

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 **Taunton on February 11, 2010.**

Notes from Taunton Forum February 11, 2010

General Vision/Process:

- Like the process of getting public engagement on this, but too late. Process has been too hasty.
- Concern about long view. What are the conditions for revisiting? Will public be involved? What kind of ongoing oversight will there be? Is the proposed zoning locked in or flexible? Need to look at historical use and trends to stay current. Needs to be an organic document.
- This document is a "philosophy" representative of the TSC, which does not include folks who are splitting wood and living off the land. "Looks like a merger document of a Mass. Audubon takeover."
- Want to see the math around concept of "thousands of acres are disappearing..." Looking back over hundred(s) of years, things have worked out pretty well.
- Why do we even need a paradigm shift?
- This represents the urbanization of environmental values.
- What groups were represented by those who made suggestions?
- This whole thing boils down to: lack of confidence in government (consensus on this remark)
- Stewardship of forest should not be neglect of the forest
- Hope all effort put into this doesn't just mean another layer of bureaucracy – hope effort not wasted – people have done this before. Processes were already in place – is this superseding them?
- Are the recommendations ranked?
- I want to know if the visioning process looked at existing planning processes like forest certification and eco region assessment taken into account and acknowledged. It gave the impression that people didn't know other planning processes were going on. Reference and acknowledge other planning processes going on. There are many more DCR zoning processes that those presented.
- Then why are fish and wildlife lands excluded? We need to have everybody included. It's going to be hard to have public confidence.
- Tell us what are the main hurdles to implementing the recommendations?
- We need an action plan to be used in overcoming hurdles besides financial hurdles
- Communities surrounding the forest must be involved
- Man from North Shore would like meetings up there. There are a lot of people who live in north shore interested in this and lots of parks/woodlands. Want to be represented.

- Man stated was very impressed with the discussions. Very useful, however should discuss wetlands too.
- Is there a process down the road similar to the TSC plan to address wetlands and other lands outside this plan but are under DCR. I.e. Quabbin, watersheds, Fish & Wildlife areas.
- Mention by woman of TSC plan vs. Wildlands and Woodlands Brochure she had in her possession. Sighted this brochure was based on a 10 year study and is much better than TSC plan and state should implement using that as a guideline. Current study is only 10 months. Cannot possibly do a complete study in this short amount of time. TSC plan seems rushed.
- Need to implement on case-by – case basis. Plan too general and rigid at the same time. Can't apply this plan verbatim. Naïve.
- Man from North Shore reiterated would like meetings up there. Need for representation.

Recommendation #1 – Ecosystem Services Model

- Concern about how the land is used. What are the priorities? Forest as an ecosystem or what? Seems unclear. Is priority the sustainability of the forest?

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

- In this climate – unrealistic to set up a Commissioner of Forests if that gets in final version – it's all hinged on that which is not realistic
- He wants to strengthen forestry and improve forestry
- This system turns back the system. In 1954, there was a Director of Recreation – it was robust; a Director of Forestry – it was wilting, and they were combined under one head. When MDC and DCR were separated that was a fatal flaw

Recommendation #3 – Policies for Privately Owned Forests

- How do you enforce any type of cutting plan?
- We ought to take care of state land before we tell others what to do. Private forests are heavily regulated. This is not the format for discussing private forests.
- Don't see any harm in public guidance for private lands. Make guidelines consistent.
- Supposed to be a consumer protection item. Be sure that is true. Skeptical of licensing requirement
- Goes beyond what a registration requirements should do.
- May cast a net over land owners. Have 70 acres – and a plan that gets reviewed every ten years
- May add regulations to unsuspecting people. Unintended consequences of well meaning – overlapping requirements
- Rights of land owners
- It's a requirement to have a forester to sign off on cutting plans. It's a requirement in these recommendations. That is beyond the purview of the stewardship council.

Recommendation #4 – Landscape Planning Model

- Great idea to have 3 zones named explicitly – huge improvement.

