

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 **Westborough on February 4, 2010.**

Notes from Westborough Forum February 4, 2010

General Vision/Process:

- Summary shows participants (TSC) did not have breadth of what is needed to know about climate change, mitigation, adaptation, etc. Need to look at what is being done in New England, U.S, and by the United Nations.
- Document did not pay enough attention to the economic potential. 1) People who earn their living and create jobs were not allowed to participate in (vision) process; 2) Business aspect of [wood production] was viewed as negative – really business can be supported by forests gives hope; state forests support business. An example of this is 100 chain of custody FSC in MA that benefit from state forests. There is FSC furniture made in Gardner, MA – needs an FSC mill. Customers are asking for this – all based on having a sufficient forest base. What percentage is state of FSC in MA – most of it! Allow people to work and sell their wood products and keep their land in forests (rather than development!). There were 150 sawmills in Massachusetts – now only 36. These sawmills employed rural people – now the state should play this role!
- Vision is very good; established 100 years ago now reasons are different. It would be helpful if vision made clear how small of a percentage of state forests are actually harvested. Currently it is only 0.5% per year – only 17% of net growth is harvested. 83% of it is still growing – highly in “black”.
- Is harvesting going up? So when averaged over a decade numbers are smaller.
- [DCR] Agency structure is different. Park supervisors used to work on forest projects – now just recreation. There used to be 1 forester and 1 assistant for each district – then it was for 3 districts – then increased to 8 districts.
- Seems to be an east-west divide in the state on this issue – what being done re: questions like PILOT? How have we moved from the Wildlands and Woodlands in 2005 to this contentious debate? What's happening?
- Get away from perceptions and propaganda, please, and towards facts. DCR needs to get the reality out there.
- Communication is 90% of what we are talking about here – be more public.
- Would have liked to have seen more encouragement of local involvement.
- User groups are not adequately addressed in the document and vision – equestrians, ORV, etc. Can support the vision if user groups are included.
- Not enough information to go on – lack of specificity in the vision makes agreeing/supporting difficult.
- Need a good explanation for the recommendations so people understand them

- I do not agree with having break-out groups. We want to get back into the large group. We want to hear what everyone has to say.
- I have been to many town meetings. This is not the way things are done. This is a manipulation.
- I am a scientist. I know what good public meetings are. You are twisting our arm here.
- This plan is just a façade to cut more trees. That's what DCR wants. They want to cut more trees.
- It is too vague
- Just talk; too far out into the future; need to focus on present problem
- Geek speak; uses too many buzzwords (also called magic words by some); not understandable to the average person, and that fosters distrust
- Too broad
- Not clear what actions will happen – how they will pull it off
- Trying to engineer nature – a grandiose view
- Too long
- Need to set short- and medium- goals
- Short-term goals are important to fix the current problems
- People want to know what this means for each park. As written, it's too vague
- If DCR were more proactive with their programs, with education and communication about why they're doing the project, they may have avoided the problems
- There was concern from the firefighters and OHV users that they were not included in the process. (One member of the group did explain that there was a motorized user representative on the AGS, but that he had been unable to attend the meetings because they were held during the day.)
- Don't understand the terminology
- Use more layman's term throughout the document
- It's like you have come up with new words/terms for things that already have a name – no need.

Recommendation #1 – Ecosystem Services Model

- Need to clarify what ecosystem services are. Ex: US Forest Service just hired an ecosystem services person. Need to be clear what that means.
- Forest products are just one of many ecosystem services and does not dominate the other services. This reflects current times – these services are not ignored in the past but it is good to have them spelled out.
- Silviculture tool for many ecosystem services.
- Was forestry given a negative perspective? Silviculture is managing for a desired end – could be wilderness. Role for forest steward – how forests grow and react whether wilderness parts are actually managed – silviculture should not be aligned with “timber gobbling”.
- State doesn't have the ability to show high-quality work
- There should be a strong recommendation that the state needs to be held to the highest standards, that DCR needs to practice exemplary forestry, and be held accountable for the best practices.
- State's demonstrated lack of ability to supervise and conduct exemplary forestry.
- Strong support for Recommendation 1
- I do not like cutting. I do not agree with the language “management” (forest management). We don't want any demo forests.
- The ecosystem services model is anthropocentric. There is a sense that it was imposed on the TSC, and there was never a discussion of conservation biology as a foundation for management policies

