

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 public forums where an overview of the recommendations was given by the TSC followed by questions and facilitated small group discussions. This document compiles the facilitator's notes reflecting comments, suggestions, concerns, etc. from the small group discussions held in **Amherst on February 9, 2010.**

Notes from Amherst Forum February 9, 2010

General Vision/Process:

- No attempt to consult with local officials. Revised guidelines will increase local costs, affect communities, impose requirements on local safety personnel—localities need to have input.
- Recommendations in general do not consider the economic impact, gain or loss of jobs, revenue, etc.
- Seems there has been no citizen input, only special interests.
- Who selected the members of the ASG. The table seemed OK with the members of the technical committee, but the ASG membership selection process was questioned.
- There was too short amount of time to review the recommendations.
- The state owns 500,000 acres between DCR, DFW, and others. I'm wondering if these other agencies have been considered in this process? Have they been a part of it?
- How can you predict 100 years from now how the forests will look?
- Overarching concern with the whole process and what will happen. There is not generally enough money or administration changes and plans are not implemented.
- How much has the public had input to this point in the process? Feels Like the agency is forcing the recommendations down our throats.
- Concerned because the amount of controversy that existed in development of the recommendations was not reflected in the document.
- Economics need to come into play as the ratios are developed.
- What will be the process for finalizing the recommendations?
- Process was not fair to the public if the goal was to build public trust.
- Small groups are perceived as being "agency advocacy time" instead of public input time.
- There appears to be a contradiction between the intent in recommendations 4-7 and recommendation #8. You cannot have the "adaptability" and the strict governing structure at the same time.
- More clarity of terms needed for informed public input.
- With regard to biofuels, has consideration been given to the amount of increased carbon release with increased clear cutting? Was a cost comparison done with other fuel sources such as coal?
- Definition of stewardship, as given by Lisa in the introduction, was vague and left too many loopholes for DCR to define the debate.
- Need to think about 100 years from now – what % will be forest in MA

- More people protest logging but the general public does not know about forestry – educating the public about forestry is critical. More important than other things the state spends money on.
- Climate change is not taken into account.
- I am convinced that my forest will be dead in 60 years – 100 year vision is a fantasy.
- Suggestion: Do a survey of why landowners sell their land for development.
- When we hear no harvesting, no hunting – polarization happens. It makes it difficult to work in a way to find common ground. We need to figure out how recommendations impact various users of forests.
- We started losing faith in states ability to regulate forests when we started seeing illegal logging.
- A mistake not to consider Fish and Game and Watershed lands in the scope.
- Idea of 100 year plan great but a fantasy.
- Where does the prediction of 50% of the state in forest cover come from – ie, how is the loss of 12% of the state's forest derived? Bob O'Connor explained that the number was arrived at by looking at 30-year trends and extrapolating out to 2110.
- What preparation is there in this document for dealing with wildfires? There was disagreement over the statement that fuel loading/wildfire danger in eastern US forests is different than in forests in the west: "forests are forests"
- Given the aggressive energy policy of the state, is this an exercise in futility?
- I think in a lot of this it's easier to lose sight of how small a portion that public land is. Out of 3 million acres we are talking about only 308,000 acres.
- The amount of public land represented is a small amount in the Forests on the edge study. Not enough money for public lands. Public lands critically important to provide ecosystem services. Look at this study.
- Going back to vision, it takes no account of development in private lands.
- It is an inaccessible process run by a small handful of people.
- This while recommendation exceeds scope. A blanket prohibition. A number of people who do not have expertise to do this. I spoke to TSC members who said it was made by two guys. Two others in the TSC who have the expertise said their opinions were overruled.
- Some of the organizations in the TSC with people from different perspectives. I'm in three different recreational groups. How were the members of the TSC chosen?
- When committee was formed I was shocked that a licensed timber harvester was not in it. There should've been one.
- We have been tracking this for two years now. Everyone's going to be unhappy. Huge hurdle to any recommendations being implemented. This is just a piece of paper. It will be an upward battle. I like park and woodlands zoning better. The alternative is a deadlock. It is either that or get it moving.
- When decisions are made they never stay. No consensus. Decisions aren't implemented. As a decision is made it should be implemented and outcomes assessed.

