

# DCR FOREST FUTURES TECHNICAL STEERING COMMITTEE (TSC)

Harvard Forest  
324 North Main Street, Petersham, MA 01366  
Meeting #2 – May 19, 2009

## MEETING SUMMARY

**Members present:** Lisa Vernegaard, Chair, Matt Burne, Heather Clish, Kate Connolly, Andy Finton, Bill Moomaw, Keith Ross, Bruce Spencer, Tom Stevens, Charlie Thompson, Joe Zorzin.

**DCR/EEA Staff:** Stephanie Cooper, Bill Hill, Bob O'Connor

**Facilitators:** Bill Logue, Loraine Della Porta, MA Office of Dispute Resolution & Public Collaboration (MODR). **TSC Technical Coordinator:** Tom Walker

**Observers Present:** Dan Clark and Thom Kyker-Snowman of DCR Water Supply Protection Division.

### Welcome and Introductions

Technical Steering Committee (TSC) Chair Lisa Vernegaard welcomed TSC members. The meeting agenda and documents were briefly reviewed.<sup>1</sup> She and several others commented that the walk in Women's Federated State Forest was very informative.

### I. Lessons and Observations From the May 18 Forum on the Forests Hosted by Harvard Forests

TSC members made individual observations and lessons from the Forum on the Forests<sup>2</sup>. The Forum was designed to provide background information on the history, present conditions and possible future scenarios for the state's forests. All agreed that the information was a very helpful historical and scientifically based perspective that set a very positive tone for the Vision Process including Commissioner Sullivan and Bill Hill's comments concerning past mistakes and desire to have recommendations for improvements. Member comments followed several themes.

- **Forest Management.** Different forest management approaches should be kept in mind, including: David Foster's comments that doing nothing is an acceptable management approach which can result in improvements; evolution and resilience are viable management goals; and biomass requires careful practices.
- **Role of Science and Values.** The scientific basis of decision making is essential and needs to be transparent but that there are underlying values which tend to drive different perspectives on vision and management goals – especially in light of an unknown future. Articulation of the array of ecosystem services and values beyond simple economic values needs to be considered. Determining the values will be difficult. Limitations on science need to be recognized.
- **Transparency.** Communication with and education of the public will be an important part of having recommendations understood and accepted.

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<sup>1</sup>The agenda and documents are available on the DCR website under the "Past Meeting Schedule and Materials Link" at: <http://www.mass.gov/dcr/news/publicmeetings/forestryfvp.htm>. The documents are listed at the end of this summary. To additional information about the process and upcoming meetings is available on the same webpage.

<sup>2</sup> A summary of the Forum and the presentations may be found through the same link above.

- State/Private Lands. The interrelationship of state and private forests, and which one takes the lead role in guiding forest policy and practice to which the other responds, is a significant issue for discussion. The release of the Chapter 132 regulations may help inform the approach to this.
- DCR Resources. Data collection and analysis for informed decision making is important. Consider making recommendations about reallocation of resources within DCR to help ensure this happens.

## II. Framing Questions

The TSC discussed the revised Framing Questions. The goal of these questions is to ensure the TSC addresses the issues but does not become overly detailed. They noted, but did not review, the Annex Questions which are intended to provide ideas for further inquiry in addressing the Framing Questions. The Annex Questions may also act as a guide for determining if a topical work group is needed. The TSC indicated they would like the facilitators and Technical Coordinator to continue drafting straw documents, perhaps with scenarios and options, to focus discussion for the TSC.

The TSC discussed to what extent other DCR lands (watershed lands and urban parks), other state forest lands and private forests should be part of their deliberations. The Chair stated that the TSC needs to recognize the influence DCR has managing watersheds and other lands and the role agency plays of governing forests on private lands. The framing questions try to recognize how DCR can strengthen their role in each of these areas. The TSC needs to focus its core recommendations on DCR forest lands and the Commissioner's role as State Forester overseeing private forests. Ancillary recommendations may be made concerning other DCR and state lands whose legislative mandate and mission are distinct. The TSC asked DCR to begin assembling information concerning the differences in different types of land

The group agreed that they need to recognize that there are historic delineations (urban parks) and organizational structures that should not limit how they approach their recommendations. Further new issues, such as climate change and off-highway vehicle management, are putting both short and long-term pressures on the forests of Massachusetts.

TSC members agreed that the Framing Questions be reordered, asked that the OHV Working Group recommendations be made available to them for reference. Any additional comments on the questions will be sent to the facilitators. A glossary of terms will be started.

## III. Ecosystem Services

The TSC reviewed the sample ecosystem services documents<sup>3</sup> and recommended adding educational, historic, wildlife, biodiversity and energy to the list. Members will email additional thoughts to Tom Walker who will redraft the list in light of the discussion and add a paragraph explain their role. The need to specify and define some/many ecosystem services more clearly was raised by several members.

In further discussion, TSC members noted that the ecosystem services must be linked to the vision and management goals for clarity and to demonstrate how, when two services are in conflict, they are prioritized in a way that makes a decision about a policy or management practice understandable to the public. The group discussed the prioritizing of ecosystem services for different goals; for example managing for carbon storage as a primary goal or for adaptability/resilience and evolutionary potential of the forests. This led to a discussion of the role of DCR lands in the context of all Massachusetts forest lands and raised questions including: should public lands act as a model for managing other lands? Should public lands take the lead

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<sup>3</sup> Provided with the meeting materials and drawn from the Millennium Assessment and Packard Foundation.

in addressing specific issues? How unique is their role with respect to that issue? What issues have not yet emerged that will need to be considered?