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

- Need more education as to how to protect land. People need to learn about conservation restrictions so more people participate. Tree committees are good – they do things on Arbor Day, “Art projects”, etc. Private sector should team up with the state – “Citizen Action Forester”.
- It is difficult for town Conservation Commissions to get landowners to meetings – to many paying full taxes because they don’t do Chapter 61.
- May be in town for different subject – like restoring the American Chestnut.
- MA Agricultural Commissions are a good model to follow. Towns used to have a Town Forest Committee – need to bring something like that back.
- I like this recommendation because it elevates value of forestry – choosing an individual to lead this will be key.
- Need to change the job description of Chief Forester to be Director of Forest Stewardship – report needs to make this distinction much clearer.
- This person has to be “Chief Forester” for the purpose of getting federal dollars and coordinating with other states.
- I worked for the state as a forester – I was always frustrated that forestry was lost in a big agency. I strongly support this recommendation as it will help with enforcing forestry practices.
- Will Commissioner have authority over DFW? Opportunity is there and it is a good one.
- Maybe combine DFG and DAR under Department of Natural Resources? The concept is there even though this was not in TSC’s charge for this process.
- The commissioner of forest stewardship is a lousy idea. The commissioner didn’t care about conservation/recreation, only about cutting.
- Instead we need an advisor to commissioner of conservation.
- We don’t need a commissioner for stewardship. Local communities are the stewards of the forests.
- The power of regional/district forest managers are taken away.
- Have friends groups to work with DCR.
- The person at the top is critical.
- What exactly is the Commissioner's role? What are the mechanics of his role? Do we call him if we have a complaint? It needs to be more fleshed out.
- Concerned how private land will be affected by this.
- Clarify the acres – restrictions on cutting on private land – specify how many percent.

Recommendation #3 – Policies for Privately Owned Forests

- If purpose is to talk about private land, then need to involve wider range of interests
- Recommendation 3: licensed forester sign-off. Not philosophically opposed for Ch. 61, CRs, land trusts, and water supply, but not agree with it on private land. Even though DCR can’t manage their own land, they want to dictate to others. Incentives vs. sticks: the stick does not work.
- FPRs, like APR – restrictions should be used to buffer woodlands and reserves, and increase the number of privately held forests that remain in forest – incentivize forest protection and production. This probably fits in Recommendation 3.
- Private sector shouldn’t be addressed – hasn’t had enough participation.
- I support the keystone project. No need for demo forests because of the keystone project.
- We do too many clear cuts when we do clear cuts. Climate change disturbances have to be thought about. High standards (to be achieved) in reducing climate disturbances.

- There's too much control in private lands.
- The majority of the group is against this recommendation.
- What is the limit or minimum for cutting? You need to spell out a plan

Recommendation #4 – Landscape Planning Model

- Good recommendation.
- This is excellent.
- G.O.A.L.S. planning and current forest management plans could be integrated, parklands in urban areas – this is where forest management should occur for people to see. Don't hide it in the middle of the woods – do it where it can be seen. You only need 2 acres of land to do demonstration.
- Ray Jackson, Townsend – Is reserves and woodlands both public and private?
- State lands represents only 10% of MA land, therefore all state land should be off limits to timber harvest.
- Large areas of unfragmented forests need to be protected – strong support for increasing forest reserves expressed.
- The multiple-use purpose of state lands has already provided for forest reserves; it is a balance that needs to be struck, there are enough reserves already.
- Really likes the compartmentalization of lands within the proposed planning model.
- Strongly support the landscape planning model proposed in the draft
- Ideals of wildland preservation need to be applied to state land, and individual tree selection needs to be practiced.
- Zoning concept is good but concerned about allocation of land for zoning and zoning as a concept.
- How does a reserve work in an ecological service region?
- Plenty of stakeholders are there that should be considered that are not considered.
- Reopen fire-rows.
- Why are woodlands separated from forest reserves? Why?
- Some of the reserves can turn into woodlands if a private owner can pass their land for teaching. State lands can be easily misused if they become teaching forests.
- Why not adopt the wildlands and woodlands report by Harvard forests? It states that “it would be left to the people to implement recommendations” in the report and not government.
- There are opportunities to do cuts like when there's a storm.
- Stronger language is needed where resources are to be made available or there will be a lot of messes.
- We need recommendations on fire management and fire practices.
- We need a balanced approach of use and management of forests. All stakeholders have to be recognized.
- Don't go after hot buttons. Have a comprehensive approach to balance what stakeholders want while managing the forests.
- Save all public lands/forests in reserve beyond the influence of money and politics.
- The debate on woodland zones is a good opportunity to have on non-state lands
- A resource management plan for every forest.
- What is the current model? You want to make a new model – but what does the current one look like?
- I support it because there is a clear definition of how to look at each (reserves, parklands and woodlands)
- I don't agree to the acreage, but agree with the segregation of the three (reserves, parklands and woodlands). Each area needs that kind of guidance
- DCR has done a horrible job educating the public regarding forest management. We wouldn't be here if they had done a good job. They haven't banged enough drums. There

