

DCR FOREST FUTURES TECHNICAL STEERING COMMITTEE (TSC)

Doyle Conservation Center
325 Lindell Avenue
Leominster, MA 01453

Meeting #10 – November 24, 2009; 8:15 – 11:45 AM

MEETING SUMMARY

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

DCR/EEA Staff as Observers: Stephanie Cooper, Dave Goodwin, Bill Hill, Bob O'Connor, Thom Kyker-Snowman.

Facilitators: Loraine Della Porta, Bill Logue. **TSC Technical Coordinator:** Tom Walker.

Observers: Dave Gafney, Fred Heyes, Claudia Hurley, Cathy Kristofferson, Jay McCaffrey, Mike Ryan.

Note: Due to schedule and other reasons this summary was prepared by the facilitators but not reviewed by the TSC.

Welcome

The TSC reviewed the agenda for the morning.

Allocation Among Landscape Zones

The TSC invited Stephanie Cooper and Bob O'Connor to the table to describe the results from the application of criteria to the parklands and woodlands landscape zones. Stephanie Cooper informed the TSC that, overall, the landscape zoning model appeared to be a viable concept but would need public participation to implement.

Parklands

Stephanie Cooper noted that DCR had applied parklands criteria to the Division of State Parks and Recreation (DSPR) lands. The criteria include density of trails and proximity to households. She noted that there was likely some overlap with the reserve lands. The land was designated as parklands in locations where there was an overlap between woodlands and parklands. This preliminary application of the criteria results in approximately 70,000 acres in parkland; much of this includes lands to the east of Route 495, but also includes many other areas as well. During discussion there seemed to be a general estimate that as many as 10,000 acres of this was probably a duplicate counting of reserves), a number that could rise on deeper analysis. She noted that the cumulative impact of this acreage and the minimal scenario for reserves the TSC had been discussing would result in about 50% of the DSPR lands as reserves and parklands.

Bob O'Connor and a TSC member noted that if a purpose of woodlands is to act as demonstration of good active forest active management the TSC should consider whether some small demonstration sites near urban areas should be considered in order to provide an educational opportunity to the general public.

Woodlands

Stephanie Cooper and Bob O'Connor noted the criteria applied in analyzing DSPR lands eliminate such areas as steep slopes, old growth, and water and analyze other feature through other criteria such as soil data layers, distance to roads, accessibility, defoliation, areas, past management, etc. The outcome indicates that about 154,000 acres, or 50% of DSPR lands, are suitable for woodland management.

The question was raised as to the necessary size for a demonstration of silviculture and active forest management. In response, it was noted that size is less a determining factor than species, soil conditions, the representative community where the demonstration is located, the goals of the demonstration. And ease of access to a broad range of audiences. Other factors include the topography and rotation length. In general demonstration tracks could be 10-50 acres.

Reserves

The AGS Reserves Work Group had provided an updated proposal to the TSC in writing prior to the meeting. Mike Ryan of the AGS noted that the proposal was based on the lack of economic imperative for wood products on public lands and additional redundancy through 25 large reserves and additional designation of parklands. Through this allocation of reserves and parklands the remaining 20,000 acres would be designated as woodlands. He noted that signatures had been collected for a referendum to prevent biomass harvesting on state lands and that it was possible this could be done concerning timber harvesting in the future. Lisa Vernegaard noted that the TSC has discussed timber production as one of a number of ecosystem services provided on woodlands including among others education, watershed protection, late successional restoration, and early successional habitat.

A TSC member noted that for small towns any land taken out of reserves would need the lost income replaced in order to address the burden of police, emergency services and fire protection related to state lands which is born by the local municipality. For small towns these lost revenues can be a significant in relation to their overall budget.

General Discussion Relating to Allocations Among Zones

A member noted with the "floors" for each zone under discussion, there appeared to be about 50-70,000 that were not allocated to particular zones. Others noted that there was a least a doubling of reserves. DCR was asked to examine the question of how many acre as are needed for achieve the woodland values and if the model could look at the 50th and 75th percentile of lands meeting the criteria how many acres would be allocated to woodlands

