

Summary of Responses From Online Survey

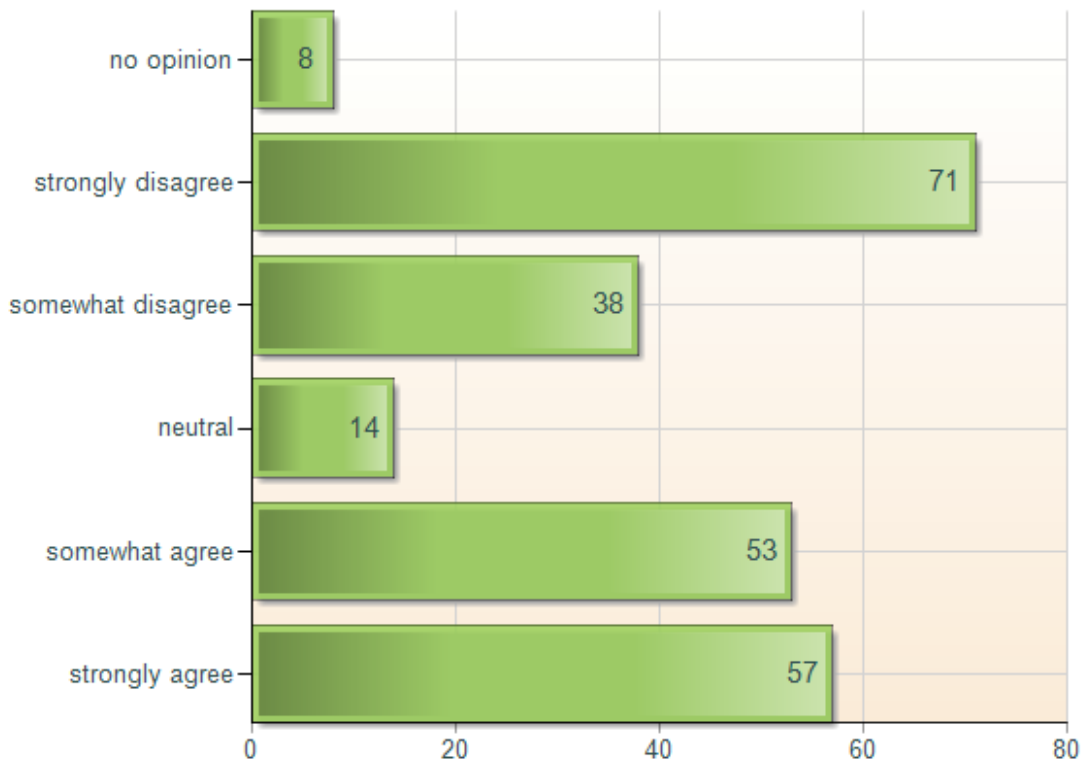
The Forest Futures Visioning Process Technical Steering Committee disseminated Draft Recommendations to the public seeking feedback. The comment period closed on February 22, 2010. One opportunity to comment was through a simple online survey established for the process by the Massachusetts Office of Dispute Resolution & Public Collaboration. This document contains the results of the survey and summarizes the narrative open responses. A separate document contains the full narrative responses.

253 survey participants. 253 participants “voted” on the Vision and on the Recommendations 1 to 10 to a 6-point scale ranging from “no opinion” to “strongly disagree”. A total of 1,355 total survey responses in 10 open-ended questions are summarized under each of the sections below. Statements grouped under “Notable Comments” are largely verbatim.

General Comments

- Too few public meetings. Too little time for more public to engage the issues.
- Public needs more notice of the opportunity to engage the creation of FFVP
- Public needs education before engagement
- TSC’s work is commendable
- TSC has exceeded its mandate
- TSC’s intentions are suspect. Specific individuals in the TSC have put forth their own interest in the recommendations
- TSC was not representative enough in terms of forest industry professionals, recreational groups, local/municipal authorities, private landowners etc.
- No need for zoning
- No need for additional regulations when Mass has the highest regulations on harvesting
- Need definitions of the technical terms used in vision and recommendations
- Recommendations must be more site-specific, taking into account diversity of the land
- Include more “verbage” about groundwater protection and preservation.
- More public meetings in towns with large tracts of DCR forests
- A 100 year vision is unrealistic.
- Global warming, climate change not taken into account in the vision “Could we mention climate change more?”
- The watershed lands need to be included in an overall restructuring of managing state forests.
- No mention of wind energy on state lands. More clarification on biofuels.
- Chances of FFVP being implemented are slim.
- DCR has no resources to back possible FFVP implementation.
- Keep your hands off of my private property.