- is nobody at the helm to support people on the ground.
- Too many acres for reserves.
 - Against the volume of acres set aside for reserves.
 - DCR need to realize role of abutting parcels in forest lands.

Recommendation #5 – Management for Reserves

- How allocated and where located – needs to be balanced and needs to consider the impact on local communities.
- Some models in TSC are as high as 75% “hands off” – this worries me.
- I side with the AGS and support the higher limit of no harvesting; there is a great deal of harvesting at watershed and on private lands. I am 100% in agreement with sustainable logging but a higher % of “hands off” is best.
- In an ideal world we would let the land speak for itself. In the real world – areas near populated areas are going to be parks.
- How are we going to address American Chestnut re-introduction in reserves? What about other changes?
- Promote redundancy in reserves – do you close the door on all management – don’t worry about “over management”. Fire prescribed burns – conservative approach but with some flexibility.
- Chestnut Foundation can reintroduce chestnut – but what about reserves?
- Example – Mountain Pine Beetle in the west – how would we deal with that type of invasive here?
- Distribution of forest age classes is not conducive to wildlife diversity. Reserves will all be closed canopy mature – will this give us adequate diversity? Need to balance this with non-reserves.
- There are other methods to achieve late successional habitat through silviculture.
- If Asian Long Horned Beetle in reserves – what happens to the adjacent private lands? What is the cost of checking on forest reserves?
- Who will check on 100,000 acres of forest reserves?
- Woodlands are not being checked now.
- Reserves: nature keeps moving. Concerned re: maintaining reserves, monitoring invasive species when not managing and not many people are using the area. There are economics, costs and need specialists and reserves are large areas.
- Need to be realistic that managing for longhorn beetles means cutting.
- Forest Reserves – the purpose is to let forests be forests, allow natural disturbance to dominate.
- Strong support for the reserves recommendation was expressed.
- Create a resource management plan for each forest.
- Write it into law for each forest.
- Against the reserves because they are more restrictive – fewer people will be able to use them and it would restrict fire and rescue access.
- What if a major catastrophic event were to take place – e.g. insect infestation - that would affect state land – You cannot prevent infestation from moving onto private land unless you interfere. This leave nature to nature – let it do it's thing – not a good thing if faced with a long-horned beetle invasion. Devastating.
- How do you define minimal interference?
- DCR must promote public education
- Have to have a better definition that allows for use of modern technology to control non-native plants, insects, and diseases.
- Restrictions in forest resources tie the hands of particular forest managers too much with regards to insect infestations.

Recommendation #6 – Management Approaches for Parklands

- Good place for forestry demonstrations with Park Interpreters – also great for school visits.
- Friends Group been trying to work with DCR but they shoot themselves in the foot.
- Example: if do an event on own, easy, but if Friends Group does through DCR, have to have expensive liability policy. For 20 years, the Friends Group constantly gets screwed.
- Parklands – Prohibition on cutting isn't clear enough in the recommendations; No commercial cutting in parklands.
- There needs to be a larger physical separation of recreational use and logging. This was stated in support of the Parkland recommendation where timber harvest will not be allowed. Mentioned the fact that cutting often occurs adjacent to and within trails.
- Against Friends' Groups – gives them too much power re decision-making. It is too one-sided. A wider variety of opinions are needed.
- Words like aesthetics and culture – what do they have to do with anything? They can't be the main focus or way to look at things.
- It is not clear how to draw the line between different areas – boundaries are not cast in stone between a picnic area and forest management area. A good on-site manager can do this.
- Recreational parks should focus more on use/recreational activities (and less on aesthetics and culture)
- Currently they are multiple use properties.
- Having words like aesthetics and culture as a filter will only make it too easy to reject project proposals. Very individual what is aesthetic and what is cultural.
- These guiding principles (aesthetics and culture) should be applied for all areas not just parklands.
- I can support this recommendation if it is a guiding document for DCR, but not if it is a concrete policy.
- All recommendations have an agenda
- Make sure you recommend that there will be public input on what type of recreational usage.

