on the Global Warming Solutions Act and Climate Change which has the goal of reducing carbon emissions by 2020. There are 11 work groups trying to come up with policy ideas – one group is the Forest Group, others include building, transportation, and electricity generation. A public forum to generate ideas about how to improve carbon sequestration through forests was held with about 40 people. The discussion was dominated by biomass. A legislatively mandated

"commission" will review recommendations and then there will be additional public input. First implementation is in 2011.

**3. Sierra Club Timber Harvest Mapping Project.** Jay McCaffrey provided an overview of a mapping project the Sierra Club was establishing using Google Earth and publicly available DCR information. The Club was trying to represent this information in a more visual fashion so that people could get a quick understanding of what was going on. Through a weblink and using free Google Earth software with layered information, anyone will be able to view the location of proposed timber harvests and the associated narrative. The public link will be available soon. The Sierra Club will try to keep the links updated with new information and will turn the project over to DCR. He encouraged AGS members to send him comments and suggestions.

DCR staff stated that this will be useful to the Department and that they were concurrently working on a matrix of timber harvest from pre-contract inception to final sign-off. AGS members suggested that in the future biomap, Natural Heritage, and other information could also be included. GIS mapping is more difficult with this free software. Minnesota was suggested as a good model for putting all this together. (EEA staff is in the process of mapping state-owned lands.) AGS members asked DCR to clarify which timber harvests were on hold pending the outcome of the vision process and which would move forward.

**4. AGS Internal Survey.** The AGS received preliminary results of the rough internal survey to which 17 of the 23 members had responded to date. They noted that there were some areas where there appeared to be high levels of agreement. Other areas show much more diverse opinion. For some questions it is not clear if this is a result of lack of clarity in a question, different understanding of terminology or actual differences. Because of limited time, the group took a few minutes to identify questions that coalesced around an issue or theme (noted below) and asked the facilitators to encourage those who had not responded to do so. Following that, the results will be circulated with the AGS and TSC. Because the questions and answers lack context and could be misunderstood, they will not be publicly circulated. The group left open the option of doing more refined surveys in the fall. A summary of the level of agreement among those who have responded to date follows:

- All respondents agreed that adding a zoning category for parklands is a good idea.

Some areas appear to have very high levels of agreement including:

- Inclusion of additional ecological and recreational considerations in planning. (There is less agreement on whether this is a structural issue or an implementation and resource issue.)
- Increase in reserves are needed.
- It would be beneficial to add a definition of "clear cutting" to existing regulations.
- More study is needed of special needs of biomass before assuming it to be available from state forest lands.

Some areas will clearly need further discussion including:

- Economic benefits direct vs. indirect.
  - What this might mean for towns of various sizes and their tax revenues and jobs.
  - An assessment of whether there is a financial benefit or gain from wood products harvested on state land.
- Clarity on what various DCR lands were purchased for and if this should restrict how the group regards future uses.
- Uses of revenue from timber sales and use of timber sale contract to accomplish other work on the state forest.
- Creative ways of addressing issues and resources, e.g., volunteer management of some invasives, road closures.
- Enforcement capacity and funding for such things as cutting practices, wetlands, MOUs, off-highway vehicle use, partying.

The AGS came up with the following thematic grouping of questions which will help in drafting a summary of results when the remaining members complete the survey:

- A. 4, 5a, Economics around wood products
- B. 5b – Economic/tourism
- C. 1,2,3,6, 16 – Planning/Follow-through – Need to improve
- D. 7, 8, 11, 12 - Cap
- E. 9, 13 – Reserves/Parklands
- F. 15 – Too focusing
- G. 10 – Clear-cutting
- H. 14 – Biomass

5. **Work Group Reports.** The ad hoc work groups reported on the status of their work.

**A. Clarification of Public Understanding.** Fred Heyes reported on the status of what the public should reasonably expect to be available information concerning a proposed or ongoing timber harvest. He noted that in his experience some best management practices (BMPs) were not being followed and project follow through could be improved. He has collected information from DCR and MDC. He noted that with its documents, such as a Certificate of Compliance, MDC notes issues such as the attitude of operator, violation of law, etc. and has used this to weed out bad operators. He reviewed MDC sample documents such as maps, specified equipment, proposed cutting plan, heritage check-off, etc. He will meet with DCR staff see what they can provide and what they cannot provide. He also noted that service forestry is different than management forestry and that he is aware of two service foresters who were told not to inspect because there were DCR foresters on the job. He believes service foresters should be within the Department of Agriculture. He will report back after meeting with DCR and note areas where the public might expect to be advised of an event or have meaningful input.

An AGS member noted that a Memorandum of Understanding is in place between the Department of Environmental Protection and DCR's predecessor agency, the former Department of Environmental Management and should be reviewed and that it is lacking clarity and consistency and provides for exceptions to some regulations. Unless the service forester notes a wetland violation, no one can step in. They stated they felt it is an internal conflict of interest for DCR and should be revised to create a check and balance. Mr. Heyes offered copies of the BMP manual and said he was in contact with DCR about possible forester training. If one is scheduled, he will invite the AGS to attend the training to learn about issues such as buffer strips, slash laws, and vernal pools, and to understand the training foresters receive.