The Technical Steering Committee sets forth a Vision for Massachusetts Forests in 2010. What is your opinion of this vision:



Comments

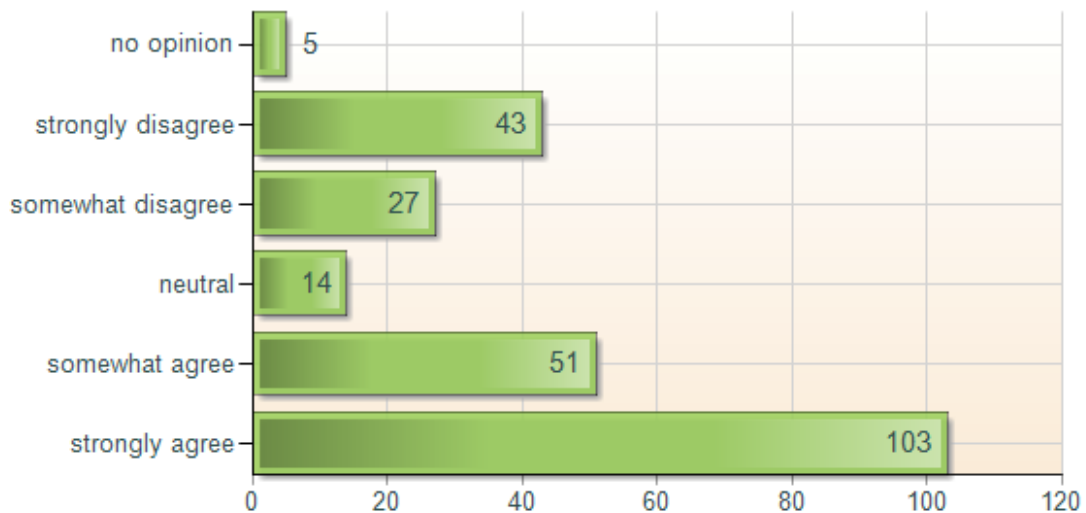
141 comments out of 253 total responses to online survey. 112 participants who completed the survey have not left any comments under the open comments section in this the first question. 32 comments are in agreement of the visioning statement while 41 comments disagree. 7 comments consider the statement unrealistic while one person mentions he does not understand the language of the vision (“I am not experienced enough to understand the ramifications of this language”). The overall majority (60) does not expressly agree nor expressly disagree with the vision as a whole. They either raise issues that they believe should have been raised in the vision or have questions about specific aspects of the vision. These questions raised include 1) the process involved in the creation of the vision, of selecting the TSC, motivations of TSC members and DCR, etc. 2) have mixed comments that indicate their own personal/regional concerns/interests or 3) questions about the science used in the process of creating the vision as a whole.

Notable Comments:

- Doesn't seem to have a category for non-forested wilderness such as meadows, bogs and shorelines.

- Fire prevention and control measures have not be addressed or seemingly even thoughtfully considered.
- Invasive plant population management needs to be implemented immediately on a large scale, especially on the watershed protection forest lands.
- Local Emergency first-responders have also not been asked for their input.
- Not realistic to look out 100 years. If this plan works for 20, and then it is considered again, that would be more practical/believable.
- Additional time is needed to address this very important issue and to achieve the goals and outcomes sought.

Recommendation 1: Adoption of an Ecosystem Services Model to Guide Forest Protection and Management -- The fundamental guiding principle for all forest protection and management policies in the Commonwealth should be to ensure the sustainable provision of a comprehensive suite of forest ecosystem services. Moreover, DCR should adopt a planning framework for the state parks and forests that focuses on the provision of key ecosystem services not expected to be provided, or not provided in adequate amounts, from private lands in the Commonwealth. What is your opinion of Recommendation 1?