- Parklands and reserves should make up majority of acreage. Would like to see only 10% designated as woodlands.
- Confused about how it integrates with what happened before – how does it work with watershed and DFW management?
- How were ranges established?
- Why did they revisit reserves – they were established before?
- Did the Committee consider predictions based on demand from biomass plant fuels?
- Why did you go to three zones? We already have a planning process. Stewardship Committee is already required to follow RMPs by law. Resource protection and resource allocation. That process is already in place. Forestry is important and there should be a place for it.
- Shouldn't it all be 100% reserves, there is a lot of harvesting – you are encouraging it on private lands
- 100,000 acres – why can't it be reserves when there is so much other land. Trail riders are ruining sensitive areas. I have respect for motorcycle group
- I'd like to see more ability for those in charge of the zones to not go through bureaucracy to solve something and say sorry to the locals and they couldn't do anything at that time.
- I disagree with forest reserves. We need more money. All of NE was devoid of chestnut. Asian long-horn beetle wiped out Worcester.
- Clarify what and where the wildernesses are.
- Clarification of forestry planning for southeast Mass. vs. rest of forests in the state. Plan is too general. Plan needs to be on a case-by-case study. Practices set forth in plan may work in one forest type (i.e. Berkshires (but not on the cape.)
- Once you label an area as parkland, reserve, and woodland. It's designation will be "cast in Stone". Plan should be flexible to changing of zones as needed. Concern that knowing history of state once designated a certain land type it isn't going to change. Need a provision in the plan for reassessment and redefinition.
- Concern that infestation will come in to any type parkland, reserve, woodlands. Under plans cannot come in and harvest.
- Man supported an increase in the acreage of forest reserves. Should designate a certain % of state forests as reserves. Cited was Fall River Freetown State Forest.
- Question on whether intervention on reserves and parklands (fro logging) in based on DCR generating \$. So DCR can let loggers come in and harvest so department DCR can get income.
- What is the priority of DCR towards its managed lands? Concern about how land is used. Seems that the state wants to set up three categories but no insight into implementing. Not specific enough.
- Is priority of DCR on these lands sustainability of the forests?

Recommendation #5 – Management for Reserves

- Northeast, everything is site-specific and managed reserves lock something up and we have Asian long horn beetle how can we monitor them?
- It takes a day and a half to gather data in one acre. This is not cost effective. A natural community or end up with one so what's the criteria?
- I don't like reserve situation, monitoring has to have a plan on the way they do that. Monitoring is needed not just for reserve but the abutting areas of reserve.
- another comment on reserve management – If blight attacks it what do you do? Should keep "toolbox open" to address on case-by-case issue when they come up. Plan is too broad has to have flexibility. Keeping the "tool box shut" is not a good thing for forests.
- A reserve is just that a reserve. As such should not be touched by human hands. Question If that is reasonable to foresee? The best practice is "adaptive management plan" where can address issues i.e. infestation. It may not be the best decision to leave a forest of dead trees that poses a fire danger. Maybe could salvage?

Recommendation #6 – Management Approaches for Parklands

- I get the impression they will be run like city parks, but that's not their purpose.
- Concern about applying all standards of urban parks to others
- Don't mess with parks that are working well
- Could it happen that some forests would be converted to parks?
- Some of those forests are not much to look at after they have been clear cut.
- Something that now has one definition may change.
- State forests may end up as parklands if near dense population.