**B. Reserves and Parklands Work Group.** Mike Kellett reported that the work group has a rough draft narrative and list of areas and revisions that will be shared with the AGS. The work group started with the assumption that based on ecological criteria not enough reserves exist and examined existing criteria to identify constraints and missing pieces. Originally the established goal was 50,000 acres for large reserves, and although criteria was applied, the group felt that some criteria were applied, the group felt that important parameters, such as climate change adaptation, scientific conclusions that older forests effectively sequester carbon, reserves expansion options, species connectivity, and eco-region representation, were not sufficiently considered in DCR's reserves selection process. He noted that reserve design biologists state that viable long-term ecological sustainability requires large reserves of at least 15,000 acres and that Wildlands and Woodlands reports indicates 50,000 acre reserves. The largest of the DCR reserves is 11,000 acres, and most reserve areas selected by DCR could have been larger by expanding them to include more existing public lands in the adjacent areas.

The work group feels that a total of 25 potential reserve areas exist that would create large reserves totaling 367,000 acres of public (state) land. The group also looked at creating a parkland category for state parks, certain parks and reservations – many in Eastern MA – and recommends these be protected from active management for timber similar to current protections for Urban Parks.. If the latter are included, an argument can be made for 450,000 acres of reserves off-limits to logging, etc. He noted the high potential for reserves in these estimates and that the group would revisit their calculations.

Work Group member Heidi Ricci noted that the Reserves Work Group report will articulate further scientific basis and rationale for large reserves. She also noted wildland forests undergo natural processes that are not present or in a different way than in managed forests, such as fungi growth, and develop structural characteristics, variety of sizes, and regeneration takes place without human intervention. She noted MA Audubon participated in the reserve committee to prioritize criteria but were not asked about what the cap should be and that public input on the 50,000 acre cap should have been sought. She felt the ranking of criteria was not done properly. Patch size is very or the most important issue to many scientists and that those participating presumed it would be considered as such, yet it was given a lower ranking in the actual DCR selection process. The work group noted that they recognized that some reserves might need some management for ecological value (old plantations, etc.), fire dependent species, invasive species present, and those things should not be precluded from reserves except where designated as a control area to

compare with an active management area or special circumstances (Asian Longhorn Beetle). They also noted that good forestry and silviculture can be promoted with a substantial portion of lands in reserves and holding a substantial portion of lands in reserves will increase stumpage rates for private forests owners.

During discussion other AGS members noted that more reserves were warranted and agreed that a definition of how the group is using the term reserve is needed. One member questioned whether criteria could be verified in the forests and the underlying assumptions about forest age and carbon sequestration capacity can be questioned. Another member stated that he felt the science was not yet conclusive regarding carbon sequestration despite the studies cited in the presentation. They also noted that private land owners hold and manage land for a variety of reasons that the Massachusetts demand for forest products cannot be met fully through local production and that a balancing of values is required. Bill Logue highlighted that this is part of the process where differences need to be articulated and why.

Bob O'Connor provided a brief explanation of how land was rated and reserves determined and noted that DCR has 4 ownerships larger than 15,000 acres He noted the criteria used to rate candidate reserves did include eco-region representation and that a goal of the process was to locate one large reserve in each of the ecological land units mapped by TNC. David Foster proposed reserves up to 50,000 acres – this was largely in recognition that the Quabbin is over 50,000 acres. DCR has used the criteria to identify land acquisition opportunities. During the process, private landowners were upset when the state discussed expanding reserves on private land. A landowner stakeholder representative concurred in this. EEA held 4 public hearings and received 300 letters commenting on reserves. More than 250 letters supported the mix of reserves and “green certified” managed forests proposed. EEA and DCR held two meetings with Boards of Selectmen who were concerned there were too many reserves in their town and the impact on payments from timber sales. During the process, private landowners were upset when the state discussed expanding reserves on private land. A landowner stakeholder representative concurred in this.

**C. Moratorium Work Group.** Alexandra Dawson was unable to make the meeting, however, on her behalf, Claudia Hurley stated that the key request is that DCR put its intention in writing with regard to proposals, plans, etc. that clearly indicate if timber harvesting will continue, where and why or if timber harvests are suspended pending the outcome of the Forest Futures Vision Process. Bill Logue noted that DCR has said that if the existing district plans need to be revised as a result of the vision process this will be done.

**D. Organizational Structure Work Group.** Heidi Ricci briefly reviewed the organizational chart of DCR and emphasized that planning has been underfunded and to understand if there are structural or resource issues the Work Group needs to understand how resources have been allocated between Bureau of Forestry planning efforts and other planning efforts. Bill Logue reminded the group that the TSC was looking at this within the larger context of decision making and organization structure/behavior.

6. **Action Items.** A significant goal is to provide information to the TSC by the third week in August.

<b>Action Items</b>	<b>Who</b>
Work groups – continue and revise work, draft summaries for circulation to AGS then TSC	Each work group
Review discussion questions, compile and note themes	MODR
Survey – remind non responders, compile and send to AGS/TSC	Bill Logue
Revise and repost meeting agenda	Bill Logue