Recommendation #1 – Ecosystem Services Model

- I generally like this modeling approach.
- I lived on 100 acres which was a tree farm – logged in a selective way. Need to start defining what an ecosystem is and must take into account global warming.
- Forest functions in ways that provides benefits: Timber products, wildlife, food, genetic, climate regulation, temperature regulation, water regulation.
- What are ecosystem services?
- Managed forests – ALL forests provide service. Management should be keyed into what services society wants from forests.
- Ecosystem services are also non-commodity – clean water, wildlife, etc.

- When did we cross the line and start losing faith in our ability to regulate forests for ecosystem services?
- Ecosystem services – commercializing a concept that isn't meant to be commercialized – we have upset the balance.
- Ecosystem services done by TSC by “protection of place” but these aren't protected by this – for example – will lose “buffering capacity” of land/forest by over population. Have to “commoditize” ecosystem services – too many people.
- Worked for DCR in management planning. Overall concept of ecosystem services is good, adapted from.... But, should call them ecosystem values, because they are social, economic and ecological values. Shifting to this term helps clarify values. This initiative has been a long time coming. Conflicting mandates for a long time. A unifying vision is important, and if this report does nothing more, this will help. Serious restructuring of planning and management is needed. Contrast existing with water division which has very clear planning requirements for what do on watershed lands, including funding for ecologists etc. for over 20 years. It shows. DCR is underfunded, including the service foresters and need planning and integrated management.
- This doesn't mean the end of commercial harvesting
- We are animals, living within the ecosystem, reliant on forests, we should not be commodifying ecosystem values/services.

Recommendation #2 – Elevated Role for MA Forests in Commonwealth Environmental Decision Making Process

- Recommendation 2 to move forests to another place under a commissioner I think is a good suggestion. Good idea to move it to someplace other than this dysfunctional agency and to a place where forestry can be supported.
- DCR is dysfunctional. I don't necessarily support a new commissioner, but rather think perhaps we need to improve upon the agency as it is.
- Recommendation 2 – challenge of removing the political influence on the new commissioner - with changing of administration, for example.
- Recommendation 2 – increases likelihood of GIS analysis on all state lands. I suggest you prioritize GIS analysis and emphasize management of the worst areas of the state (e.g. areas dealing with invasive species).
- Forests can't make decisions.
- “Disconnect” between people and land. There needs to be more discussion of this issue – not clear what is meant by that.
- What level of existing state government asked for this process? Who will act on these recommendations? If not at a high level then economy and health of forests won't happen. You can have a “Commissioner of Forests” but if higher levels in government don't support that – it won't work.
- There is a role for citizens to act. Forest and water are keys to the future economy in MA.
- Stewardship Commissioner recommendation: don't need this – it is one more step into private business. Landowners are already doing a good job.

Recommendation #3 – Policies for Privately Owned Forests

- Comment that DCR should help private owners keep their privately owned woodlands. Minnesota was cited as an example of how this was being done. DCR should create “tools” to do this.
- Do you want to take private landowner rights away by making licensed foresters sign off on cutting plans? (seconded by others)

- Private forest management. Taxes on property (Chapter 61). Concerns with the proposed tax credit – how do towns make up for the loss of tax dollars?
- Having licensed foresters have to sign on harvesting plan - this is a critical item that needs a lot of thought, because it means taking away rights of landowners. This may be a step over the line. Perhaps this should be encouraged rather than required.
- In terms of the tax credit – who will pay the towns for monies lost?
- Private land has no part in this document. It should come out completely (seconded by other participants)
- Private forests should not be on the table for discussion.
- Very concerned with the state's involvement on private lands – current cutting plan works. Don't want his private property seen as a buffer – wants to be able to manage my land as I see fit. I have clear goals and I'm not politically influenced over time. Very concerned re: private land recommendations.
- What happens now on private lands and what is proposed? Want to understand.
- There are many regulations now. Not need another regulation requiring licensed foresters. DCR does fine job but understaffed. If fully staffed and under agriculture...
- One item stuck in here by someone requires licensed foresters to cut. In theory it's not bad but in fact it's a joke in practice. Anyone can get a license. We have to change the framework of forester licensing.
- How about the money issue? We have to pay through the nose for a forester.
- Ch. 132 requires a forest cutting form. The recommendations push land owners into the hands of the foresters. It increase expense of the land owned.
- I just purchased forest land. DCR had to sign it off. Why recommend it again? Land is already logged. Proposal is in addition to preparing the forest.
- If we are going to cut wood it requires approval by licensed forester. Non profits are not going to pay any taxes. What state resources are being put that these go beyond recommendations into regulations on harvesting? No incentives to land owner?
- Don't impose it on landowners without consent. They can get a licensed forester on their own even now. How is the state going to give you that money?
- Enough restrictions on us already. Why do I own land if everybody else can say what I should be doing with my land?
- No reason to change what's already there.
- In future years and future laws and what's going to change the laws stricter on private property as it is on public property? To keep it from getting tighter and tighter?

