

New Hampshire  
Forest Advisory Board Meeting  
June 28, 2019

Present: Brad Simpkins, Mark Zankel, Jane Difley, Charlie Niebling, Tom Thomson, Jack Bronnenberg, John Caveny, Jim Oehler, David Publicover, Diane Taliaferro, Carol Foss.

Absent: Dennis McKenney, Mark Ducey, Karen Bennett

Public: Eileen Townsend – Northern Logger

#### Meeting opening

- Brad hands out roster, state statute that references state forest advisory board
- Introduction of members
- Review of Agenda – Dave Publicover asked that Nash Stream update be included under the Director's report.

#### Review of FAB membership

With the passing of Marty Carrier last fall, the Division is seeking another fire service representative to fill his spot. The agency has sent a letter to the NH Fire Chiefs Association asking for suggestions. Tom Thomson, forest landowner from Orford joins the board, replacing Bruce Schwaegler. With the dissolution of NCRC&D we will be reviewing other potential board members.

Terms – Brad commented that our goal is to have people on the board who are engaged and want to be on the board and have not enforced any term limits. He asked the board's thoughts on reinstating term limits and added that members should feel free to resign if they feel it's time to move on. Mark Zankel commented that he believes terms are a good idea, turnover adds good dynamic to the group. Jane Difley suggested adding someone with climate change expertise, perhaps from the University or from research. Other suggestions included an economic development representative.

Brad noted that the statute authorizing the board doesn't have required board member numbers or representation and asks members to share their thoughts regarding terms and representation on the board via email.

Election of Chairperson – Brad stated that RSA 227 requires the board to elect a chairperson annually. Having a chairperson allows the board to function more effectively, particularly if board would like to write letter regarding issues. After a short discussion **Dave Publicover nominated Charlie Niebling, Tom Thomson seconds, unanimous approval.** Effective July 1 through June 30.

Jane Difley announced that she is retiring as of October 1. The Forest Society will seek an appropriate staff member to take her seat on the board.

#### Director's Report

- Budget – The House and Senate passed a budget for FY 2020-2021, however the governor is expected to veto it. The House and Senate also passed a joint continuing resolution in anticipation of the veto. It is expected we will be authorized to spend up to an amount equal to ¼ (3 months) of the Fiscal Year 2019 approved budget. This can make seasonal spending difficult. If the current House/Senate version of the budget passes, we will get one additional ranger position, bringing us to 10. Also, two additional full time forester positions working under the good neighbor authority on the WMNF. (The Farm Bill allows States to do work on federal land under a cooperative agreement.) Our goal is to fully fund the position through timber sales. The challenge is

the gap between when they start and when we begin to see revenue. Diane commented that for the WMNF focus is on shared stewardship – working with states and private partners to meet timber production and fuels reduction goals.

Brad noted that in 2008 the agency funding mix was about ½ general funds and 1/3 self-funded, now the opposite it true.

Our current total budget is approximately \$8 million operating, in 2008 it was closer to \$6 million. About 14% of the budget made up of other funds like grants, fees, fines, etc.

- Position changes – New rangers: Mike Mattson – Seacoast Area, Adrian Reyes – Cheshire County, Luke Perrault – Grafton County; Forest Management - Billy Kunelius; Community Forester - Cory Keeffe; Natural Heritage Bureau Data Manager -Chris Fontenot. We are in the process of hiring the Central Regional Forester as Shaun Bresnahan retired at the end of May.
- Bear Brook State Park Management Plan– We have begun the Bear Brook SP plan update in partnership with the Division of Parks. There was a public meeting last night (6/27). There was only one question about timber harvesting. Most of the comments and questions were about recreational uses. Charlie Niebling asked how much of the 9,976 acres is designated as appropriate for timber harvesting. Brad explained that our properties are zoned for tax purposes Forestry (pilt is paid to the local community based on current use) or Developed Recreation (no pilt paid). At Bear Brook only 482 are designated developed recreation, the remainder is zoned forestry.

Within the tax zoning areas we have another level of zoning where an area within the forestry zoned acres that has a trail may be designated as forestry recreation. There are 2,050 acres within the forestry zone that are designated undisturbed or unmanaged.

