Letter Writers' Guide To “Finding Common Ground”

The Northern Forest — A Region Under Siege

Public Tells Council

- Buy Land, Establish Large Ecological Reserves, Stop Subsidizing Forest Abusers, Establish Regional Task Force
- The Draft Recommendations in "Finding Common Ground" Fail to Adequately Address these Vital Issues

Important Deadline

- Submit Written Comments to Council by May 16
- Insist Council Respect the Needs of Northern Forest Ecosystems & the Will of the People
The Northern Forest Lands Council (NFLC) “Listening Sessions” have been extraordinary. Unprecedented! If you have been fortunate enough to attend one or more of these sessions, you have witnessed—and, more importantly, participated in—the rebirth of democracy in all four states of the Northern Forest region.

In session after session, citizens from all walks of life have spoken with eloquence of their love for this region, of their fear for the Northern Forests if the status quo is not dramatically changed, and of their desire to leave an ecologically healthy, economically sound region to future generations.

Of course, despite much agreement over many issues, there is not unanimity of opinion. So much the better. Honest differences of opinion stimulate creative debate. What matters is not that we all agree, but that we find a way to discuss, debate, and even disagree over the issues, in a spirit of mutual respect to proceed into the twenty-first century.

For years I have believed with all my heart that, if given an opportunity, citizens who care about the Northern Forests would resoundingly endorse fundamental changes in the status quo, and they would demand that this dialogue continue to evolve—to assume a life of its own.

However, democracy is much more than the right to express your views for three minutes at the NFLC microphone. It goes far beyond the right to send the Council a letter prior to the May 16 public comment period deadline.

For genuine democracy to flourish in the Northern Forests for generations to come, several things must happen as the NFLC moves toward its self-imposed September 30 extinction:

1. The NFLC must listen to the public and must rewrite its “Draft Recommendations” so that its “Final Recommendations” reflect the will of those who testified and wrote letters. Specifically, the Council must address:

   Ecological Reserves: The Council must state unequivocally that the network of large, buffered, connected ecological reserves in a matrix of sustainably managed private lands is the only strategy that will effectively protect the biotic and evolutionary integrity of the Northern Forest region, and that adequate funding to acquire large tracts of land from willing-sellers is a national security issue.

   Forest Practices: The Council must state unequivocally that the public, including loggers and foresters, reject current industrial forest practices. The states must pass meaningful forest practices regulations. And the Federal government must tie funding assistance (i.e., highway, economic development, or education dollars) to minimal forest practices regulations. This is how the civil rights legislation works.

   Economic Restoration: The Council must state unequivocally that the public demands a new regional economy, one that is locally and regionally controlled; that is diverse, adds the maximum amount of value locally, meets local and regional needs first (i.e., local agriculture), and is ecologically benign. There is no place for clearcuts, herbicides, or air and water pollution in the Northern Forest economy. Tax breaks and other incentive programs will only be available to landowners and businesses that operate in compliance with these standards.

   Development: The Council must address the very real threats of development—whether condos on a lakeshore, or Wal-Mart in our communities. At a minimum, the Council must recommend adoption of an anti-subsidy “Land Gains Tax” similar to the one already doing good work in Vermont. It must recommend “Current Use” or “Existing Use” zoning to retain the agricultural and forested qualities of most of this region. The Council should recommend that Congress stop subsidizing second home building while so many in America don’t have a first home.

2. Culture & Education: The Council must address the serious crisis in Education and Culture. Although the “Draft Recommendations” speak of “educating the public about forestry or land owners about biodiversity, they fail to address root causes of our cultural and educational crises in the Northern Forest region. We need better education at all levels, including college and graduate levels. Education must focus on natural and cultural history, ecological restoration, and ecologically sustainable business opportunities. Vocational education must train workers for a new, ecologically sustainable, diverse, value-added economy, not for the old rust-belt jobs.

3. Northern Forest Restoration Council: The Council must recommend a workable regional process to keep its good work alive and evolving, and to assure us that the weaknesses of the NFLC (industry veto power, intimidation by “property rights” zealots) are a thing of the past. We believe a “Northern Forest Restoration Council,” composed of representatives from local, state and federal perspectives, and charged with facilitating the work of grassroots watershed and community task forces, is essential.

Plutocrats will not effect meaningful change. Either the Council endorses its democratic effectiveness to effectively address the issues the public wants addressed, or the Council must join a long list of forces that have subverted democracy in the Northern Forest region for the better part of two centuries.

2. We, the members of the public who have participated in the NFLC process, including attending the Listening Sessions or submitting written comments, must accept responsibility for the fate of our communities, whether the NFLC’s “Final Recommendations” reflect the will of the public or the veto powers of those who have benefited from the inequities of the status quo.

3. The future for these community and watershed “Task Forces” exists: you, the caring citizens who bothered to attend a Listening Session or who cared to write a letter to the Northern Forest Lands Council, to Congress, to your local newspaper.