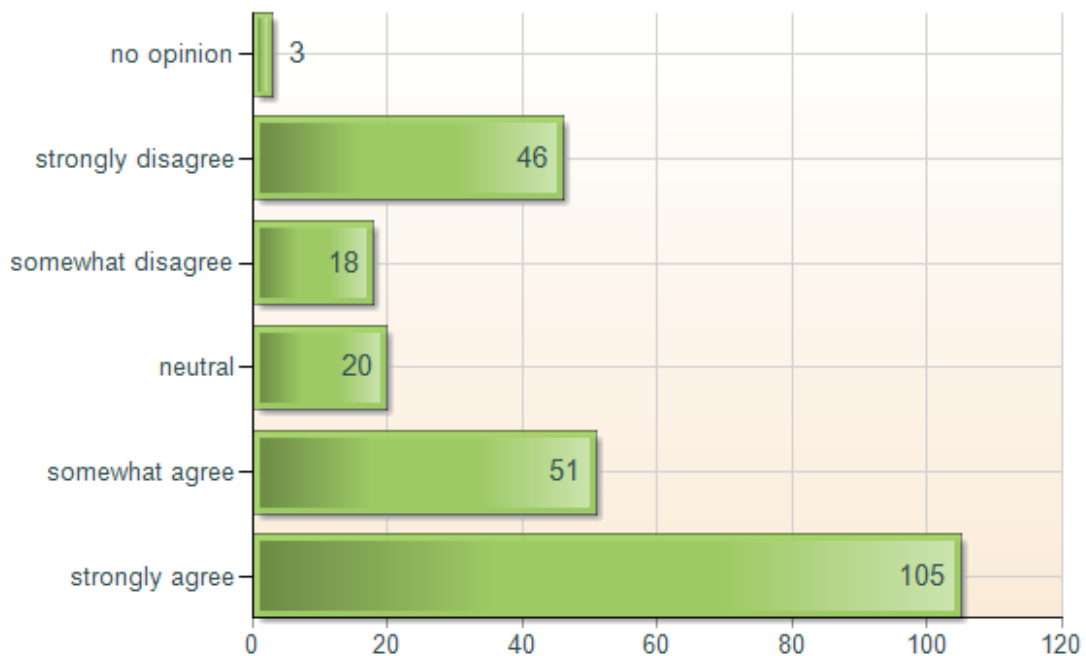
Comments

103 comments out of 253. Again the majority--150 responders-- have not left behind any comments. 16 agree with the recommendation while 17 disagree. 14 comments are mixed, many agreeing with the recommendations as a whole but doubtful on either its implementation or soundness on specific aspects of it. 7 say they do not understand the recommendation’s meaning or jargon. 45 responses neither expressly agrees nor disagrees with the recommendation but indicate personal concerns/interests or other facts to consider.

Notable Comments

- This recommendation warrants further discussion. Ecosystem Service means a lot of things to a lot of individuals and needs to be more clearly defined, understood by all, and adapted / applied at multiple landscape scales. The discussion and comparison of other models warrant further discussion.

Recommendation 2: Elevated Role for Massachusetts Forests in Commonwealth Environmental Decision-making Processes -- In implementing its environmental priorities, the Commonwealth should focus increased attention on the protection and stewardship of the state's public and private forests. What is your opinion of Recommendation 2?



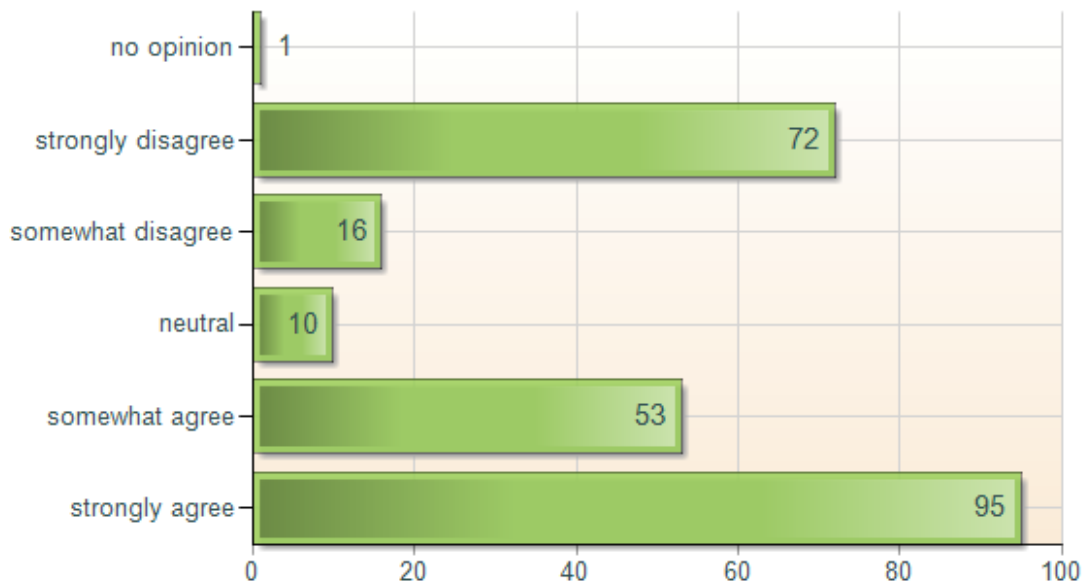
Comments

114 comments. 14 agree with the idea. 26 disagree. 25 are mixed of which the majority agrees conditionally. Two are undecided. Two does not understand. 45 neither expressly agree nor disagree but raise other concerns/interests.

Notable Comments

- I remain concerned about the gap between a 'goal' and its actual impact...
- There are no definitions including what is meant by protection, natural processes, stewardship, etc.
- We can all do a better job. We must balance the economic value of our resources along with their other functions

Recommendation 3: Policies for Privately Owned Forests in the Commonwealth -- Due to the high level of public benefits provided by private forests in Massachusetts, the Commonwealth should adopt measures to prevent further forest fragmentation and conversion to other land uses, and promote better stewardship of private forests, including a requirement that all forest harvest plans be reviewed and approved by a licensed forester. What is your opinion of Recommendation 3?