- Pisgah – In 2008 the Division completed the multi-year management plan development project for Pisgah. The first timber harvest at Pisgah occurred in 2007. The long time-group, Friends of Pisgah, was involved in the development of the plan but a few members were unsatisfied with the plan and the process so they splintered off, forming a group called Defenders of Pisgah. The group is opposed to any timber harvesting at the property, and believe it should be a wilderness focused predominantly on recreation. Recently Representative Harvey asked to meet with us regarding the groups concerns. Representative Harvey then invited other area elected officials to the meeting and one of those officials invited members of Defenders. The day before our meeting, Representative Harvey and the other officials had a private meeting with Defenders, who had developed a list of 7 requests regarding the property. The Defenders also requested a moratorium on plan implementation until their other requests are addressed. The Division sent Representative Harvey a 10 page response to the request by the Defenders

One of the questions raised in the Defender’s document is whether enough of the forest is left undisturbed or is re-growing at a fast enough pace to offset carbon emissions generating from cutting, milling, and transportation (particularly if sent overseas). We are talking with Forest Ecosystem Monitoring Center, out of Vermont, to see what information we can get regarding carbon and Pisgah. Jasen Stock sent Brad and Commissioner Stewart an email regarding this issue. Brad shared the email with the Board. Jane Difley asked if the congressional delegation has been taken on a field trip to see the forestry operations out there. Brad stated that we have hosted congressional tours in the past, and Representative Harvey has also been on a tour of Pisgah. John Caveny questioned whether the members of the Defenders bothered to read the plan...which is 150 pages long. The plan is clear that it is a long-term plan- 20 – 25 years. He expressed concerned

that this is a small group of individuals trying to undo the work of all those involved in the development of the plan. Charlie Niebling asked about the opinion by the National Park Service regarding the ability to conduct forest management activities on a property acquired using LWCF funds. Brad stated that the Park Service agreed that timber harvesting is an appropriate activities at Pisgah and noted that we have many properties with LWCF funds and timber harvesting is conducted on most of them. Mark Zankel asked that the FAB be sent the agency response and link to the Pisgah Page. Brad stated he was disappointed with David Foster's newspaper quote, citing it as unprofessional.

Tom Thomson commented that it seems there is a small number of people who operate the property is theirs instead of a property for all the citizens of the state. The plan is multi-year, and many people & organizations involved in its development. Jim Oehler stated he doesn't think they will ever stop. They seem to resurface when new legislators are elected. The agency has to continually educate elected officials about the property and the management plan.

Jane Difley suggest we develop a comprehensive strategy to keep forests and sustainable forestry at the forefront of people's minds with consistent messaging across the forestry community. Just because we educate doesn't mean public will agree with us. How do we collectively come up with what we all agree on and can jointly promote.

Mark Zankel suggested looking at the Great Bay Partnership model. He also thinks the carbon question is important to answer because this we are likely to get this question more often. He also stated he expects that carbon storage increasing on the property.

Dave Publicover agreed, given the management of the property, but noted that looking beyond the management of the property to carbon impacts of transportation is not really within the scope of what we can do.

Charlie Niebling suggested caution when proceeding with this kind of study citing competing science regarding carbon storage and sequestration.

Jane suggested there is a broader perspective and maybe focusing on single property is short sighted. John Caveny also suggested caution given the complexity of the science. Adding that it is hard to respond to this group given their defined agenda. They don't seem to see the wildlife benefit of harvesting either.

- Connecticut Lakes Headwaters Forest (CLHF) – The 145,872-acre CLHF property is up for sale. The current owner, The Forestland Group, has owned the property since 2008. The State of New Hampshire, through the Department of Natural and Cultural Resource, Division of Forests and Lands, holds a conservation easement on the property. The state also holds a right of 1<sup>st</sup> offer and right of 1<sup>st</sup> refusal. We are currently moving through the process of providing a waiver for the right of first offer. Brad noted that The Forestland Group has been great to work with. Jane Difley asked if the funds that the state has to maintain the state-owned roads is less than what is needed. Brad said the road maintenance funds always fall short and explains the 3 endowments, stewardship, monitoring, and road maintenance; and added that the landowner also contributes to road maintenance on state designated roads needed for timber harvesting. Jane asked if we should be having discussions about increasing the amount of funds available for maintenance. Brad agreed but added that Phil should be included on that discussion.

David Publicover suggested consideration for improving/upgrading the roads, Jim Oehler recommended we look into mitigation funds to help with the work.

- Nash Stream – Brad explains the proposed ATV southern connector.... Primary reason for the trail is to get to a source of gas and connect with roads in Stark. The proposal went through the

coarse/fine filter criteria, and the tech team developed list of concerns. At the meeting this week the Citizen's Committee reviewed the proposal and concerns developed by the tech team. The committee directed the tech team to come back to committee with recommendations of conditions that should to be met in order for the committee to approve the trail, keeping in mind that the trail would still have to go through the CORD process. If approved there would be a trial phase before the trail is made permanent.

Fish and Game Department is opposed to the trail primarily due to the amount of money that has been spent doing restoration and improvement work on Nash Stream. They are very concerned about anything that would impact user experience and damage or undo the restoration work.

