

TO: Stephanie Cooper, Department of Conservation and Recreation

FROM: Bill Logue, John Goodrich, Loraine Della Porta, Massachusetts Office of Dispute Resolution & Public Collaboration

RE: **Outline of Proposed Public Participation Process for DCR Forests**

DATE: February 5, 2009

What follows is a brief outline for a proposed public participation process. The proposed design is meant to be flexible and to include ways of incorporating broad public input, creating dialogue among more organized stakeholder groups and bringing credible scientific information into any recommendations for a DCR vision going forward. As needs and issues emerge the facilitation team may adjust and adapt the process. We look forward to implementing the process goals and the proposed design. We hope that you will share this information with the Stewardship Council and we will contact the interviewees to share our recommendations with them.

We have incorporated ideas and information from our discussions with DCR and EOEEA staff and almost 20 interviews with a cross section of the stakeholder community. Those conversations have surfaced a number of issues, concerns and hopes. We feel that the process needs to:

- Bring clarity to the mandates and values reflected in DCR forest management.
 - Many interviewees feel that they need to be confident in the consistency and predictability of decisions and on-the-ground practices that will benefit the long term health of the forests.
- Be informed by science from a variety of disciplines to establish criteria for forest management and cutting that will address on-the-ground issues for the context and implementation of forest management.
 - Many interviewees feel that the discussion should include the larger context of the full range of public priorities, and that important values including broad ecological, social, cultural, aesthetic, and other public interests are not sufficiently incorporated into current vision, policy or decisions.
- Be transparent to the participants and the public.

Process Components

We recommend a public participation process which has a number of interconnected components. As we move forward, each step will be reassessed based on what has preceded it. The basic elements include: information from a broad cross section of the public through online surveys, site visits and open public forums; a dialogue among a representative group of the organized stakeholder community; an expert steering committee that will develop recommendations for DCR based on their scientific or other expertise and from the information generated by the surveys, forums and stakeholder dialogue. Throughout this, we will help organize and facilitate the meetings and draft meeting summaries and other documents related to the process which can be made readily available to the public and participants. A few additional details are below.

- **Public Forums and Site Visits.** We suggest site visits be conducted at several representative forests and/or parks. These would involve technical experts who are familiar with the on-the-ground issues. These site visits will be immediately followed by facilitated open public forums to elicit feedback about public values, goals and concerns going forward. Local legislators may be sought out as conveners for these meetings and stakeholder groups will be encouraged to have their members attend. At least one additional public forum will be hosted to review proposed recommendations.
- **Surveys.** We recommend web-based surveys to gather information about public opinion and values concerning forest management practices and provide feedback concerning recommendations. The MODR facilitation team will design the surveys with the assistance of DCR and will independently administer and compile the results.
- **Advisory Group of Stakeholders and Technical Steering Committee.** The MODR facilitation team will oversee the process for identification and selection of two groups – a Forest Futures Technical Steering Committee who will attempt to reach consensus recommendations for DCR and an Advisory Group of Stakeholders to engage in a dialogue to surface and discuss the issues, develop ideas and suggestions for the Technical Steering Committee and provide feedback to the Technical Steering Committee on draft recommendations.

Meetings.

Several types of meetings will occur in addition to the Public Forums mentioned above. The Stakeholder Group and Technical Steering Committee will have opportunities to meet both together and separately. The MODR team will help the members prepare for meetings, share information, and resolve issues between meetings. After each meeting the team will prepare a meeting summary or draft recommendations to create a shared memory of the process. The MODR team will also draft ground rules, and outline roles and responsibilities for these meetings and the public forums.

- **Joint meetings of Technical Steering Committee and Stakeholder Group.** We suggest an early joint meeting of the groups to provide an overview of the process, roles, responsibilities, set forth process goals and outcomes, establish a baseline understanding and initiate the dialogue. Later joint meetings may occur to discuss possible recommendations.
- **Stakeholder Group.** This group will meet several times to bring forward issues, interests and options that stakeholders may wish to have reflected in the recommendations and to provide suggestions for improvements to the recommendations.
- **Forest Futures Technical Steering Committee.** This panel will meet several times to develop and share information and draft recommendations.
- **Other Meetings.** The MODR facilitation team may facilitate work group meetings or conference calls where segmented portions of the tasks will be addressed by small groups of stakeholders, technical experts or the recommendation panel experts.

Formation of the Advisory Group of Stakeholders and Technical Steering Committee

The **Technical Steering Committee** should be composed of individuals who have a high level of expertise through their background, formal educational degrees in the area, and continued research or

professional practice so that they are current on the issues, trends, and best practices. They should be advocates for good science, good forest management and good process, and also be highly regarded by a broad cross section of stakeholders. The areas of expertise may be from the following specialties: forestry (including silviculture, habitat/wildlife management, landscape ecology, insect and disease/invasive species control, natural resource economics, forest fire management and ecology, watershed management and protection), forest sociologist/policy, forest recreation management, natural resource lawyer, natural resource planner, and climate change and forest impacts.

We have solicited names from the interviewees and have compiled a list that may need supplementing. We will invite one individual each from the forestry, landowner, environmental and citizen stewardship communities to advise in the process in order to arrive at a final group of 10-12 individuals to sit on the Steering Committee. We believe that this stakeholder participation in the selection of the Technical Steering Committee is an important part of the process.

We recommend a **representative group of stakeholders** who reflect the various interest categories be convened to engage in a dialogue to surface and discuss the issues, develop ideas and suggestions for the Technical Steering Committee and provide feedback to the Committee on draft recommendations. The Stakeholder Group would have approximately 20 members drawn from the forestry, environmental, citizen stewardship/recreational, land owner, wildlife/habitat, economic development, and government/municipal stakeholder interest group communities. In the near future we will make recommendations concerning the categories of composition of the group. We will work with the various stakeholder communities to identify appropriate representatives. We hope that Commissioner Sullivan will extend the invitation to participate.

In identifying potential stakeholder representative participants we will use the following criteria:

- Typically represent stakeholder groups or interests not just themselves (individuals will be able to participate in the process through the public forums)
- Knowledgeable about forest management issues on both a statewide and, if possible, a regional or national basis
- Have authority and/or trust, respect and support of their constituencies or group(s)
- Ability to articulate their group(s) perspective and have the capacity to represent the larger interest group (i.e., capable of speaking to the issues of more than one organization)
- Ability to communicate back to their group(s)
- Able to work productively with others
- Represent the geographic areas and demographics of their group(s)

While some elements of this design are likely to change we look forward to discussing this with you and to reviewing it with stakeholders.

