

**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 #4 – December 18, 2009; 10:00AM – 3:30 PM

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

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

Members Absent: Jay Belanger, Tim Fohl, Jim Sherman.

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

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

Observers Present: Steve Kaiser.

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

Welcome

Lisa Vernegaard welcomed the TSC and AGS members. She noted that the TSC members had read the AGS comments and suggested that the meeting focus on language that strengthens the recommendations. Bill Logue noted that the goal was to make the document as strong as possible and reminded those present of the agreed-upon ground rules.

I. Quabbin Update

Dan Clark of the DCR Division of Water Supply Protection (DWSP) distributed written information concerning the recent controversial harvest in Petersham. He gave a brief summary noting that during the harvest some issues arose, specifically, concerning where a buffer strip was not left along 500 foot section along Woodward Road as required in the plan. The DWSP cutting plan required the contractor to use a forwarder, however the contractor's forwarder broke down and they requested to use a skidder. Permission was granted incorrectly. Opening sizes in the lot were different than proposed and different than DWSP allows in its plans. DWSP responded quickly by identifying individuals involved and

disciplinary action was taken. He noted that over 1000 timber sales have occurred without incident and stated that that this work does not reflect the program as a whole. He offered to discuss the issue after the meeting with anyone interested.

An AGS member noted that, although DWSP staff may feel this is an isolated matter, the FSC audit had identified problems with harvests on watershed lands and asked if those findings would be appealed. Mr. Clark stated that some findings would be appealed and others the agency agreed with.

II. Discussion of Draft Recommendations

The TSC spent the remainder of the meeting listening to comments and concerns expressed by AGS members and DCR representatives. They also clarified various points where their intent in the recommendations had not been sufficiently clear. In starting the discussion, Lisa Vernegaard asked if the draft recommendations would put in place mechanisms that prevent or avoid future issues. Bill Logue noted that a general theme in the comments indicated a need for a stronger link in the introduction to the controversies that were the primary driver of the visioning process. The summary following generally notes by topic the significant takeaways from the interchange.

Culture change/Paradigm Shift. The groups engaged in a discussion concerning a paradigm shift in the basis for DCR decision making and ways of interacting with the public and how the current situation has DCR feeling attacked and defensive and much of the much of the public distrusting DCR. The sentiment of many AGS members was that a significant cause of the current problems was a timber management mindset based on historical attitudes rather than an ecologically minded approach. Several TSC members stated that, through the recommendation of an ecosystem services and a forest stewardship approach, they had intended to propose a paradigm shift and that the recommendations should be revised to make this more explicit.

Several AGS members strongly expressed their opinion that this intent had not come through and that they felt the recommendations needed to be stronger in the move away from any aggressive timber management. An AGS member noted that an essential shift is viewing the forests as ecosystems not as trees and that leadership familiar with ecosystems is essential. Others expressed concern about whether such changes in attitude would take place and that the document would have to address the negative impacts of harvesting, and harvesting methodologies on other ecosystem services.

Other AGS members noted that severely restricting harvesting may protect Massachusetts forests but will externalize the damage to other parts of the country or world and that ecosystem services such as water yield can be improved through certain types of silvicultural treatments and that timber harvesting should be able to co-exist with other ecosystem services. A general lack of reference in the draft to the influence and economics of recreation and tourism was noted as an area needing more attention.

FSC. Several people stated that they continued to object to FSC certification for state lands for a variety of reasons including feeling that its approach places priority on high-yielding species, is designed to address harvesting, and is expensive to administer. That being said, some stated that they would consider how FSC standards might be acceptable for the woodlands zones to continue under certification. The groups were unsure as to what this might mean for the FSC requirement for reserves. Others noted that, in their experiences, FSC can enhance other ecosystem services and that it helps create more marketable wood products.

Scope. Lisa Vernegaard clarified that the TSC was charged with making recommendations concerning DCR forests and parks, which are under the purview of the Stewardship Council, and the Commissioner's role as State Forester. Watershed lands and other state forests are not within the scope of the Vision Process except as these and private lands provide context and influence the management of the DCR parks and forests.

Land Acquisition History. Several members noted that DCR land acquisition purposes and restrictions should inform future decision making regarding the land. Some lands were acquired to increase the supply of timber products, others for parks and other purposes. If future use of the land differs from the original intent then this should be made clear. A GIS data layer with the history/purpose was suggested as a means of informing the discussion.