Recommendation #4 – Landscape Planning Model

- Comment that a greater need than allocating uses within the three categories of DCR land is to protect forests from conversion to suburban or retail uses. What good is it to manage the relatively small DCR holding if thousands of acres of forest are converted to non-forest purposes. Comment that the recession will go away in time and forest conversion will take up again.
- Support the model with three categories – it makes decision-making better, helps in management and planning.
- I agree this model will make decision-making easier.
- My concern is with prohibiting commercial harvesting on parklands. It seems like this prohibition is setting us up for high costs in the future. I'm also concerned with the portrayal of early successional habitat. It's not taking into consideration young forests, but rather just grass and plant life.
- The legal protection of only the reserve zone gives more weight to the value of reserves over other types of land. It also makes it easier to alter parklands and woodlands than reserves because protection is different. It should be the same.

- I don't see the value to creating large reserves – it just shows an emphasis on the spiritual value over all other values of the forests.
- There is value in the category breakdown, but I have an issue with what lands are being designated as such. I don't see why there is a need to exclude commercial harvesting on those lands (reserves) because it does not have a huge impact on the land. Management strategy sees different strategies as incompatible. In the past these have not been considered separate. Also concerned with the fluctuating rates.
- It is beneficial to break lands into categories, but criteria for each they agree on will be difficult. There is a lot of grey area. Attention is needed for the design and grey area.
- Concern with scenario of two overlapping zones – if you wish to create early successional habitat that changes the nature of one of the zones. This is an area of confusion for me.
- The balance of zones has been adequately addressed. Reserves have costs to manage and I don't see where that money is going to come from and how to support that.
- I want to see reserves increase. People don't see the value of not cutting areas. Also, the issue of local products vs. imports is not as simple as the argument that the import will come from the Amazon. This idea needs to be explored more.
- Three kinds of lands good.
- Total ecological interests not represented. Why can't we devote entire DCR lands to be reserves?
- When land is "parcelized" by private or public (zoning) – access is lost for forestry or emergency use. We need to make sure we keep road system in good repair and work with towns. Access must make sense – don't be a "knucklehead" about it.
- Question: if less area managed, then will the foresters be allowed to manage what's left on their own?
- State lands should not be used for cutting trees or for biofuels – not for utility scale, smaller scale, home fuel, not for any biofuel.
- I am very concerned about process. I'd like to see at least 80% reserves. 1/5 of our forests can be harvested and somehow there's an opinion that the public is OK with that. I saw satellite pictures, how its been cut acre at a time. I was shocked to see the pictures. DCR didn't answer at all. Why can't it be selective cutting? Why can't we think of global warming?
- Our area will be most affected. Forest reserves in central and eastern Mass will not get hit. Recreational use in our own lands for which we have paid for. A lot of those rights exist in these places. Rights for everybody. They are equal. We will get hit more than those in eastern Mass.

Recommendation #5 – Management for Reserves

- Reserves will lead to them becoming reservoirs of pests and dead wood. This will cause fire danger. Private landowners who abut state land are concerned.
- Not agree with the forever wild recommendation; scared that bugs or catastrophic events won't be dealt with. Also, need to manage water runoff.
- Question re: forest reserves: how define "biodiversity" and how will you do it?
- Law of unintended consequences. If largest area of forest canopy preserved, we are trying to go back pre-man because the native Americans managed. For biodiversity, need cleared areas for succulents or the deer will be starving. Particularly on the Cape with the cedar woods, if there is a fire, conflagration. Even if preserve, have to deal with fire and revisit it for biodiversity.

