

**New Jersey Highlands Council
Sustainable Forestry
Technical Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary
15 August 2005**

Summary:

On Monday, August 15, 2005, the Sustainable Forestry Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) held a meeting at the New Jersey Highlands Council office in Chester, New Jersey. Notice of the meeting was provided to the public on the Highlands Council's web site. Lynn Brass-Smith of the Highlands Council staff facilitated the meeting. In addition to Lynn, Council staff members present at the meeting included: Steve Balzano, Dante DiPirro, Maryjude Haddock-Weiler, and Jeff LeJava. Technical advisors present at the meeting included: Judson Bennet, Heather Gracie Petty, Chrissy Harrigan, Wayne Martin, Andy Kimm, George Pierson, Ron Farr, Mark Vodak, Troy Ettel, Lorraine Caruso, Emile DeVito and Anthony Sblendorio.

Steve Balzano began the meeting by providing an overview of the purposes of the New Jersey Highlands Council and the Sustainable Forestry TAC. Specifically, Steve detailed the requirement that the Council adopt a regional master plan (RMP). He discussed the various timetables associated with adoption of the plan and explained what the roles of the Council and the TAC will be in helping to develop the RMP.

Lynn Brass-Smith explained the importance of the TAC members' role in the regional master planning process and highlighted some of the key areas of expertise that the TAC members bring to the process. Each TAC member was asked to introduce themselves and comment on what they would like to see achieved in the regional master plan.

Lynn explained that the TAC would strive to take a holistic view of the Highlands Region when it comes to forests and sustainable forestry. She explained that, to do this, the first step for the TAC would be to identify and assess the forest resource. The TAC members were asked for feedback on forest conservation goals and strategies, and how to address those goals.

The following summarizes the TAC members' comments and concerns related to Sustainable Forestry:

- Identify forests based upon whether or not they are watersheds, and identify both primary and lower-level watersheds.
 - Make water yield a primary characteristic used to classify forests in terms of importance.
- Map out those forests that are protected in a way that goes beyond what the Farmland Assessment Act does.
- Investigate pooling local GPS data and/or local lot data, as a method of mapping the region's forest lands.

- Investigate using forestry data as a method of mapping the region's forestlands.
- Differentiate between forestland and farmland, when mapping and identifying preserved land.
- Identify forest management plans that have not been filed (e.g. with the tax assessor's office).
- Consider both forests with a forest management plan and those without a forest management plan when categorizing forests.
- Make sure that all protected forests have a forest management plan.
- Don't make forest management plans overly restrictive (e.g. where you can't cut down an old tree for timber).
- Educate municipalities that have tree cutting ordinances that these are not forest management ordinances, and encourage them to adopt appropriate forest management ordinances.
- The Council should continue to compile all of the various tree cutting ordinances, and the like, that exist throughout the Highlands region.
- A forest management plan should be an attached requirement to any kind of timber sale.
- Encourage local municipalities to develop tree cutting and forest management plan ordinances.
- Conservation easements need to include forest management plans when drafted.
 - They shouldn't just effectively put a rope around an area, without doing anything to manage it.
 - They shouldn't only amount to a deed restriction.
- Land trusts that accept conservation easements must insist that they have a management plan aspect.
- Model conservation easements or ordinances, which include management plans, should be available to town attorneys, etc.
- Consider revising the State's conservation restriction acts, so as to strengthen the requirement for forest management.
- Encourage the inclusion of forest management plans into deed restrictions as well. Deed restrictions should have more flexibility (e.g. allow for a greater degree of forest management), and should be revisited for possible revision (e.g. include some sort of review process).
- Property owners should work collectively to manage their forestlands (e.g. bring in wood cutters on a collective basis).
- Ongoing education is critical to a successful conservation easement program.
- Non-commodity benefits should be added to the required revenue generation of woodlands that receive tax benefits.
- The deer problem, and other invasives, needs to be addressed before any conservation of forest areas can be successful.
- The Council should try to quantify regeneration failure.
- The RMP should encourage active management to further forest regeneration.
- Data must be found or developed, which backs up anecdotal information about what is threatening sustainable forestry efforts.
 - Use the data that is collected to take action.

- Several attendees volunteered to provide existing data.
- Data needs identified – identify changes in management strategies to maintain biodiversity (consider old growth forest management, water quality, t&e species).
- Encourage the sustainable forestry industry, i.e., smaller sawmill operators, “boutique” forestry – specialized products.

Next Steps:

Lynn asked the TAC members to consider additional key experts other than those serving on the TAC. The members asked that Emile DeVito and George Pierson join the TAC. Both Emile and George were in attendance.

Lynn concluded the meeting by explaining that the TAC members will be e-mailed as a follow-up to this meeting, a meeting summary will be sent within the coming weeks, and they should feel free to share their ideas via email.

The Highlands Council would like to thank everyone who participated in this opening meeting of the Sustainable Forestry TAC. We greatly appreciate any follow-up comments and questions about this summary report. Please contact Lynn Brass-Smith via email: lynn.brass-smith@highlands.state.nj.us. Notice of future meetings will be provided to the public on the Highlands Council website, www.highlands.state.nj.us, and via email to Committee participants.