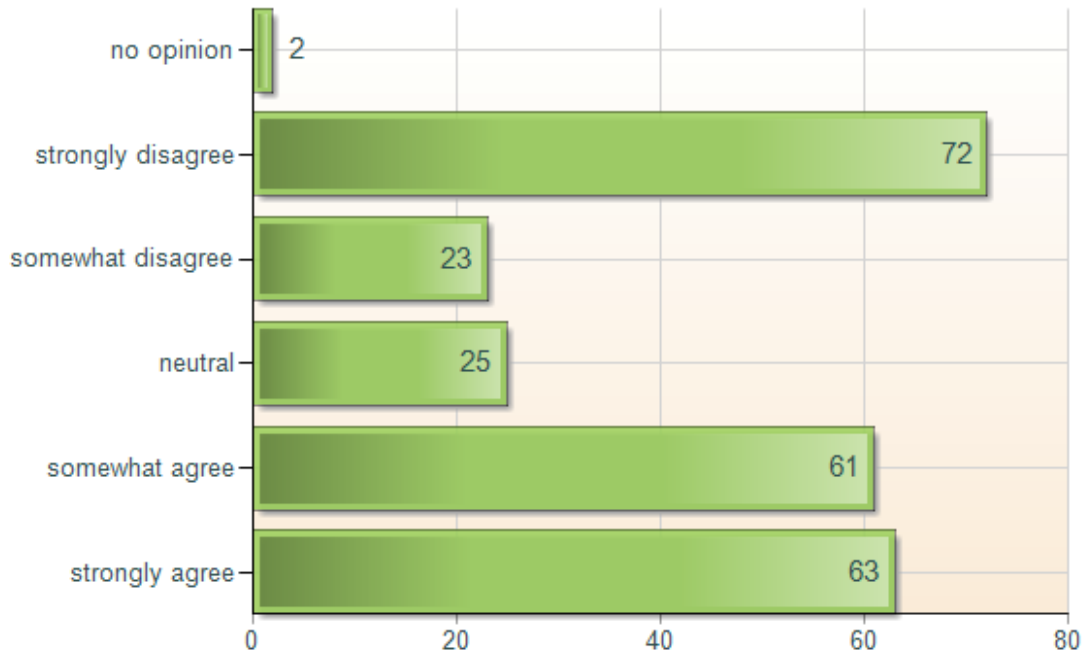
Comments

140 comments in total. 40 agree in general. 19 disagree in general. 29 raise different other concerns not directly related. 14 believe this is outside the scope of DCR FFVP. 18 believe DCR should not regulate private lands. 11 say DCR is already practicing this. 4 disagree with licensed forester sign-off of cutting plans. 3 agree with licensed forester sign-off of cutting plans. 2 say it is too expensive.

Notable Comments

- Politically, I think that the emphasis should be on efforts to encourage and facilitate desirable practices by private owners of forest lands.
- Local cities and towns should be included in the public private partnerships.

Recommendation 4: New DCR Landscape Planning Model -- As an overarching template for organizing its land management activities, DCR should adopt a management paradigm that subdivides its State and Urban Park lands into three zones: (1) Forest Reserves, (2) Parklands and (3) Woodlands. What is your opinion of Recommendation 4?



Comments

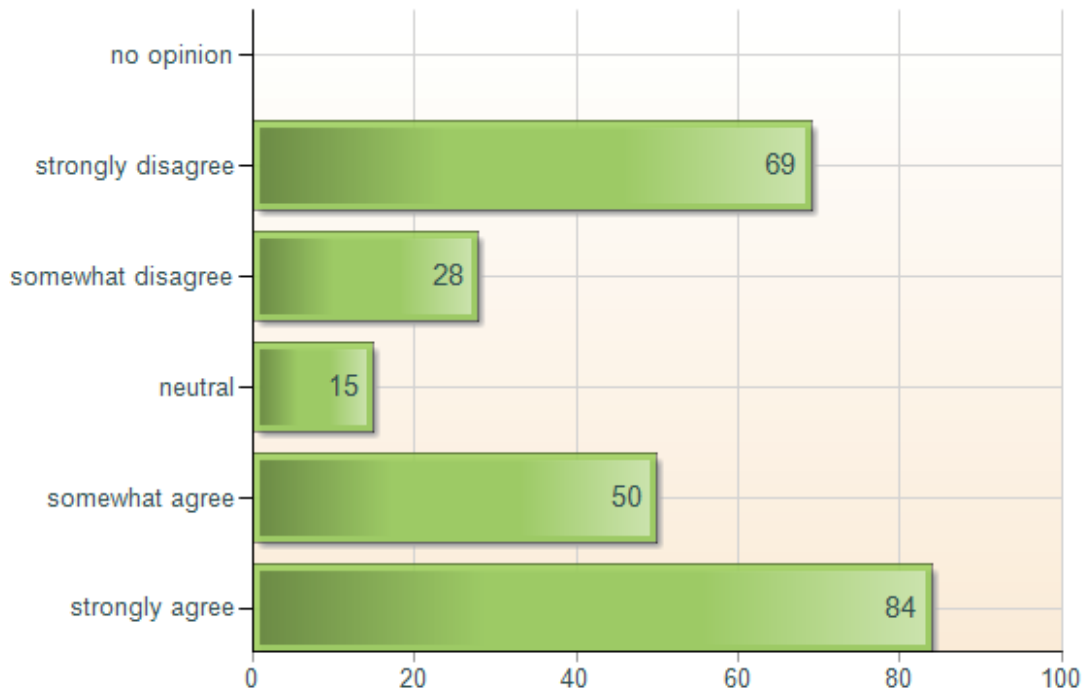
126 participants out of a total of 253 had left behind comments. 39 have expressed general support for the recommendation while 15 have expressed general disagreement. 33 have expressed other views/opinions not directly indicating either agreement or disagreement. 14 have indicated that there should be less reserves while 4 disagreed saying there should be more reserves. 9 said things should be left as is while 8 said the recommendations were either unclear or that they wanted more information to decide. 3 indicated land allocation issues as a barrier to the recommendations while one requested for the disbanding of DCR.

