

DCR FOREST FUTURES TECHNICAL STEERING COMMITTEE (TSC)
& ADVISORY GROUP OF STAKEHOLDERS (AGS) JOINT MEETING

Doyle Conservation Center
325 Lindell Avenue
Leominster, MA 01453

Joint Meeting #3 – October 14, 2009; 1:00 – 5:00 PM

MEETING SUMMARY

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

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

DCR/EEA Staff: Gary Briere, Stephanie Cooper, Bill Hill, Bob O'Connor, Thom Kyker-Snowman.

Facilitators: Bill Logue, John Goodrich. **TSC Technical Coordinator:** Tom Walker.

Observers Present: Steve Kaiser, Monica Leverett.

Presenters: Bob Leverett, Dave Loomis.

The TSC and AGS reviewed the agenda for the afternoon and began the meeting by receiving two presentations.

Presentation: Balancing Public Values -- Biodiversity, Recreation and Silviculture

Professor David Loomis of the UMass Department of Natural Resources Conservation gave a presentation on balancing public values concerning biodiversity, recreation and silviculture. He started by noting that the tendency is to look at natural resources such as forests and evaluate their condition. If the forests are not in good condition there is the desire to improve them through management and rehabilitation but achieving this is not as easy as one would think. He discussed the role of the social sciences and recreation in resource management.

Professor Loomis reviewed the history of management briefly by noting that from the time of European settlement through about 1825 the forests were not managed, for the 100 years following that there was considerable cutting, hunting and burning on the land, from 1920-1960 the forests were treated as a commodity, from 1960-1985 the environmental movement arose and legislation was passed to manage resources for the public, and since that time there has been considerable conflict and litigation. He noted that a colleague at one federal agency told him that one-third of their budget was devoted to litigation in situations where the public had not been properly consulted. This is often the result of well intentioned people with scientific or technical expertise who gravitate toward expert based management with insufficient public consultation. He noted a distinction where natural resources scientists tends be

descriptive (e.g., if you do what you are doing here is what it will look like) and social scientists are the ones who tell us what it should be (Opinions vary as to what forests you want, at what cost, and with what trade-offs).

Social systems tend to drive resource management, often through the passage of legislation. The social values are influenced by our interactions with the natural environment; they are not fixed and vary regionally. For example the way of addressing an issue is very different in Texas and New England. This is also affected by the way people recreate differently and has implications for how forests are managed (e.g., tent camping and RV sites with electrical hook-ups). Professor Loomis noted a number of expenditures in Massachusetts relating to recreation from 2005-2006 data: fishing \$770million; hunting \$70million; wildlife watchers \$750million. The demand for recreation is often based on what an individual desires: activity based, experienced based (i.e., spend time with family), benefit based (stress reduction). However there is little research on recreational users.

He cited survey work he has conducted at Myles Standish State Forest, Blue Hills Reservation and Wachusett Mountain. The surveys were conducted with site intercepts on a random basis. In general the results are consistent in that users wanted to experience activities in a natural environment setting but were less responsive about the specifics of the setting. Users tend to respond in ways that indicate that they "like what they've got" which could lead to the question about why make improvements. Users tend to be amenable to temporary closures to protect endangered species but object to permanent closures. Baseline studies of the general population have not been done.

Presentation: Identifying Exceptional Forest Sites for Patch Reserve Designation

Bob Leverett of the Eastern Native Tree Society made a presentation about exceptional forest sites based on his experience traveling throughout the United States. For the public exceptional places often relate to the aesthetics and inspirational values of a place. Historical connections and passive recreation are also important. He and the Eastern Native Tree Society have a recognition process with weighted criteria that leads to designation as an exceptional place. Mr. Leverett displayed numerous pictures with examples of special places in forests in Massachusetts. These included views of old fields, across valleys and old growth trees of exceptional size and age. One example he gave was that two of the four white pine trees in the Northeast which he has measured with diameters in excess of 12 feet and more than 160 feet tall are in Massachusetts. Other special trees of a variety of species were also displayed including hemlock, beech, yellow birch, pitch pine and others. He also noted areas, such as rock caves, that have seen continuous use by Native American tribes.

In response to questions he noted that there was the danger of some of these places being exploited by human impacts. For this reason the locations of some exemplar trees are not disclosed. He estimated that there were 1,200 – 1,300 acres of old growth forests in the state.

Large Forest Reserves

Andy Finton of the TSC and Mike Ryan and Heidi Ricci of the AGS gave brief presentations on large forest reserves.

