

Comments--Bennington

Forest Plan Revision

October 11, 2001

COMMENTS ON ISSUES

1. What's the implication of going forward for the next five years if you were stopped before will you be stopped again?
2. Follow-up on first question, sounded like all the stuff we are working on is politics. Where is the reality?
3. Roadless area how will it affect this process.
4. Acquisition and the aggressive nature of the acquisitions. Creating a marketplace for cutover woodlots. Appraisals—you are looking at what people are buying and not at what people are not buying. It's above what normal market would be. Dennis explained federal appraisal process.
5. Definition of a roadless area is – definition of what a road is.
6. In looking over issues, they are segregated out, i.e. timber harvesting is a tool to several other of the issues, i.e. wildlife habitat, etc. Need to elevate timber to a higher level.
7. What the forest can do to respond to maybe not global warming but there are some other things that you do have control over and you can do something about them – these should be identified.
8. Problem with roadless—roads are all over the place. 15 year old plan and we aren't cutting timber. Why aren't we harvesting. Not one word has been said about ski areas. Ski trails are top to bottom clearcutting. Snow machines can run as fast as people on I-91. I want a piece of the plan and I can't have it. I don't want to run a snow machine, but would like to hunt. We need to get all this politics out of the way. How many people burn firewood. Firewood is almost non-existent in southern Vermont. We have thousands of acres of land in Vermont not being utilized.
9. In 1986 plan, timber management was one of the big concerns. When it came out we were supposed to cut 15 mbf of timber. What year we have cut that much?
10. Looks at the last 50 years and thinks nobody is telling the truth. We lost fish and can't eat it, we need to have it out in the open and have a healthy discussion.
11. One percent of timber comes off the forest, Forest has to go by what is appropriated by WO/RO. You can only do what you get the money to do. I don't usually stand up for FS, but you have a hard row to hoe.
12. Tax base—40 percent now in GMNF—lose tax base. By the timber program not working, we don't garner anything on the 25 % fund. Point is it is a burden on the local property tax of town.
13. Another comment on acquisition—tremendous burden on the local people, more land should stay in private ownership. Economics are all wrong—there is no stable resource base. Not a shortfall in timber but because forest management changes.
14. Utilizing volunteers and private citizens. Ice storm damage—salvaging—hundreds of thousands dollars that is on the ground that will never have an economic value for the communities because it will rot. People can come in there and help salvage, help with anything. Taxpayers are flat out, and we can't salvage what's right here.
15. Timber harvesting—snowmobiles. On old log road. Conflict of uses – prevents utilization of the resource.
16. Issues being related. Timber—wildlife. Need to put these together.
17. No net loss of private property. For each acre we gain, we need to lose the same.

NEW ISSUES

18. Watershed planning - approach is important. Makes sense.
19. Effects of outside sources such as global warming, invasive on forest health
20. New issue that I didn't see: Any way to establish the criteria for "best science" data. What does that mean? Concerned about the difference in defining what good science is. Piece of legislation "model legislation" has criteria of what should be in there and accountability.
21. Decline of early successional species in east
22. Citizen volunteer involvement—would like to see FS make more use of volunteer involvement -
- could get more done.
23. Snowmobile—is working too well. 6000 people out on the trail, makes it difficult for an old X-country skier like me to share the trails. Would like to review arrangement with VAST—no net gain in more snow trails.
24. Economics of Timber Sales
 - How much taxpayer money is tied up in appeals that the FS gets hit with.
 - Are timber sales in the east comparable to those in the West? If you are going to look at amount of money that's coming and going, you have to account for price of other things, the whole picture, how it affects air, water, PILT, taxes, etc.
 - Road construction, Price/Waterhouse evaluated FS roads, environmental groups say we are subsidizing timber sales. FS is building roads to a certain standard this needs to be taken into the equation.

COMMENTS ON EDUCATIONAL FORUMS

25. History - reason the land was purchased. Would like to know what the first idea it was for.
26. Sustainability—where does it come in.
27. Appeals, frivolous lawsuits, we need to have an open discuss. Old plan was a model of public participation. Now everything is stopped. What is the end game of wilderness?
28. Gridlock - We both need to come in and have a discussion so we don't keep getting hit with lawsuit.
29. Wildlife—all the other topics have some aspect of wildlife.
30. Forums are important—people have a disconnect with natural world. When there were family farms, there was a connection to nature. But today, that isn't there and people don't understand science, biology and people don't have an understanding.
31. Education deals with who has the money and the power. Need scientific and socio-economic side.
32. Forum to define stakeholders.

COMMENTS ON PLANNING PROCESS

33. Forums are a good idea – need this information
34. Local Bennington Group interested in forming nature group to provide information