Recommendation #6 – Management Approaches for Parklands

Recommendation #7 – Management Approaches for Woodlands

- DCR is doing a disservice by not explaining clearcutting – what it is. The same with selective logging. More information should be provided to people (e.g. on DCR website) for people to get more information.
- Leave it up to the professionals – plenty of them out there with knowledge and expertise.
- Model forests should be to the highest standards and provide information to the public on good forestry. People usually only hear about bad forestry.
- I like the model forest idea. It is appropriate for the state as long as it's not expected for every forest. I don't like uneven-aged forest. Even-age plays a role in forestry and wildlife habitat. The Recommendations are missing a focus on wildlife needs - was the TSC missing a member with this expertise?
- Levels of woodlands – level 1 says no commercial harvesting – why in the woodlands, and not just in the reserves?
- Model forests statement excludes even-aged harvesting, but this is part of good foresting.
- Regarding cutting – document references cutting 1/3 of an acre. Would this mean cutting several patches of 13 acre each?
- The same goes for forest products – consider the impact on others and the bigger picture.
- Uneven-age management is appropriate in some places, but not the only good way. It sounds like this TSC is sending the message that this is the only good way. Even-age management also promotes biodiversity. With uneven-age, there is a point where growth no longer occurs. So, limiting it to 25% leads to a limited percentage of stocking consideration.
- It is unethical/premature to discuss reducing harvesting on state lands unless we examine what we consume – examine forest products and consumption, and consider where these products would have to come from.
- Clear cutting concern with topography and erosion as a result of clear cutting (specifically on hills) – reference Chap. 132.
- Recommendation 7 – ecosystem services – broad land ownership we're talking about and stand levels should not be overarching criterion. This is restrictive silviculturally. Don't remove our tools from the tool box in regards to woodlands.
- Why is the recommendation on harvesting under the category of woodlands?
- Would like to see more details about the “model sustainable forestry”.
- Opposed to all state forestry options that compete with private foresters. They undercut prices and private owners cannot compete. DCR should get out of the forestry “business” and offer support to the private owners.
- Commercial forestry and good management is not an “either/or” situation. We can have both.
- The Aesthetic value of the aged forests should not be lost in the debate over good management. Nothing so majestic as some of the very old trees as you hike through the lands.
- No one has addressed the climate disturbance issues such as greenhouse gases, etc. and their impact.
- Recommendation 7- it is too narrow. Lisa said even age. Taking trees the same age is dangerous. She's promoting high grading. Totally inappropriate.
- High grading means largest single age trees.
- Forest management is inappropriate for high grading.
- Cutting down affected out water when there aren't any other water source.

Recommendation #8 – DCR Organizational Structure, Decision Making and Planning

- exchange many small properties currently owned by the DCR for larger parcels.
- I support a change to the organizational structure and decision-making.

Recommendation #9 – Improving Public Process

- If DCR is going to increase public involvement, they need to increase public education and explanation with time to absorb the info before the public hearing.

Recommendation #10 – Resources Needed to Implement the TSC Recommendations

- Recommendation 10 – funding for this. Example of Missouri – they have implemented designated .5% sales tax voted on by the public – maybe this is an idea that could work here?
- Where is that funding coming from?
- Where did it come from before?
- Now it comes from capital investments. There's a recession now. I don't like how you can make recommendations without money coming from the other end. You are taking more rights away. I'm talking about any regulations in there.
- I went to a small town meeting and DCR Commissioner Sullivan was there. He said DCR budget was level funded of reduced so where's the money coming from?

FSC Certification

Biomass

- Biomass – there is no reason not to do this as long as other standards are upheld.
- Instead of eliminating biomass, establish guidelines for harvesting for biomass.
- Are we saying we don't care about others when we say no biomass?
- I feel strongly that no biomass for energy should be harvested (4 agreed).
- Don't understand biomass-electric ban. Once a tree is harvested – why does it matter if it's burned?
- Biomass plants are in heavily populated areas.
- Need to keep the [tree] tops in the woods.
- Light determines what grows in the forest and how fast it grows.
- Biomass – everyone is against it – but when all of their electric bills go down – then they'll be for it.
- Does the left hand know what the right hand is doing here? The Governor supports renewable energy – how does the TSC's recommendation hive with Biomass policy? Secretary Bowles asked the TSC to deal with the impact of biomass on state lands.
- 132 is a good system. Can control biomass with 132. There is a market for low grade wood which allows the good trees to grow. Need to do our share. NH has a TNC parcel where the upper parts are reserved and the lower is managed.
- Question: has anyone made an analysis of the impact if take out the low grade for biomass – the impact on the pallet business?
- Concerns: biomass – small and medium biomass gasification units are up and running like Mt. Wachusett Community College – a very clean system, saves a lot of money, usually from mostly waste products from saw mills.

