

Notes from small group discussions
FLNF Forest Plan Revision Public Meeting
Feb. 5, 2003

Question #1: What questions or suggestions do you have on the public involvement process?

Group 1

Who makes the decisions?

Loss of local power (decisions made in Vermont, not New York)

Advisor committees?

Formal versus informal comment period: does it need to be about a specific topic or subject?

Timeframe of planning process: why not 1 or 5 year plan?

More localized advertising (ex. Penny Saver and HiLights)

People do not feel advertising is working-hard to find out about public meetings

Concerned that local citizens don't have as much power as large special interest groups (ex. oil companies with lots of money)

How do we find out who is talking to forest (ex. interest groups)?

Clarify non-negotiable topics (ex. Clean Air Act)

Clearly defined agenda-clearly define what will come out of local planning group meetings (deliverables)

Have local planning groups help devise agenda for each meeting (at end of one meeting-devise agenda for next meeting together)

Group 2

Who is the decision maker?

How to go from maps to alternatives?

Why hasn't the 1985 plan been fixed (re: oil and gas)?

Report on assessments

Have a meeting on forest management in the woods

Presentation on maps and map skills

Coffee at meetings

On-site forest management education

More detailed fiscal analysis-at least every 5 years

Better budget information

Keep information from previous meetings

Don't re-do past meetings and forums

Group 3

When will we get to manage the conflicts?

Process seems clear, seems to be baggage in the room

Information to the public

Humanize the process, keep it short.

Use language people understand

More time for ads to run and more ads

Forest Service disclose all partner groups
Forest Service have all minutes available
How will Forest Service maintain interest in monthly public meetings?
How do you balance science and values? What do you do when science doesn't agree?
How are those decisions made?
End on time: punctuality

Group 4

Explain current management guidelines and where each is located on the Finger Lakes National Forest
Proposals for change: layout what we expect to happen under the revised plan
Is the plan realistic-look at historical budget and explain expectations for future (will budget be there to implement plan?)
How does public input affect the decisions that are made?
Will public involvement make a difference in the decisions that are made? Response requested from Paul Brewster
Importance of the Record of Decision to provide rationale (draft Record of Decision?)
What is the best way for public to make a difference and be heard (ex. meetings, petitions, legislation...)?
Would like reassurance through Forest Service-produced products that the work done at public planning group meetings is having some impact.
Ensure the process finishes the job
Use work completed to date (ex. Previous plan and public meeting information)
Streamline decisions and amendments

Question #2: What dates, times, and locations would be best for future monthly public planning group meetings?

Group 1

1st Wednesday or Thursday of the month, evening
any Wednesday night
1st Thursday morning
anytime
evening
maybe somewhere quieter (better acoustics)
1st week of the month, evenings
1st week of the month, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, evenings
1st week of the month, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, evenings
1st week of the month, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, evenings
Hector is a good place
evening 7-9 is best
6 pm is too early

Group 2

More meetings and workshops in good weather

Ads in Seneca County papers (ex. Penny Saver)
Publish a schedule
Not first Wednesday-maybe Thursday is good
Outdoor workshops on weekends
High school acoustics better-Watkins Glen
Hector is more central location
Burdett Fire Hall

Group 3

Move meetings around: Trumansburg, Ithaca, etc.
Different locations
Predictability-it is easy to remember (ex. 1st Wednesday)
weekend or night
weekend OK

Group 4

Concentrated on question #1

Question #3: What skills should be covered at the Interface workshop to improve forest service and public communication skills?

Group 1

How to get people to talk
Improve communication by having Forest Service offer free food (beer and chicken!)
How to make meetings less formal
Listening skills and speaking skills
How to recognize emotions
How to find common ground
Removing Forest Service jargon from presentations
Educate public on Forest Service language so they can understand documents (if Forest Service is going to use it we need to have skills to interpret it)
Communication: How do you speak to everyone on the same level?
Other communication pathways: not everyone communicates best by speaking-can we work writing into public meetings?
What makes a useful comment from public-how can public comments "best" be heard and have points taken?
In small groups-public likes how Forest Service went around the circle accepting comments so everyone can speak-not just throw out thoughts where less boisterous people don't get their chance.
How to treat each other with respect
How to see neighbors viewpoint
Small groups work best
Time limit: if an issue cannot be resolved in a small group, move on and keep as a discussion point for the larger group at next meeting or at current meeting wrap-up
How to deal with overly confrontational views?

Dealing with submissive versus aggressive people...how can they both express their views?

Rumor controls

Identifying or qualifying statements (make sure no misunderstandings, ex. I know I'm being sarcastic but...)

Forest Service answering questions in a timely manner

Group 2

Non-violent communication

Consensus decision making

Publish agendas and schedule ahead of time

Get on with the plan, not process

Not sure a workshop will help, how can the Forest Service ensure that it will?

May just be avoidance to do a workshop

Get to the bottom line

Need strong moderators and facilitators

JUST GET AT IT!

Group 3

Skills to define issues

Need to be in the "same woods" (on the same page)

Listening skills

Forest Service needs to be transparent

The partners need to be listed and transparent: FOIA

Patience

Open to learn (other views)

Compromise

Bring everyone together (all interest groups)

Prioritize issues (need to do this for resolution)

Have representatives from all partnerships and have them give presentations

have it at night

involvement of kids, parents, schools (ex. field trips)-leads to knowledge with stewardship of the forest as the central goal.

Group 4

Concentrated on question #1