Notable Comments

- Only if you have public input into which areas are designated as what.
- Acreages involved should not be set until input received from more stakeholder groups, especially select boards from towns with a high percentage of DCR lands. Harvesting should be tied to our consumption of forest products. Best way would be to set harvesting as a percentage of our consumption. That way we could reduce harvesting by taking responsibility for reducing consumption rather than by grabbing land.

- What's need is a statewide is better coordination among federal, state, and local governments, private landowners, non- profit organizations, and businesses.

Recommendation 5: Management Approaches for Forest Reserves -- Reserves management should allow natural processes to determine the long term structure, composition, function, and dynamics of the forest to the maximum extent possible. What is your opinion of Recommendation 5?



Comments

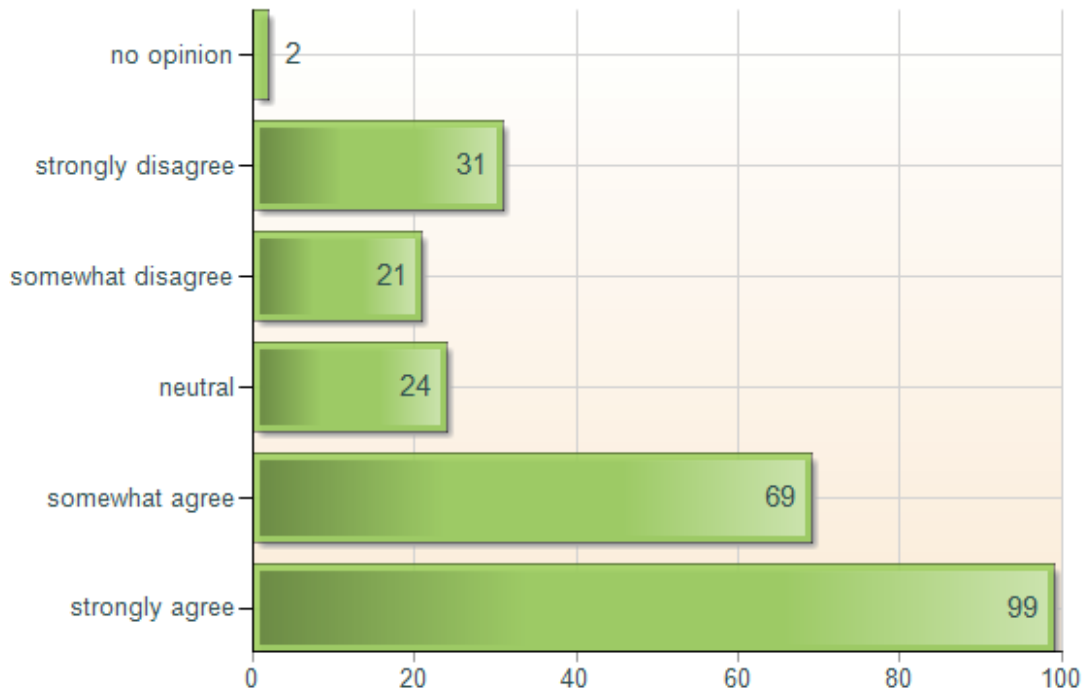
51 responses out of a total of 128 disagree with the hands-off management approach while 23 are in favor of that same approach. 7 are in general agreement with the recommendations while six are in general disagreement. 5 agree that there should not be any motorized recreation in reserves while one disagrees. Four agree that management plans have to be created for each reserve while one disagrees. 4 believe that conditions are fine the way they are now while another 4 say they have no idea or need further information/clarification to decide. 20 have expressed other views/concerns neither directly agreeing nor disagreeing with the recommendation.

Notable Comments

- Taking public safety into consideration at all times, of course. Wildfires and certain disasters need to be addressed promptly.

- We worry that Global Warming and invasive pest outbreaks may defeat the best plans.
- What is a natural process? Seems open to interpretation.
- Who will pay for the protection and maintenance of the reserves?

Recommendation 6: Management Approaches for Parklands: DCR should develop and implement management guidelines for Parklands that focus on enhancing recreation, including the aesthetic and cultural values of the property. What is your opinion of Recommendation 6?