Forest Certification

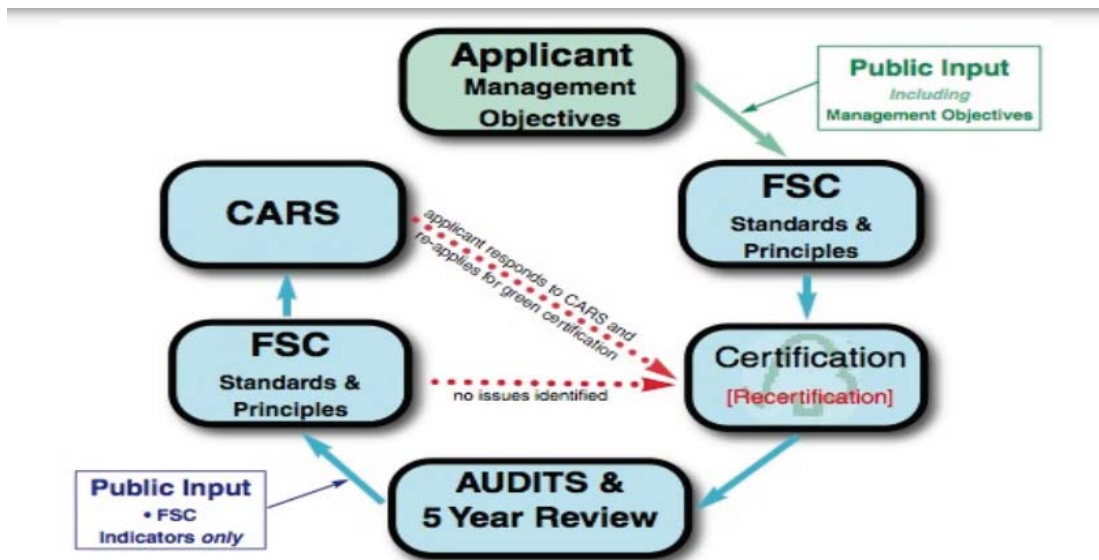
The TSC invited Claudia Hurley to the table to share her concerns regarding FSC certification of state lands. A TSC member noted that the certification process helped educate DCR foresters on management approaches and perspectives especially toward a larger landscape perspective, recognizing special stands, addressing rare specials and habitats, and moving more slowly concerning the plantations. Claudia Hurley noted that, in addition to the concerns previously expressed in writing to the TSC, a primary concern for her is that public lands are held in trust future generations not for the benefit of any one industry. She feels that FSC can be good for lands managed for timber production which focus on high yield species but this is not the situation for public lands. She also noted that FSC is not grounded in legal mandates and provides no binding recourse for failure to abide by standards.

The TSC was joined by conference call by members of the United States FSC staff including Corey Brinkemma, Gary Dodge, and Karen Steer. Lisa Vernegaard posed the question to them of whether FSC certification advances the goals of protecting multiple public values. Together FSC staff provided an overview of FSC noting that internationally 53% of certified lands are public lands that the certification is based on 10 core principles and 56 criteria which address overall land management and they allow, but do not encourage, logging. Where logging does occur, the principles and criteria are applied. They listed a number of mostly northern states including Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Washington, New York, Pennsylvania and Maine with publicly certified lands. Certification is not intended for high intensity production lands or for the National Parks.

The role of FSC is to set the principles and criteria and independent certifiers determine if the land managers are meeting the criteria. Accreditation Services International audits the certifiers. New nationwide standards are being developed. These are likely to include social impacts which are reflected in Northeast criteria 4.4 now. This addresses the issue of stakeholder consultation and high conservation values. FSC staff noted that certification requires the application of the management plan and that if there is a change in the plan or activities that the landowner needs to notify the certifying body and demonstrate why there was a change.

Claudia Hurley questioned why in the audit the issue of aesthetics was addressed only through a recommended action. A TSC member noted that a number of environmental organizations oppose FSC certification. A number of people present commented that the social aspects of certification did not seem to be sufficiently considered in the original certification and recertification audit. At this point the FSC staff was excused.

Jay McCaffrey of the Sierra Club noted that his organization supports certification but has brought several concerns forward to FSC. He identified what he considered to be a significant gap in the opportunities for public involvement during the certification process and where additional public input would build better understanding of and credibility for the process. To illustrate this he a diagram below.



The key points being that after the initial certification the process becomes a closed loop bypassing further review of the original Management Objectives with later audits and management plans based off criteria and indicators established in the original certificate. The original management objectives are not reevaluated and for public lands this presents certain problems. Sierra club has suggested FSC establish a public process that allows for input to the applicant's stated management objectives and that underlying goals and Management Objectives for harvesting on public lands must be re-evaluated at the time of annual audits and/or green recertification 5-year reviews.

After discussion, with the exception of one member who opposes certification in any form for public lands, the TSC generally supported the intent of third party accountability through certification. However, the group expressed some concerns about unintended consequences of certification. The suggestion was made that the decision to seek certification be revisited prior to each 5-year audit. DCR was asked to provide the costs of certification and audits.

Other Business

The group did not have time to discuss the public involvement section. The language prepared by Matt Burne and Loraine Della Porta will be circulated with the discussion draft.

Lisa Vernegaard will draft a statement for consideration concerning biomass.

The TSC agreed to share a discussion draft to the AGS in anticipation of the joint meeting.

The goal is to have a draft ready for public comment in January. In the next several weeks the facilitators will confirm with DCR the release date of the draft and the location and number of public forums. Once these are confirmed they will be circulated to the AGS, TSC and through other public methods.