Biomass. The groups reviewed language drafted by Lisa Vernegaard and alternative language proposed by Mary Booth concerning biomass harvesting for energy on DCR lands. The primary difference between the drafts being that Ms. Booth's statement was stronger and more declarative in indicating that such practices should be prohibited on state lands. The group discussed how, in contracts, the type of equipment and residue left behind could be specified. There were different understandings as to whether the state could restrict the market use of wood products once removed from state land. Several of those present expressed reservations about blanket prohibitions or restrictions that could prevent silvicultural treatments where biomass sale was the only viable market and there was an ecological purpose for the treatment. Should this occur they felt that such situations should be very limited exceptions. In this discussion, and other portions of the discussion, a number of AGS members expressed concerns with what were seen as loop holes for harvesting that could be inappropriately exploited. Several members noted that small scale, local and efficient biomass energy generation might be appropriate. Scale also was raised in reference to home fuel wood sales.

Allocation to the Landscape Zones. Lisa Vernegaard stated that a number of AGS comments had expressed concerns about the allocation to reserves and that discussion of a minimum in the draft could result in a de facto maximum. She also that the TSC had taken the approach of a minimum for reserves while awaiting information concerning the minimum necessary to provide ecosystem services associated with woodlands. DCR/EEA has put forth a proposal for this.

Reserves. Mike Ryan and Mike Kellett of the AGS made a brief presentation highlighting the differences among the various reserves straw proposals. They noted the maximum potential reserves that create substantial redundancy in ecosystems, geographic diversity and risk disturbance. They noted that the difference between the minimum in the TSC draft and the potential maximum were an additional 8 ecoregions and 12 large forest blocks. This creates a difference of 117,000 acres. Several members of the AGS who had not been part of the AGS reserves work group noted that the AGS had not fully discussed the AGS reserves work group proposal as a group. An AGS member noted that the selection of specific reserve sites needs to be performed in an open process with public involvement and to ensure that the integrity of reserves will be protected because, at the moment, DCR has difficulty preventing inappropriate activities on some of its existing reserves. Another member noted the economic importance of wood products to Franklin County and the implications for placing too many lands in the area in reserves.

At several points various participants noted, among other issues, that: redundancy also occurs at a regional scale across state boundaries; the number and extent of reserves, or other allocations, becomes a value judgment at a certain point; the special role of state lands in providing reserves; the need for smaller reserves sizes in the eastern portion of the state where DCR lands are smaller and more fragmented; and carbon credits might provide income to support monitoring and maintenance of reserves. Bill Hill of DCR noted that all reserves have a buffer area in extended rotation for old growth characteristics to protect them.

Woodlands. Bob O'Connor briefly explained the rationale for woodlands allocations proposed by DCR based on criteria discussed at earlier meetings and noted that EEA/DCR want to have state lands act as a model for private lands. They want to significantly increase the level of uneven age management on state lands and use even age management only in situations where it is designed to serve the purpose of preventing decline of a species. He further noted that they had conducted an informal survey of 14 northeastern states and the average in reserves was 26% and the range varied from 9-64%.

Mr. O'Connor noted that North Adams and Williamstown are being managed as watershed lands and should continue to be managed in that fashion. He noted that 3% of lands could be managed for early successional habitat in a 15 year rotation (30,000 acres) and other lands using silvicultural treatments to promote late successional forests. He stated that he had reviewed these concepts with Bill Keeton and Dave King and that they had supported this. Lastly he noted the overlay of values, the Wildlands and Woodlands report, and stated that having 50% of lands identified and managed as woodlands would be appropriate using the criteria identified at earlier meetings. The Global Warming Solutions Act provides a mechanism to promote "buy local" initiatives that would reduce the carbon footprint. The use of master loggers on state lands would support better work on private lands. An AGS member noted that managing for late successional habitat in the way suggested by Bill Keeton would be a significant change for the agency. Others noted that demonstration forests need to address not only silviculture but also economics.

The group discussed whether early successional habitat can be maintained by re-mowing an area. Several participants noted that grassland and shrubland birds species differ. An AGS member asked for a list of species that require early successional habitat.

It was also noted that whatever recommendations the TSC makes, that the existing management plans will have to be reconciled to match what is implemented. Bill Hill and Bob O'Connor indicated that simply editing the existing plans is unlikely.

Other Aspects of Zoning Discussion. Several participants noted that mapping out the zones will provide a useful way of visualizing and understanding the zones and gaining a sense of where there are potential overlaps to be addressed. Management costs associated with the zones and the use of volunteers / partnerships were raised as considerations.

Other Points Raised During Meeting. AGS members made additional comments concerning the draft including:

- The need to address resources.
- An objection to the implication that the recent controversies were caused by a failure to sufficiently educate the public.
- A desire to eliminate clear-cutting.
- A feeling that some of the language in the draft reflects a timber management mindset.
- The integration of planning needs to be highlighted more clearly.

III. Next Steps.

The draft will be revised and discussed at a meeting of the TSC during the first week of January. It will then be edited and circulated to the TSC and AGS briefly before the draft is disseminated for public comment later in January. Bill Logue indicated that the dates and locations of five public forums will be distributed within a week. He quickly reviewed them with the group and asked that they help disseminate them when they are released.