This is the real test of democracy: is it whether or not we, the people who care about the rights of future generations of all species native to this region, care enough to take back control of this region we love so much. Now is the time to act.

(3) Long term, our cultural, educational, social, and political institutions must support and promote informed grassroots democracy that safeguards the rights and options of future generations of all species. Currently, these institutions work to disenfranchise locals and to protect the interests of those who benefit from current inequities. Congress will not reform them. State legislatures will not reform them. Industry certainly will not reform them. That’s our job.

Will the legacy of the NFLC be the perpetuation of the injustices and destructiveness of the status quo, or will it mark the beginning of a new era in this region, a region that led the way in the abolition of colonialism and slavery? We’ve had enough talk, enough studies, enough silly posturing. Now is the time for action—and results.

The responsibility is mine and yours. Are we worthy of the challenge?

—Jamie Sayen

Council Must Compose Final Recs in Sessions Open to Public

When the Northern Forest Lands Council meets this summer to craft its Final Recommendations to Congress and the Governors of the four Northern Forest States, it must demonstrate to the public that it’s commitment to a free and open process is sincere. This requires that all Council sessions be open to the public, just as were regular Council and Subcommittee meetings. The Draft Recommendations were drawn up in seclusion, and they are tainted by an air of timber industry veto on many important issues. The only way the Council can escape charges of industry veto power and secret deals will be if its final recommendations in open sessions. The public has a right to know why the Council did or did not choose to act on a given issue.

Please write to the Council (54 Portsmouth St, Concord, NH 03301) and to your Senators and Congress-person and insist on open sessions throughout the entire Final Recommendations process.

—JS

Page 2

Northern Forest Forum

Letter Writers' Guide Special Issue
Challenges Council Must Address in Final Recommendations

Efforts to polarize the debate over the future of the Northern Forest region by pitsing "jobs vs. the environment" protect neither. Proponents of such arguments have given us massive clearcuts and job loss in Maine. According to a NEFA (Northeastern Forest Alliance) study frequently cited the Council, the industrial forest of Maine provided only 2.9 jobs per 1000 acres of forest land. New York's forests with 2.4 million acres of Wilderness and Wild Forest in the Adirondack Park provided 6.5 jobs per 1000 acres of forest land. If we concentrate on developing small-scale, value-added forest products work in the region, that figure will increase considerably. The photo of an industrial clearcut in Kokadjo, Maine was taken by Stephen Gorman.

by Jamie Sayen

Throughout this issue, we offer suggestions for improving the NLC's "Final Recommendations." But, there are four issues that the Council must address in addition to the specific recommendations we support:

1) The Council must endorse a role for the Federal government in an ongoing regional Northern Forest Restoration Council. (See pages 10-12 and 22-23)

2) The Council must conduct its final deliberations in public. The "Draft Recommendations" were negotiated in secret sessions which has intensified distrust of the Council process. If the public is to believe the Council has conducted all its business in an honest, open manner, all the sessions dedicated to drawing up the Final Recommendations must be open to the public and media. The public has paid for this process and it has a right to know how and why the Council reached its decisions.

Finding common ground requires establishing trust among all participants. Right now, as in so small measure to the secrecy of the meetings that produced the Draft Recommendations, distrust of the Council is still very strong. By agreeing to open to the public its Final Recommendation drafting sessions, the Council will demonstrate its commitment to honest, fair play. Such openness will do much to silence its critics.

3) The Council must explicitly reject the false choice of "jobs vs. environment." One of the more disturbing aspects of the "Listening Sessions" has been that opponents to land acquisition and ecological reserves justify their opposition with the claim that protection of the environment will subvert the economy. The more unscrupulous anti-enviros have claimed that environmentalists don't care about the local economy and want to hurt local economic interests.

Readers of the Forum know this is a bold-faced lie. We, who care about protecting the biotic integrity of the region, care deeply about protecting the economic interests of our communities. The Forum and the environmental community at large have written at least as much about strengthening our regional economy as have the enviro-bashers.

The environmental community is making a good faith effort to help develop alternative economic strategies. Dialogue between representatives of the timber industry, landowners, local officials, and environmentalists is critical. Posturing, enviro-bashing, and efforts to obstruct environmental protection in the name of jobs and the economy are made in bad faith, and the Council must reject such dishonest arguments and false choices.

On page 12 of "Finding Common Ground" the Council wisely writes: "Environmental and economic considerations must not be mutually exclusive." We urge the Council to expand upon this essential point. The environment is the economy. Only a healthy Northern Forest environment can support a healthy Northern Forest economy. And, on those occasions where economic interests harm or threaten to harm the environment, we must find other ways to provide jobs that are not environmentally destructive.

The Council must reject all environmentally harmful activities; it must reject tax breaks and other subsidies for polluters and clearcutters; and it must explicitly reject the claims of the anti-enviros who oppose land acquisition and ecological reserves.