Comments

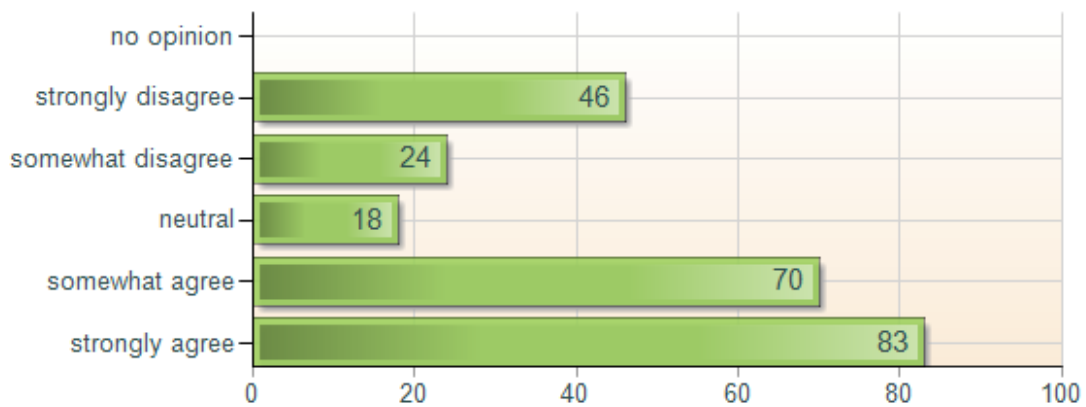
27 responses out of a total of 118 are in general agreement with the recommendation while 10 are in general disagreement. 66 have other views/opinions neither directly agreeing nor disagreeing with the recommendations but are still connected to the recommendation. 9 responses indicate that the current status quo must be maintained without any changes while 5 responses indicate the need for more information and one response indicating a neutral stance.

Notable Comments

- This should depend on the park itself and the input of the core group of users in the area the park serves

- First you need to get the public on board. Educating the public, esp. school children is critical. Look to Connecticut's "No Child Left Inside". They've done a phenomenal job at drawing attention to the benefits of maintaining state parks, including forestland.
- Sometimes protection of animal or plant habitat should override enhancing recreation
- Harvesting should be considered on a case by case basis, at least evaluated in a five year plan.
- Parklands guidelines should be developed. These guidelines need to be flexible and realistic.

Recommendation 7: Management Approaches for Woodland -- DCR should develop and implement management guidelines for Woodlands that demonstrate excellent forest management practices for sustainable production of wood, restoration of late successional habitat, active management of drinking water quantity and quality, creation of early successional habitat, practices to promote carbon sequestration, and any other ecosystem services that benefit from relatively active manipulation of the forest. Over time, these guidelines should promote a general shift towards uneven-aged management of the forests in the State and Urban Park system. At the same time, woodlands management should include guidelines to protect the integrity and scenic quality of trails and scenic roads in the woodlands zone. What is your opinion of Recommendation 7?

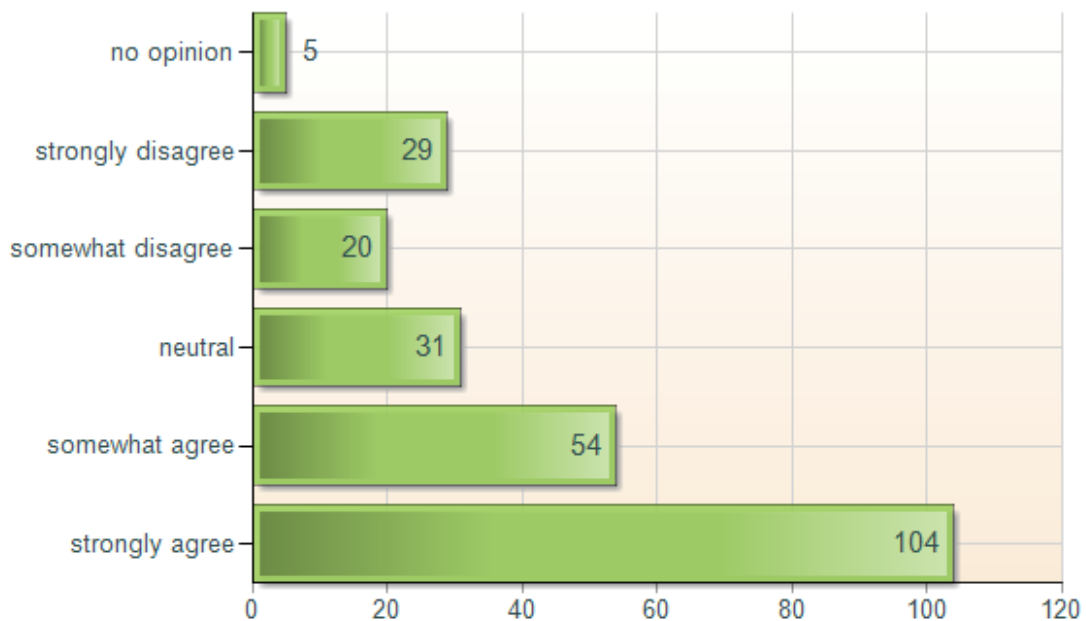


Of the 146 comments, 29 were in general agreement with the recommendation while 11 were not. 75 comments expressed views and opinions not directly agreeing or disagreeing with the recommendations though their views/opinions were still connected to the recommendation. 14 disagreed with the shift towards uneven-aged management while three agreed with uneven-aged management. Four agreed with the idea to manage a section of the forests for demonstration/education purposes while two disagreed. One disagreed to more wood products coming out of DCR lands while another agreed that the recommendation will have negative impacts on the local economy. Three expressed the opinion that TSC does not have the mandate to make this recommendation. Two wanted the status quo as is while one comment indicated a lack of knowledge on the issue and the need for more information.