Recommendation #7 – Management Approaches for Woodlands

- TSC mentioned that many AGS members objected to early successional habitat. The need for this is well-founded and I support it.
- AGS members think DFW with NHESP is best equipped to do this.
- Early successional habitat needs to be beyond DFW land
- We cannot have the full array of species we had even in the 1950's without early successional habitat
- The health of forests has declined. By introducing early successional habitat – invasives become a problem.
- Invasives separate – move into mid-successional habitat.
- I am a back-packer – I've hiked the Appalachian Trail - invasives, especially burberry is everywhere in the Berkshires
- There was consensus in the group that invasives were a big issue
- Woodlands – there should be special procurement allowances for local vendors
- No clear cutting
- Allow clear cutting
- "Clear cutting" probably occurs when you exceed a 100' x 100' opening.
- Confusion over why urban parkland is mentioned under woodland.

- Woodland recommendation's multi-purpose goals are good – not focusing just on forest products, but on additional ecosystem services within the woodland zone is a good aspect of the recommendation.
- Opposition to “demonstration projects” was expressed. This is marketing for private lands, and that's where it (demonstrations) should be done.
- More sustainability in logging.
- No commercial logging on state public lands.
- Allow logging on woodland and other suitable areas where appropriate.
- The upper limit of acreage for woodlands is higher than reserves – and that seems to be too high of a ratio
- Regarding conflicting science: The American Ecological Association and a large number of scientists have said that even-aged management causes permanent damage (the forests) Shouldn't be managed at all if the priority is forest health
- Recommendation #7 – more acreage is needed. Need to remain flexible as to markets and the local economic conditions.
- Open up the woodlands for recreational use

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

- Everything here in this recommendation is good. Need to get management plans done
- Invasives and forest health is key to everyone – invasives are not healthy
- TSC needs to provide a glossary of definitions – how they are defining certain terms – everyone defines them differently
- Recommendations are all well and good – staffing and funding are going to be the key.
- Current staffing levels at DCR are terrible.

Recommendation #9 – Improving Public Process

- Need to get the public more involved.
- Public can make it difficult for DCR by being obstructionist saying things like “all logging must be stopped”
- Need to let those who have education, skills do their job and have faith they will do it well. People have faith when they go to their doctor – need to have faith in state staff that they will do their job well.
- Need to build public trust.
- If everyone could get behind a “middle approach” they could get the public behind it.

Recommendation #10 – Resources Needed to Implement the TSC Recommendations

- This is absolutely key. Without the proper funding and staffing – this will not be possible.
- Recommendation 10 is the key – hard to get \$ to plan and manage and a lot of the recommendations have big \$\$s.

FSC Certification

- No FSC
- The state should do forest management plans but not be green certified
- Down with green certification – it's extortion. The National Tree Farm Program is free – it has wood, water, wildlife and recreation.

Biomass

- Strong concern about the ramifications of large-scale biomass development on DCR forests and the pressure to harvest more
- Biomass – removing the tool of whole tree usage from forester's hands is wrong