- 90% of what use in biomass is reuse.....
- Disagree! Not enough available for all the big plants proposed.
- Plan seems thoughtful and hope people don't oppose it just because they oppose biomass – I oppose biomass but support the plan.
- From Westfield: concerned re: biomass. Management is important. Have a little land, lost the woodcocks and turtles because land around me has not been managed. No one likes to be told what to do, but....
- Here because concerned re: biomass. Utterly opposed to biomass. These are state-owned woodlands.
- Biomass recommendation: "no touch" areas will become reservoirs of exotic pests, fire fuel, that will spill over and affect private land owners.
- Who cares if a log becomes a board or a mega-watt? A discussion started about the demerits of biomass energy, but I focused it in on harvesting recommendations by saying we don't care what comes of the wood, but that the tops and brush should be left for soil nutrient, habitat, etc. Opinion was stated that cleared land does just fine, grass grows, trees come back; Trees are present for 80 years, after they're cut remnants decompose within 4 or 5 years, so nutrients of the tops aren't necessary. We should make the case behind our statement that the tops need to stay in the forest.
- Regarding biomass plants, we should not be starting out with many massive plants, we should be trying it out on a small/test scale.
- A point must be included here about biomass. At one point we are going to get enough energy from somewhere. Biomass is defined so that it included firewood for homes. Outlawing biomass on state forests is a dangerous thing. Excluding any thing for 100 years is dangerous. If you want to leave a huge area alone, with something like the Asia Longhorn Beetle how do we manage?

ATV/Recreation

- Doing a great job. I'm a hiker, trails will be protected because people use them. Hate in when loggers cut and leave trees across the trail, but the cut grows up well over time.
- I agree with compromising. I represent the motorized recreational groups. Reserves kicked us out. People who visit, clean the trails are kicked out. Why? Its public property.

Management/Cutting/Harvesting

- Comments about the Commonwealth importing wood from areas where it was illegally harvested with no safety or other form of regulations, loss of habitat world-wide. "We should live on our own land." General concern about saving trees in our area while consuming lumbar products from other areas.
- Comment was made (from a self-identified expert in logging) that we cannot log as much lumbar as already grows in the forests. Comment ran to logistics of logging.
- Need for better regulations and more authority to control logging on public lands.

Industry/Economics

- Economics of timber harvesting – state land producing revenue from timber harvesting should be considered in terms of funding – don't take it out completely.
- State not honoring its agreement of Payment in Lieu of Taxes for those towns whose economies are affected by this process. Towns most affected should have more say in the process.
- 700 loggers in this state – what % are we cutting? There are jobs at stake.

- Also started losing faith when land prices started skyrocketing – its hard not to sell your land for \$10,000/acre when forestry only provides \$100/acre per year. There's too much regulation.
- MA forest resources – don't cut trees down here and send them to ME and NH.
- Sawmill industry in MA is dying – need to try harder to keep logs in the state and save the industry.
- MA forest industry is dying. Canadian mills are bigger and more efficient. Material is leaving the state and we're losing jobs. We need to revitalize the MA forest industry.
- Develop local sawmills.
- We're not building the community if we're sending trees to Canada.
- Saw mill industry in MA is dying. What can we do to keep jobs here?
- Forest industry is in decline because Canadian saw mills are more efficient. Mass forest industry needs to be revitalized.

Other

- Scandinavian model is great – DCR people have traveled there to see it – there is no waste.
- Population is rising in MA – need to have less population if we want forests to survive.
- What kind of life do we want to live – in farming and forestry....or in development? Pretty soon we'll all live in an urban environment – look what happened to Belchertown.
- Logging in Hampshire/Berkshire County – on state land; when an ice storm devastes forests – why not cut it and get some new forest to grow? Wood will go to waste.
- I'm a carpenter and a builder – I love wood – and I love the woods too.
- Staffing and funding – “COVERTS” program. Need continued funding for that (several had participated in this program at UMass). Brings people like this together, which is critical.
- How much land is in CRs? Other organizations like the Westfield River Watershed Association are working in conjunction.
- When you have an ice storm, it ruins the wood; you have to cut it.
- State put a bit out to loggers go on lowest bid and saw we need insurance..
- Its always the highest bidder
- Yes but it doesn't always mean quality of the work. There are bad and very good examples. Who makes the decision on this?