Mark Zankel stated that TNC is also opposed to the proposed trail. The track record has been that once something is approved as probationary it isn't going to be removed. This is a gradual chipping away of the view of what Nash Stream should be.

Brad stated that if the probationary trail is approved there must be clear conditions and standards that must be met for the trail to be continued. Dave Publicover agreed with Mark and hopes this will be taken more seriously that last time. There was no study and no data gathering.

#### Other NS items

- Ken Desmarais, is establishing CFM plots at Nash Stream and gave presentation regarding this project at the NS Citizen's Committee meeting.
- Natural Heritage Bureau staff are conducting surveys on the property. They have found 2 rare plants previously unrecorded at Nash Stream
- Timber harvesting and road maintenance is ongoing. Dave Publicover asked about the designation of control areas that are representative of the timber types where management is occurring. Brad stated that we have consulted with Bill Leak regarding control areas. Brad will send the board information regarding the establishment of control areas at Nash Stream.

#### Legislation of Interest

Brad gave an overview of the legislation of interest to the Division this year. Tom Thomson commented on the importance of HB 183 - the biomass bill – on markets for low-grade wood. For many properties, low-grade material can be as much as 60% of wood harvested. The bill passed house and senate and is now on its way to the governor's desk. However, the governor may veto the bill. If it doesn't pass forest landowners in NH will have a decision to make regarding their land. Jane asked about next steps if the bill is vetoed. Brad said he is not sure if there are enough votes to override the veto. It's not just getting additional folks to vote for it but also get those that voted for it to vote for the override.

Jane Difley asked if there is someone who can influence the Governor on this issue. Tom stated that he and Jasen Stock have both spent time in this effort but have not been successful. Charlie Niebling asked if there might be an opportunity over the next few weeks to ask Commissioner Stewart to engage with the Governor on this issue. Charlie suggested that, as an advisory board to the agency, perhaps FAB can draft a letter to the director and commissioner regarding the importance of biomass markets to sustainable forest management in NH. The letter would be written in such a way that is respectful of the many perspectives on board. Carol Foss stated that we must make sure letter includes discussion of the larger ramifications of the loss of this market to role of the forest in all aspects of life in NH

Dave Publicover asked how we answer the question of why should rate payers bear the cost of subsidizing this power source.

It was noted that there is no energy source that isn't subsidized. While biomass is a small part of the energy market, it is a large part of sustainably managed forests which impacts many other

aspects of the state's economy (tourism, recreation) and ecology. Brad agreed, stating that he is concerned that the lack of low grade markets will result in declining forest health and timber quality. We need to devote resources to the development of additional low grad wood markets.

Charlie Niebling offered to draft the letter referenced earlier and asked Tom Thomson and Dave Publicover to assist. Dave and Mark both stated that they are sensitive to the need for low grade markets however their organizations will not sign onto the letter. Climate change is an important issue for TNC and Audubon. Their organizations did not support the bill because biomass energy generation not a very carbon friendly form of energy generation.

Jane stated she sees biomass energy generation as a gap filler until other low grade markets are developed.

Charlie agreed to have a draft to board members by Tuesday of next week – with hope to have consensus draft by close of business on Wednesday. Any member wishing to sign-on to the letter should let him know after review of the draft.

#### Forest Action Plan

- Susan Francher gave an overview of the Forest Action Plan process and outreach dates and strategy. The Plan must be completed and submitted to the Forest Service for approval by June 30, 2020. Initial outreach has begun with an online survey and scheduled public meetings. The survey and public meeting dates can be found on the Forests and Lands website at <https://www.nh.gov/nhdfl/natural-heritage/current-projects-and-events/2020-forest-action-plan.htm>

#### Roundtable

- Jim Oehler – We don't want to lose sight of the importance of the communication issue raised by Jane Difley. Charlie Niebling believes the Forest Action Plan can be the vehicle for developing strategies to address this.
- Jack Bronnenberg – Thanked Charlie Niebling for agreeing to serve as board chair for the year. Also thanked Tom and Dave for their willingness to work with Charlie on the HB 183 letter.
- Diane Taliaferro – Enjoyed attending the meeting on behalf of Clare Mendelsohn. Clare will return to work in late August. Diane stated that the Forest Action Plan process is of great interest to the White Mountain NF and encourages the Division to engage with State & Private Forestry and Research (including the Forest Products Lab in Madison, Wisconsin) as well. Recreation important part of management of the WMNF and increased public understanding of relationship of forest management to recreation is critical.

Timber program – Almost 16 million board feet was harvested in FY 18, 15.5 million board feet are slated to be harvested in FY 19 and for the following 15 years. A regional review of the timber program is looking at the cost of infrastructure, which includes roads, trails, office buildings, campgrounds and parking lots. There is a lot of interest in how to fund increasing infrastructure needs.