

Rutland Plan Revision Meeting October 28, 2003: Public Comments

Break-Out Session: 4 Question Stations

1. What is your view or "desired future condition" for the vegetation on the Green Mountain National Forest?
2. How would you like to see timber management change from the current Forest Plan?
3. What methods would you like to see used for timber management? (Even-aged, un-even aged, other?)
4. For what purposes would you like to see timber management used (wildlife habitat, timber production, other purposes)?

Public Comments

Question 1: What is your view or "desired future condition" for the vegetation on the Green Mountain National Forest?

Depends on characteristics of certain areas and activities appropriate for that area...long-range view (100 year) that best suits vision and what parcel is capable of

A mosaic of openings thinnings and uncut areas providing a diverse wildlife habitat and a mixture of forest types and species

Large old growth patches or blocks

Areas large enough to withstand natural disturbance

Quiet

No new roads

Only uneven-aged management, only along forest perimeter, using existing roads and winter logging techniques

Regeneration cuts limited to 20 acres with adjacent not cut for 10 years

Small trees are quiet too

Mixed age groups for diversity

More old growth-enough private land for early successional habitat-forest doesn't need to provide that much

Reflect working forest tradition in Vermont (more deer wintering area management and early successional cuts which aren't happening on private land)

Need vegetation to provide habitat for all forest wildlife-from species that like old forest to species that like early successional habitat

There is an undeniable lack of both very old and very young age classes on the GMNF. DFC should allow and encourage a generally aging forest condition while managing for early successional habitat and grassland habitat

1/3 of forest to grow to old growth, 1/3 to even-age management, 1/3 to heavy shelterwood cuts (delayed ok)

Aspen and birch stand managed in short rotation even-aged management

Allow for areas to become old growth

Lots of opportunity for dark and quiet forest

Vegetation management should be consistent with historic range of variability-benchmark before European Americans-not sole focus but should be a strong emphasis

Question 2: How would you like to see timber management change from the current Forest Plan?

Just put the current well thought out, well-balanced, nationally acclaimed plan into effect!

More clearcutting

Manage timber lands for forest management goals-wildlife habitat, forest products, and economic benefit of the communities near the GMNF

Improve quality of wildlife habitat through timber sales program

More clearcutting and shelterwood cutting for early successional habitat for wildlife species

Many small cuts, 20 acres, are better than large cuts

Cluster cuts rather than scattering them

Have a lower limit on cutting

Limit cutting to within a mile of existing NF ownership (don't penetrate interior of forest)

Likes old growth core-managed fringes

No new roads-including temporary roads

Consider winter logging

Consider horse logging: reduce footprint of activities

Pull culverts and close roads after sales

No clearcuts-emphasize uneven-aged management

Include detailed information on species like RFSS and MIS-in NEPA documents, don't just refer to other documents-also include maps with contours and previous harvest (example 20 years)

No increase in the amount of land for timber harvest (keep same percent from 1987 plan in new plan)

Uneven growth management

Would like to see more numerous, smaller, more carefully planned sales (public involvement would help get sales started again)

Question 3: What methods would you like to see used for timber management? (Even-aged, un-even aged, other?)

Uneven-aged management only

No regeneration cuts over 20 acres with adjacent lands not cut for 10 years

No new roads-use existing roads

Limit cutting to within 1 mile of forest boundaries

Consider winter logging

Consider horse logging

Mixed methods to mimic natural processes

Continue to use fire to the extent necessary

Method of management should be in service to desired ecological conditions, based on landscape/whole forest inventory and analysis

Return to some even-aged management to achieve early successional forests for wildlife diversity and forest regeneration

FS should be allowed to use a full range of management practices to achieve plan goals

Appropriate method for the goal of the particular project

Clearcuts

New silvicultural techniques that enhance specific ecosystem components such as forest structure

Active methods-early successional habitat creators

All methods appropriate for the type of management

More even-aged, in the Northeast, that habitat (created by even-age) is disappearing

Bird species that rely on such habitats are the most rapidly declining

More uneven-aged management areas

Let nature take care of the even-aged

More acres that provide educational or experimental areas for sustainable forestry

Whatever method will minimize visual impacts

Use methods that will minimize impacts on hiking and other uses (slash being left)

Emphasize uneven-aged management

Look at the forest in a regional, state, NE perspective

More educational and experimental sustainable forestry areas

Question 4: For what purposes would you like to see timber management used (wildlife habitat, timber production, other purposes)?

Concern that private is being so sub-divided that timber harvesting is no longer practical (example-daily farming-who is going to be a logger-are youth going into profession?)

Multi-use, timber production, wildlife habitat, recreation, demonstration of good forestry to landowners and general public

GMNF should be a leader in good forestry practices

No beauty strips along roads-public education with signs, opportunities accompanying timber sales that occur close to well-traveled roads

Managed for early successional habitat for wildlife

Use signs and visitor information centers to explain that timber management is good for wildlife

Modern timber management assumes role of traditional Native American practices and other natural disturbance events in maintaining a healthy, diverse forest

The role of public land is to provide early successional habitat-private landowners do not have this as an objective

Cooperation between Forest Service and education institutes/colleges

Maintain biodiversity as related to maintaining viable wildlife populations

Protect fish habitat

Keep sales small to stimulate interest in small operators

Not just "provide wildlife habitat" but use timber management to assist transition to a fuller diversity of natural communities and age classes

Summary Remarks

Lt. Governor's article in the paper asking for comments on land acquisition

Wallingford is 47% covered by GMNF-do we provide an opportunity for towns to comment? Yes

Do we have all the town and regional plans?

There is a misconception that private land is providing enough early successional habitat-not true, birds are most rapidly declining because of lack of habitat

Misconception on costs of appeals and litigation-more than 1.5%-more like 40-50% range

What are "excessive and unreasonable" costs versus the cost of doing business and good stewardship and does not add value to the forest

Valuable for the FS to provide information on the GMNF costs of appeals and litigation

Is litigation/appeals to prevent timber harvesting in general, or a specific project?

From 1998 until now there has been no harvesting but the timber staff is still there-working on projects or litigation

Are budgets set in stone or can we get more for litigation process (usually the first-have to achieve less to pay for costs)

How open is the sale preparation process? Follows NEPA

Current plan is old and new projects will be viewed through a new set of eyes once there is a new plan

Why not have a Wilderness designation on the GM-but the best hardwood stands are on the GMNF-management has improved the quality

Appeals have only a 45 day turnaround-so why have appeals impacted the program so much? Not just the appeals but the preparation, funding, staff loss

A lot of the process is the cost of complying with the law-if a high bar has to be met

Higher NEPA costs to withstand litigation-this does not lead to a better response on the ground

15 appeals since 1992, 30+ projects

There are costs associated with no harvesting also

Appeals are challenges that make sure the law is followed-if a higher bar, then it is appropriate.