Recommendation #7 – Management Approaches for Woodlands

- Not clear how replanting will occur. Need to be site specific and strategic.
- We need to avoid abusive logging.
- But don't create a structure that is so limiting that it becomes impractical to do any forest
- There is a place for openings (early successional)
- Don't make logging details so strict, for example if you require no limbs or branches to leave forest – it might be prohibitive for other logging
- Bad forestry is a function of leadership
- Political appointment is bad – changes with a new administration – no continuity
- We're supposed to be sequestering carbon in our forests
- No legal justification for extracting timber from public lands
- 2.5 million other acres – this is the goal eventually– how can this happen with out conversion of private lands?
- From my time in forest – when times are tough, you see more clear cutting.
- Freetown is a mess. Trails are ruined. No respect for critters.
- Situations and ecosystems where whole tree harvesting are appropriate even if ugly
- I think uneven aged will create one kind of forest – not provide biodiversity
- Leaving full trees is a slash violation. A fire hazard. Fuel in the forest. Yellowstone 88 all over again. Access becomes harder.
- I'm in line with that. Flash and fuels, there's no description how high the tops will be left. A hazard to wildlife.
- Tops are left but you buck them up right?
- Yes but inside a forest you don't have to do that.
- A forestry company won't cut anything unless they don't have to.
- Please adhere to strict management guidelines of woodlands.
- The state is in numerous eco regions. I want to know to what extent they will change with climate change, geological, ecological, soil, climate, and hydrology changes. The ability of species to cope will go. Can't take a stewardship management policy without Taking into account adaptive management.
- South east MA is a hotspot for fires. The ecology and species in a high fire danger area.
- I concur with that.
- Woodland is a use abusive terminology. Humans are equal with trees, polar bears and penguins. No need for separate categories. Overall flexible management principles and regional characteristics of forests requiring local involvement. Systemic overarching principles.
- I don't agree with that. But we need terminological and definitions on these regions and other regions where more intense management is going on. I'm in favor of harvesting, logging. I'm comfortable with the term logging.
- Differences between central and western and south east MA- did TSC think that we were going to go from white fire oak/ from even age management to uneven management and

integrate pioneer forests/ its hard to regenerate white oak if you remove even age management.

- There was a program back in the 80s when continuous forest inventory was taken. It took one day to do one plot. Turnover of the crews was unbelievable. Two times the work if done with an efficient two man team. Quality control of the monitoring is essential.
- The exceptions aren't largely enough to document. These things make it look like these differences weren't thought through at all.
- Its area specific. Local community should determine the criteria.
- Wildlife habitat, especially early succession habitat is important. People have an antipathy with logging. If no early successional habitat bird, rabbit and black moth will be endangered if there's not enough ES Habitat. One way to get these habitats is logging. Retain even age management. Bigger clearcuts. Great big chunks of early successional habitat. Woodland acreage must not be dropping in relation to reserves and parklands.
- I'm an 11th generation tree farmer. I am concerned about laws. I've seen these in the past. What's good for one person, one generation is not good for all. Sciences changes overtime. Then we have to go straighten things and redo things. How long is it going to take?
- I have a tough time with what this organization and the other want me to do. Private control versus public control, local versus state.
- DCR for whatever reason is unable to properly monitor what's going on and I don't see how they will be able to do that in future.
- Private lands are very well managed.
- If I get incentives from the state then we have to look at stewardship. We are all temporary. We are trying to share the earth we live in. tax incentives to look after the land is appropriate.
- We import most of the wood. If the change in zonation reduces land to grow timber it is going to greatly increase harvesting in private lands. We are exporting environmental cost of harvesting to Malaysia, Russia and other countries.
- The amount of wood we get out of public lands is very small. It's not going to have much of an impact. Total amount of logging done in public lands is small.
- I've read reports on forest lands and the different it makes in the absorption of carbon. If we are halting logging for carbon sequestration, then its going to be only a matter of time.
- When the log public lands how much money goes to the government?
- 8-35% to local town depending on when land was acquired.
- on how trees are harvested and what part of tree is left if any. All tops, some tops, just branches? Should be different requirements for different woodlands. Not detailed and specific enough.
- Leaving tops. Who determines what tops remain? The DCR? State forester? Who's going to implement and oversee all these requirements?
- Right now DCR regs state that all tops all remain. If you leave any tops (especially in S.E. Mass and the Cape they will pose a fire hazard. The state fire Marshall would get involved.
- Goal/plan for early succession forests is too general. Should designate these areas for a reason i.e. wildlife habitat, watersheds etc. Plan seems like it just picked a random number for % of succession forests.
- How did DCR come up with this number? Any scientific research to back it up? Seems random.
- Another comment on "keeping the toolbox open". The broad classifications set out in the TSC recommendations will result in problems down the road. Need to implement on a case-by-case basis. Whatever is needed to follow best management practices is what should be done NOT just following an arbitrary blanket plan.
- Should be more research and study before determining specifics.