ATV/Recreation

- What about the motorized vehicles? 90,000 registered vehicles with nowhere to go? There have got to be ways to share.
- ATVs have challenges like what saw with snowmobiles 15-20 years ago. Yes, snow weather means less damage, but ATV community has “X-game mentality” with stewardship like grooming.
- Response: not true! I slow down, maintain trails, but like every group, a small number screw up.
- If have a universal access policy, should provide places for ATVs who are paying \$200 per year per family while I as a walker pay nothing.
- NH, ME, VT, NY etc – trails thru woods that don't hurt anything – why can't we do that here with ATVs? Why not open up Rutland, Douglas, and Myles Standish so people from one part of the state don't have to travel to the other end of the state?
- They are opening more trails in NH, MA ATVs going up there and spending all their money in NH!
- Under logical use, have ATVs use primarily one trail and walkers another.
- I drive 5-20 mph; I am not maniac!
- NH has quarterly trail user meetings which bring together ATVs, hikers etc with state agency to talk over trail uses; state has grants to trail groups, too.
- Wants improved access to state lands for ATV use. Spends a lot of time cleaning up state property that surrounds the house, but is unable to use vehicles to do this work, and needs to travel far to legally access state land.
- Concern was expressed that state land remains open to hunting, feels that a lot of land has become off-limits to hunters, including as a result of the 500' set-back from structures that de facto eliminates hunting from land as houses are developed adjacent to state land. Suggests a building set-back from state land boundaries.
- Hunting restrictions suggested for wilderness areas is a big concern, and hunting restrictions generally.
- Having firearms-free zones in the woods, as suggested in the Wilderness areas, would be a good measure for people that want to recreate in state lands during hunting season.
- DCR should be responsible for better enforcement of ATV use, dumping, logger pirating, etc.
- Improve access for ORVs
- Hunting. Enough said.
- Motorized groups felt disenfranchised. Only 4 DCR properties allow ATVs. There needs to be more allowance for motorized use, and there is concern over taking more land out of current or potential motorized use through the expansion of forest reserves.
- State not enforcing illegal OHV use
- DCR not allowing use where it is appropriate, and the OHV user group is not just a western group (Myles Standish given as example)
- DCR needs to team up with groups who are willing to work to create and maintain OHV trails for use
- 4-wheeled motorized recreationalists have no representation with DCR and should have an open public meeting with DCR
- Hope to have the lands open for hunting and sportsmen, and foresters – it's all a renewable resource

- More legal ATV trails
- Would like to see Gilbert Hills State Forest and Franklin State Forest open doors to 4-wheeled OHVs – currently only open to 2-wheel – don't discriminate against 4-wheel OHVs.

Management/Cutting/Harvesting

- A consulting forester – assumption timber harvesting is dominant paradigm. Is that true? Not see MassWildlife etc. motivated to cut timber. Challenge the perceptions. Need to quantify cutting. Seem to be saying a big part so should be less.
- It is quantified: only 1250 acres/year but because we see it, think happens everywhere.
- How many acres cut last year, last 20 years? 1% with 200 year cycles? That's a "snowflake", not a "blizzard". People have no problem with a farmer clear cutting their corn every year, but upset when cut trees.
- Not like clearcuts.
- Motivations for clear cutting are not driven by timber – it is done to create specific habitat and it costs more to take the junk out.
- Private landowners can't go near streams but some state cuts right up to stream edge, historical cemeteries, etc. Accountability and responsibility.
- Was there a reason for clear cuts? (others explained species management...) Need for communicating, explaining and educating is key.
- Moore State Park American Chestnut Orchard demonstration project. Concern if do clearing to reintroduce disease-resistant Chestnuts, new regulations might stifle this reintroduction.
- As a logging contractor, concur with previous comments: started filing plans under Ch. 132, not a licensed forester, there are always provision under 61 for licensed foresters, want to see my rights protected. Taken courses for over 20 years to keep my license up.
- Are endangered species addressed in cutting plans that have to file? (loggers answered his question).
- Maintenance
- Against the prohibition on whole-tree logging since it would prevent a way to make use of low-value wood

Industry/Economics

- We have a renewable resource that can be responsibly managed and not depleted, can be utilized, and bring income to the state.
- The economics of state forest cutting was discussed briefly – cutting is not economically viable if all costs are accounted for.
- Recommends a cost-benefit analysis of forest cutting, add in FSC costs. It was expressed that "the more we cut, the more we lose."
- Massachusetts needs a forest industry

Other

- Tension between conservation and preservation leading to tension between public and private lands. Concern what happens on public land like reserves will move over onto private land. Hope state will renounce eminent domain as a way to obtain more reserves.
- What happens when spruce bud worm, cut and then blackberry bushes later: every cause has an effect. Believe most of these things have been taken into consideration by the recommendations. DCR does a poor job of explaining what doing.
- There are some people with a fixed political ideology and then there is reasonable science.

- Zimmerman property example: need better ways to address these situations. Have contempt for those who did that and those who oversee them.
- Cut staff when they should be doing more.
- I work for DCR seasonally as an interpreter. Could forestry tap into interpretation a little more?
- I would like to know if wood for homebuilders be affected?
- State lands don't have to go to market.
- All user-groups cannot be accommodated everywhere.
- All users can share the forest
- Enhance accessibility to forest lands.
- Public lands are for all the public.