Notable Comments

- There must be strong educational components to all these recommendations -public understanding of forest management is very poor.
- I hope there are funds and regulations in place to realize this recommendation.
- Instead of specifying a "one size fits all approach" (uneven aged silviculture with exceptions up to 5 ac), specify the goals and use professional foresters to implement plans that use all the tools in the toolbox to best meet the goals on each site.

Recommendation 8: DCR Organizational Structure, Decision-making, and Planning – The DCR Commissioner should establish a fully integrated planning and management structure focused on long-term stewardship and adaptive management for the complex and inter-related set of ecosystem service priorities established for DCR parks and forests. What is your opinion of Recommendation 8?



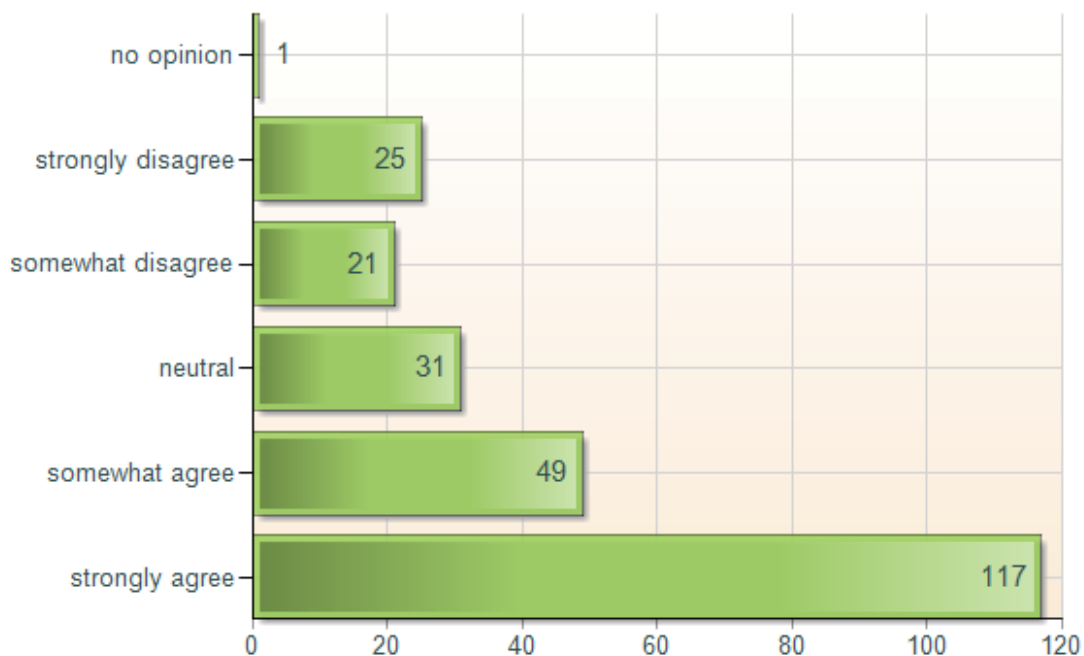
Comments

28 comments out of a total of 98 do agree with the recommendation. Only seven disagree. 47 comments neither directly agree nor disagree but go on to express additional views/opinions that are still connected to the recommendations. Nine comments ask for further clarification or information while six believe what DCR already has is adequate. One comment has questioned TSC's authority to make this recommendation.

Notable Comments

- I agree with this recommendation but fear it will go by the wayside upon election of the next administration - how do you ensure future administrations will commit to this?
- The commissioner should establish an advisory group including forestry consultants.
- Need to have all parties involved.
- How will this be paid for?
- Site specific resource management plans should be developed for each property.
- DCR needs a fully integrated planning team.

Recommendation 9: Improving Public Process -- Create a robust process that gives members of the public an opportunity for their concerns and values to be addressed and incorporated throughout the planning and implementation of management of the publicly owned land under DCR's care. What is your opinion of Recommendation 9?