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

Recommendation #9 – Improving Public Process

- Importance of keeping the transparency in the process. Although open to public now through these, should have public involvement as the process continues. In all stages of the process in the future.
- Who makes the decision when trees are cut? State, county forester? Who? Bureau of Forestry to this point. Not clear! Not good!
- Need for robust public process
- . Public process transparent. Resources needed (more staff and \$) to implement and enforce. Concern that this is not going to happen. Concern that less staff and the plan will end up sitting on shelf collecting dust.
- Will the public hear about the roadblocks down the road and be able to participate in moving the process forward?

Recommendation #10 – Resources Needed to Implement the TSC Recommendations

- Concern that Deval Patrick is going to cut DCR funding so how committed is DCR to this?
- Uneasy feeling that DCR budget will be slashed. What is DCR's resolve to implement big scale changes. This is a huge undertaking.

FSC Certification

- Short history with FSC has been problematic, but 3rd party oversight is a good thing. FSC might or might not be the right organization for that.

Biomass

- What does Biomass actually mean? Need good glossary.
- Is there a biomass policy? Need to clarify/separate relationship between Woodland plan and biomass policy. All clumped together in peoples' heads.
- How did you evaluate the pressure on our state lands for wood for these biomass plants?
- The biomass plants descending on state want anything that looks like a tree.
- It was stated earlier that this had nothing to do with biomass, -suspicious - It is interesting that it is happening when all these plants are proposed.
- Price of coal, price of diesel fuel. It will never be profitable to harvest biomass. These plants will never happen. Investors will abandon them
- Comment on statement in plan "expansion of biomass facilities poses a significant threat to ecosystem". This is a strong statement. Biased statement. Biomass should be looked at as a component of good forestry practices. What basis did the DCR use determining this?

ATV/Recreation

- Population of state increasing – needs around recreational use of land will follow.
- Concerns about depleting ORV access. So many trails already closed. Will some be reopened/added with this plan, or will more be closed? No reason why Myles Standish State Park shouldn't have ORV use.
- How will the zones affect motorized vehicles? I've spent a lot of time in the forest – constructed trails in Myles Standish and Freetown. I've put a lot of time into the forest.

- Recreational interest – are they protected?
- Engaging people in recreation – invest in the public - getting the public outside
- How do they maintain trails without allowing off-road vehicles when you allow snow mobiles?

Management/Cutting/Harvesting

- I have seen destructive logging on all lands
- There is no money to enforce it. Travesty to treat public lands this way.

Industry/Economics

- Too large a change. Will totally upset sawmill industry.
- The reason is DCR has no real handle on stewardship of the land and economic benefit of locals. In defence of DCR the first cut on economics in terms of budget is on conservation.
- A tree cut in Malaysia is a tree cut here. We need to work on consumption. We need to develop our own wood products. Promote local markets.
- We have a big program to promote local produce. We have nothing on going to local saw mills.
- We need an economic analysis of the impact on local cities, town budgets, particularly rural.
- Stated by another that there is no incentive for DCR as \$ generated from timber harvesting goes into the state general fund?
- Should look at \$ generated from harvesting going back into DCR not the state general fund.

Other

- In plans from the 1980s – G.O.A.L.S. went away – where are they? These people went to G.O.A.L.S. meetings.
- Chapter 21, section 2F calls out those duties.
- I've ridden in a lot of places. We don't spend much money on our forests
- Woman stated that she never sees DCR personnel out on the lands. Spends a lot of time hiking/walking in the woods. Reserves and woodlands especially. More DCR staff required to implement and oversee this plan. She feels a sense that "no-one is really managing the lands – they are NOT LOOKED AFTER". Stated that often times sees dogs barking/running in woodlands/parks from abutting homes. Who's managing this?
- Mentioned 4-day forestry program at Harvard Forest to learn about forestry practices.