Andy Finton reviewed the criteria used in selecting the existing reserves. These include places of sufficient size to support or contribute to the full suite of forest biodiversity and the ability to recover from disturbances, with the ability to respond to global change through ecological and evolutionary process, which provide habitat, clean water and air, and offer educational, recreational and spiritual benefits. He

noted that The Nature Conservancy has worked on this independently for 10 years and he reviewed the process that TNC had used looking at the northeast. In Massachusetts 11 forest types in 24 blocks of 15,000 acres or greater were identified. Core areas which can support interior bird species were a significant factor. The state agencies had identified 9 reserves. He described several scenarios for discussion which would add to reserves. These scenarios included existing DCR forests, already protected open space and land to be acquired. These have been detailed in other meeting summaries and presentations. In short the first scenario would add an additional 24,000 acres for a total of 79,000 acres in reserves, in the second the total would be 167,000 acres, in the third 198,000, and in the fourth 377,000. (The latter included non DCR forest and park land outside the scope of the Visioning Process.)

In response to questions, Mr. Finton noted that the group needs to revisit the values that were used in deciding to select the current level of reserves and that he believed that enlarging the reserves to 15,000 acres each would still have surrounding forest buffers but a finer scale analysis in the future could address this question. He noted that redundancy exists in the type and at the ecoregional scale where some redundancy might exist outside of Massachusetts.

Mike Ryan presented on the proposal of the AGS reserves work group (other members include Heidi Ricci, Nan Finkenaur, Mike Kellett, Dave Gafney, Mary Booth and Jane Winn). He noted that Massachusetts is the third most densely populated state and only 10% of lands are publicly owned. Given climate change and the evolving knowledge of scientists the group believes the precautionary principle should apply and therefore there should be much greater redundancy. He noted the benefits public lands offer that private lands cannot or will not protect. These include wilderness, large blocks, wildlife, clean water and clean air among others. The work group added substantial representation in each region. This analysis led to 455,000 appearing to qualify as reserves, with 79,000 as parklands and 376,000 in large wildland reserves. This would leave 100,000 in state forest lands for positive impact forestry that would be sustainable and accessible and a benefit to the local economy. The group also believes that there should be stronger protection through legislative designation as reserves. Heidi Ricci encouraged the TSC to focus on the criteria in the proposal as the numbers need additional analysis. She also encouraged the TSC to look for opportunities to work with abutting land owners. With lands that would be actively managed she, suggested that those could be the focus of planning activities within available resources.

Discussion.

Woodlands. An AGS member noted their support of the three zone concept and encouraged the TSC to ensure calculations are done concerning woodlands which determine the amount of timber that might be harvested and how that relates to current levels of harvest. Several individuals asked if fewer acres available for timber harvest, might better managed harvests yield more timber per acre but have an overall lower impact. In conjunction with this they stated that from a resource perspective DCR would have sufficient staff to manage this smaller area. Others noted the importance of supporting forestry operations and communities where they currently exist. Several noted the opportunity to manage woodlands for late successional habitat. Several participants commented that whole tree harvesting should be prohibited in DCR forests.

Reserves. A TSC member raised the issue of connectivity among reserves to address migration related to climate change. Most of those present highlighted the importance of having large reserves. Many based their comments on the wildlands and woodlands concepts. Others emphasized the protection of special places. Some AGS members noted that the large forested

tracks vary in quality and encouraged the group to think about what can be done to restore lower quality areas.

Parklands. A fair number of those present emphasized the importance of parklands for people to gather and recreate.

General Discussion.

During general discussion, a number of participants noted the importance of DCR establishing a new more trusting relationship with the public. Several also noted the importance of identifying criteria for each of the three zones.

Comments from the AGS not captured above when participants were each asked to highlight important issues to be addressed in the draft recommendations:

- A member encouraged the TSC make recommendations which ensure consultation with Native American tribes.
- Several members noted the importance of having criteria for the zones and allowing multiple forms of management and sustainable forestry. Others noted that forestry can be done through low impact methods as set forth in a paper shared by Bill Keaton.
- A member noted the importance of recommendations that will work and can be sustained over time.
- A member noted the importance of addressing conflicting legal mandates.
- A member noted the importance of DCR working with the public and non-government organizations and creating public-private partnerships which enhance communications.
- Several members expressed strong concern about the potential pressures and negative impact of large scale biomass plants.
- A member noted that stronger, clearer and more closely adhered to cutting regulations would improve the situation.
- A member asked that reserves allow minimal human impact recreation.
- A member encouraged the TSC to balance the uses and activities, and preserve traditional recreational activities.
- A member suggested that wildland preservation similar to the Adirondacks be used as a model.
- A member suggested that training of local volunteers, similar to Riverways projects, could help with implementation.