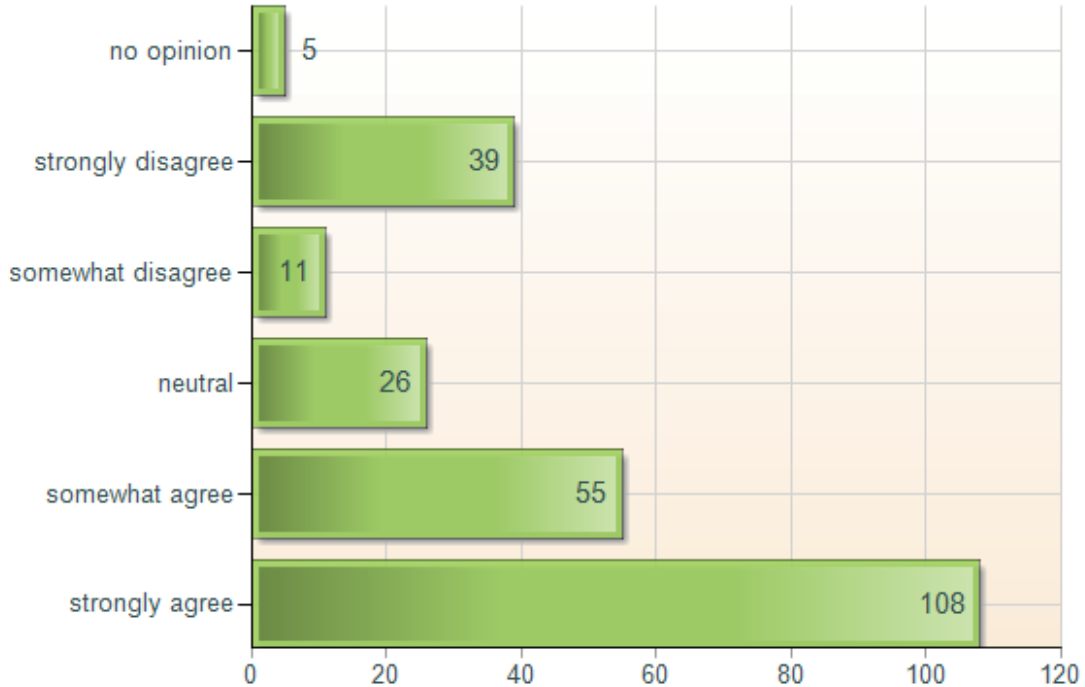
Comments

80 comments out of a total of 130 do generally agree with the recommendation while 19 do generally disagree. 21 comments contain answers not directly agreeing nor disagreeing with the recommendation but express views and opinions that are still related to the recommendation. 5 comments raise questions about the process of public engagement mentioned in the recommendation while 4 require clarifications/further information. One comment indicates such a public engagement process already exists.

Notable Comments

- The difficult part is balancing public input with biological necessity.
- Give highest priorities local communities and say 50% weight then redistribute remaining to each "stake holder group"
- A plain language abstract of reports such as this one would go a long way toward improving public awareness and participation in the process. Also, public opinion should be only one factor involved in decision making, and not necessarily the primary one.
- However, from my experience it seems that most of the time people only get involved when they are opposed to something.
- Using this survey format is very helpful. Use it as a model for future public comment.
- Education needs to come first. Before a concerned public citizen is allowed to voice their opinion on a management plan, it would make sense for that person to have some knowledge as to how forestry and ecosystem management works.
- The public that comes out to express themselves are usually very fringe people expressing a relatively extreme position. Don't allow noisy fringe people to drown out good science and policy.
- Perhaps a means of ongoing dialog through a website could be a way to keep the interests of the public served going forward
- The operative terms here are "addressed and incorporated", not just heard.
- I have a concern that the loudest voices will not always have the best interests of the greater good.
- Management should be based on solid science NOT public pressure groups.

Recommendation 10: Resources Needed to Implement the TSC Recommendations -- The DCR Commissioner should develop and implement strategies for funding the specific recommendations from the Forest Futures process. What is your opinion of Recommendation 10?



Comments

42 comments out of a total of 110 do agree with the recommendation while nine disagree. Thirteen indicate they are not clear enough about where DCR could obtain the funds for implementation of vision while five are concerned that there will not be sufficient funding to implement the recommendations at all. 31 comments have raised other issues not directly agreeing or disagreeing with the recommendations with views and opinions that are still connected to the recommendation. Five require additional clarification or information while another five believe that DCR either does not need or has already got the necessary resources to implement the recommendations.

Notable Comments

- DCR is the first to take a hit in bad times and the last to receive a trickle in good times and it has never been any different since George Washington.
- The more public funding for this program, the better.
- Foremost is the need to retain harvesting money within DCR to be used for sustainable purposes.
- I would be willing to pay higher user fees for access to forest reserves and parklands if I felt the money was being wisely used to implement this plan. Maybe a global pass to all accessible

properties analogous to fishing / hunting license would be worth considering. The money would need to be earmarked specifically for implementation of this plan and for on-going management of these properties.

- The economy may limit acquisition of resources needed but a solid plan will ensure that as the economy comes back, DCR is able to reconstitute using a well thought out plan to guide them.
- Funding for maintenance of land (picking up trash, maintaining boundaries, gates & roads, as well as control of erosion, haz trees, fire, & invasive) should be included.
- I would need more information on the strategies to approve or disapprove of this proposal.