Several members urged a precautionary approach in the face of uncertainty (biomass was cited as an example of where it is not clear if the suggested benefits will be fulfilled). A member proposed that the TSC consider framing the discussion around what is taken out in terms of forest products and what remains in terms of ecosystem services. As explanation, they noted that some silviculture practices could result in removal of wood products in a way that causes depletion of soil calcium which will take decades to recover.

#### **IV. Vision Discussion**

**All Forest Lands.** The TSC brainstormed elements of a vision for all of Massachusetts forests then discussed the role of DCR within the vision. In brainstorming, members described what the forest might look like 50-100 years from now. Comments included:

- A protected forest land base that is knit together.
- A forest with complex biodiversity; uneven age management; a majority of the land a mix of large old trees with medium and young trees, some gaps and a high aesthetic value that would look like old growth with a few stumps; the remainder would be other types of ages and perhaps some plantations.
- The public will understand and share the stewardship values through their recreational use. Massachusetts forest wood products would largely be used in the state.
- The forests will provide the full array of ecosystem services and Massachusetts will be doing at least as much as developing countries in terms of the role of forests in addressing climate change.
- The forest will have diverse size and species and will be a quiet place with trails for multiple purposes.
- The forests will be largely woodlands and climate change may have altered the types of trees. Half of the state's lands will be protected from development.
- The forest will have sections of old growth and areas of future old growth.
- People will be able to, and will, use the forests respectfully, a quiet refuge, the forests will be varied and complex.
- The dominant management forces will be natural patterns.
- Multiple large parcels of old growth or potential old growth forest with at least 250,000 acres statutorily protected.

In related discussion, TSC members noted the limited connection and awareness many Massachusetts residents have with the forests. The role/acceptance/societal connection to timber production varies by region of the country and the state. Several members noted that strong local markets for Massachusetts wood products do not exist now and will be dependent on a viable industry. An analysis of the comparative advantage of the local products and/or the patience to grow and harvest high quality products in a sustainable way is needed. Several members felt that DCR should require that any wood products removed from state-owned land should be used within the state. Other aspects of the discussion made brief reference to the role of forests in ensuring quality water supplies and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

**Role DCR Forest Land in the Vision.** The TSC discussed the role of DCR forest lands as they relate to all forest lands in the state. Most members felt that DCR lands, because they are large tracts, are unique in their ability to protect forests and biodiversity – this was framed in terms of public entities being “custodians of the future” where the Department does what private landowners can't or won't do. One example of this

might be the protection of certain ecosystem services. Several members stated that DCR should increase fee and conservation easements to protect additional land and establish more reserves. The role of timber production on DCR lands was discussed further and members agreed that timber could be a byproduct of management but should not be a goal in and of itself – a departure from the vision for the forests of 100 years ago. Several members noted that foresters have been traditionally trained to view the forests and their management in terms of maximizing the economic value of trees. However, the point was also made that DCR foresters will manage according to their plans, and therefore the plans must be clear on the management goals and purposes. For example, if the management goal is forest complexity and resilience, then DCR foresters would manage for that. A member noted that much of the current conflict is that DCR speaks in terms of protecting forests but when the public sees cutting it does not fit with the public conception of protection.

Following on this discussion, several members noted that timber production was a societal good and that, in the process of managing DCR lands, the state should not forgo the benefit that may come from management harvesting economically valuable products. Another member noted that the wood products industry was hampered by high labor costs so that even giving timber to the industry might not help it in its current state. Overall however, no conclusion was reached in the discussion of timber production on state lands and the state's role in supporting a distressed industry.

The TSC discussed how private lands influence state lands and vice-versa. One member noted that what happens on private lands needs to drive what happens on state lands. Another noted that the state can be an educator and help to control what happens on private lands, for example the information provided by 132 can be communicated to landowners by maps, etc.

## **V. Gap Analysis**

The facilitators informed the TSC that several stakeholder groups had urged that they analyze the TSC membership and need for technical advisors in light of John Hagan stepping down from the committee. Mr. Hagan remains eager to provide technical advice. The group discussed potential areas of substantive expertise. After discussion the group agreed that the best approach will be to supplement their expertise through presentations from Technical Advisors and work groups rather than adding an additional member.

## **VI. Future Presentations**

The TSC identified the following possible presentations, and preferred presenters where appropriate, for future meetings:

- Silviculture
- Carbon storage/sequestration
- Old growth – Bob Leverett
- Biomass
- DCR, possible topics: statutes, history of acquisitions, forestry management planning / implementation, relationship of certification to planning, "State Forester" definition and role.

## **VII. Glossary**

Terms identified for glossary: "State Forester", Ecosystem services, managing lands

## **VIII. Action Items**

- Revise Framing Questions, revise ecosystem services, draft Vision (Walker, Vernegaard, MODR)
- Coordinate Silviculture and carbon presentations for June 9 (Walker/MODR)
- Coordinate DCR presentation for June 23 (MODR/Walker/DCR)

- Disseminate draft vision from Bob Perschel
  - Begin assembling glossary (Walker/MODR)
  - Provide copy of OHV Working Group Recommendations (MODR)
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## Meeting Materials

The following materials we distributed to TSC members and observers at or before the meeting:

- Meeting Agenda
- Revised Framing Questions
- Ecosystem Services - samples