

**DCR FOREST FUTURES  
TECHNICAL STEERING COMMITTEE (TSC)**

Doyle Conservation Center  
325 Lindell Avenue  
Leominster, MA 01453

**Meeting #12 – March 8, 2010; 12:15 – 5:30 PM**

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

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

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

**Observers:** Nan Finkenaur, Leo Garneau, Claudia Hurley, Steve Kaiser, Cathy Kristofferson, Kent Lage, Chris Pryor, Mike Ryan.

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

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**Welcome**

Chair Lisa Vernegaard welcomed the group and noted that more than 500 people participated in the forums and numerous mail, email and survey responses were submitted offering feedback on the draft recommendations. She thanked MODR staff for compiling the information for posting on the DCR website in such a short time. Bill Logue reminded the TSC that the goal of the meeting was to arrive at recommendations that all could support and that, if there was an aspect that a member could not support that it be articulated so the public and DCR could understand the nature of any remaining differences. Joe Zorzin noted that, although the TSC has heard from many passionate voices, the group should not assume those are the only or dominant voices but rather have science decisions drive the recommendations.

The TSC then reviewed a redline version of the draft recommendations prepared by Lisa Vernegaard and Tom Walker. The general outcomes of the discussion are summarized below.

**Recommendation 1 – Ecosystem Services Model**

Several minor edits were approved which clarified the language but did not materially change the recommendation.

**Recommendation 2 – Elevated Role for Massachusetts Forest in Environmental Decision-Making**

The group discussed possible name changes for DCR and ultimately agreed that this is not necessary, nor was it wise to become too detailed with recommendations concerning the structure of the agency or creation of a new agency. The TSC focused on the underlying goal of elevating forest *stewardship* within DCR and enhancing integration and collaboration across agencies. All agreed with the language concerning the expertise of a Director of Forest Stewardship.

### **Recommendation 3 – DCR Landscape Planning Model**

The TSC discussed whether it would be advisable to make specific recommendations concerning allocation among the three zones (reserves, parklands and woodlands) and if the allocation should be revisited. The group also recognized that they had heard a variety of opinions from participants at the forums and in written feedback which reflect the conflicting values which people hold. Bruce Spencer and Charlie Thompson felt that an argument could be made for a lower level of reserves because forests might require some active management to protect them from invasive species or lessen the impacts of climate change. All agreed that the final allocation be science based, ground truthed and subject to future public process. The TSC agreed to make edits which: distinguishes between large and patch reserves, acknowledges the local economic impacts, addresses silviculture for restoration in reserves and clarifies other language. The TSC then confirmed the allocation ranges previously agreed upon.

The TSC discussed codification of reserves and the concern that had been expressed by some members and in some feedback that doing so would prevent actions to adapt to climate change, protect from fire risk, invasive species and impacts on neighboring properties. Others noted that the reserves management allows for some interventions based on criteria and appropriate scientific review and approval. Others expressed concern that protection from political pressures and that the value in reserves is in the very long-term protection. Several members noted that New York has a constitutional amendment for Adirondack State Park protecting its status. The group also acknowledged that further public process would need to address OHV use. After discussion the TSC agreed that reserves should receive long term protection through codification, constitutional amendment or some other methodology. Bruce Spencer and Charlie Thompson noted their disagreement with this aspect of the recommendation.

### **Recommendation 4 – Management Approaches for Forest Reserves**

The TSC noted some of the public feedback that being overly restrictive on reserves management interventions could have unintended consequences and did not account for sites such as Miles Standish State Park which might need more intervention to protect a particular type of habitat or protect the public from fire risk. Questions were raised about whether such a site should be designated a reserve if it required a higher level of intervention and if any revenue or incidental revenue could come from management of reserves. After discussion the TSC agreed that it should be framed in terms of ecosystem services with wood production not being a goal for reserves, followed by several examples. The provision for a scientific advisory board will be kept.

### **Recommendation 5 – Management Approaches for Parklands**

The TSC discussed the comments submitted concerning the home fuel wood program. The group agreed that parallel language should be used concerning wood products not being an ecosystem service for parklands. Areas where home fuel wood is harvested should be designated woodlands and the need and analysis performed in the refined zoning analysis.

The TSC noted that OHV use has been subject to a robust public process and future decisions should be made on a property by property basis.

### **Recommendation 6 – Management Approaches for Woodlands**

Bruce Spencer explained some suggested changes to allow managers more flexibility in practices to manage based on the forest type while still using silvicultural methods which will help DCR re-establish trust with the public. The group noted the need for ground truthing of forest types and the need for DCR to

revisit the silviculture limitations in 5-10 years as part of the adaptive management approach to ensure that they were achieving the desired objectives. The TSC also agreed that the recommendations include direction to develop standards for cultural/historical resources as part of patch reserves. Charlie Thompson expressed concern that the recommendation remains overly prescriptive from his perspective.

The TSC discussed the issue of whole tree harvesting and determined that the recommendations state that tops and branches (larger than 4") be left in the forest and that whole tree harvesting be strongly discouraged. Charlie Thompson will review the language with Tom Walker but has concerns about being overly restrictive.

After discussion the group agreed that the language on FSC certification was appropriate with the inclusion of ensuring meaningful public input and transparency. Tom Walker will work with Joe Zorzini to ensure he is comfortable with the final language given his concerns about past practices related to certification. The TSC agreed that the phrasing on early successional habitat was correct.

#### **Recommendation 7 – DCR Organizational Structure, Decision-Making and Planning**

The TSC agreed that language noting the existing ambiguities and conflicts in mandates, with an example, need to be clarified would be useful. Bill Logue will work with Kate Connolly on this.

#### **Recommendation 8 – Public Process**

Lisa Vernegaard and Loraine Della Porta noted that some of the public feedback highlighted concern that public process should not paralyze the agency. Re-establishing trust will ease this issue. The adjusted language was deemed sufficient to address the concerns.

#### **Recommendation 9 – Policies for Privately Owned Forests**

The recommendation concerning forest licenser signoff on long-term plans, and likely the issuance of revised Chapter 132 regulations, will be controversial. The TSC discussed different information provided during public feedback about the cost of preparing a cutting plan. The TSC all agreed that having a licensed forester prepare a long-term plan is best; Charlie Thompson disagreed that it should be required. The TSC noted that they should highlight that the recommendations for private forests were not regulatory but incentives to promote good stewardship worthy of study. Easements should be included in addition to fee purchases.

#### **Recommendation 10 – Resources Needed to Implement the TSC Recommendations**

The TSC noted that future acquisitions could apply to all three zones. They also agreed that the impact of state lands on local communities and the need for compensation through PILOT or other payments when land is removed from the tax rolls.

#### **Other discussion**

Andy Finton agreed to draft language concerning the recommendations needing to evolve with development of new knowledge and use a precautionary approach where the science is uncertain. Language will also be added about public feedback concerning the composition and geographic representation on the Stewardship Council to reflect the forest stewardship mission of DCR.