Failure to reject the false choice of jobs vs. the environment will condemn the Northern Forest region to continue down the slippery slope of Pacific Northwest polarization. Rejection of the efforts of the polarizers will be one of the Council's greatest accomplishments.

4) A second false choice must be rejected by the Council—the "us vs. them" mentality that has reared its ugly head at a few Listening Sessions. Anyone who cares enough to protect the ecological and economic integrity of the Northern Forest region is a more caring steward of the land than landowners who seek to polarize the issue with "us vs. them" rhetoric. People living outside the Northern Forest region have a right to care deeply about the region and to participate in a Federally-funded study of that region. Many of the participants at Listening Sessions who live outside the region either were raised in the Northern Forests but had to leave due to lack of economic opportunities, or they regularly visit the region and contribute large amounts of money to our regional economy. Calling them names and acting in a parochial manner is mean-spirited and the Council must reject this attempt at polarization.

I am a staunch supporter of genuine "local control" of our region's destiny. I do not believe people from away should dictate to us on issues we are best qualified to decide upon, such as local school or town highway budgets. However, often the most nasty enemies of people from away are silent on the real issue regarding local control—the fact that more than half of the Northern Forest region is owned by trans-national corporations and large family trusts, mostly headquartered out of the region.

The large clearcuts, the dumping of dioxins into rivers, and the major decline in mill and woods work in the past decade are due to decisions made in corporate boardrooms outside the region, not because concerned citizens want to protect the environment that sustains us all.

Those of us who love the region—whether we are local officials, enviros, industry representatives, or temporary visitors to the region—must respect the needs and perspectives of the various constituencies affected, and we must work together. If we do this, the polarizers will find themselves powerless to poison the emerging democratic process.

Conclusion: The secret to success for the Council is strong adherence to free and open discussion and to fair choices for all of us.
Letter Writers’ Guide to Critiquing Council’s Draft Recommendations

by Jamie Sayen

A Note to the Reader: it is imperative that you submit written comments to the Northern Forest Land Council, 54 Portsmouth St., Concord, NH 03301 before 5:00 PM, Monday, May 10. Please tell the Council the Draft Recommendations fail to effectively protect the regional environment, economy, or culture, and they must be strengthened to reflect the overwhelming public support for such an ongoing effective regional strategy.

Listening Session Message: Restore Northern Forest Communities

The public has sent the NFLC a resounding message at the Listening Sessions: Restore our natural and human Northern Forest communities. At listening sessions after listening session, speaker after speaker has praised the public dialogue fostered by the listening session process, condemned industrial forestry, supported land acquisition and the establishment of large ecological reserves, called for ecologically-sound economic revitalization, lamented the plight of education and regional culture, and spoken from the heart of their love for this wonderful region.

Written Comments Are Crucial

The listening sessions ended on May 5, but the public, written comment period ends at 5:00 PM, Monday, May 10. It is essential that you write the Council, even if you have testified at one of the 20 listening sessions. There are many reasons for this:

1. It is impossible to provide in-depth, detailed testimony in three minutes. A letter gives you the chance to more thoughtfully express your concerns and reasoning. The Council is especially looking for specific recommendations and changes you believe it should make. If possible, give them the exact wording for your favorite recommendations (whether or not the Council addressed this issue in its Draft Recommendations).

2. Several people associated with the NFLC have told me that the Council expects that the written comments will contain the most helpful testimony. So, even if you have spoken at a listening session, remember, the Council will probably put more weight on written testimony.

3. Only a handful of the Council members attend a given listening session. All NFLC members will hopefully read all written comments.

4. And most important: because many who have testified have not thoroughly studied the Draft Recommendations, Council members may have misunderstood your real message.

Most testimony begins: Thank you for giving us the opportunity to comment on these Draft Recommendations. We salute you for your hard work and effort to address important issues facing this region.

Next, speakers will describe their core values: we want an end to abusive forestry; we want land acquisition; we want ecological reserves; we want development controlled; we want a new ecologically responsible economy.

Now, what are the Council members actually hearing? They are hearing that the public wants strong environmental protection and that the public feels the Council has adequately addressed these concerns. I don’t accuse the Council members of dishonesty; rather, it is human nature to dwell on the praise. But, the problem is: people who have not thoroughly studied the Draft Recommendations are surprised and pleased to see sections on forest practices and biological diversity, and they thank the Council.

People who have studied the Draft Recommendations thoroughly reach quite the opposite conclusion. We realize that if the Draft Recommendations are not dramatically transformed, the strategy outlined by the Council will fail to achieve what the public has said repeatedly at listening sessions that it wants: forest practices regulations, ecological reserves, land acquisition and an economy not based on the pernicious choice of “jobs vs. environment.”

Letter writers must inform the Council that they are unhappy with the Draft Recommendations. The Final Recommendations must effectively address:

1. an ongoing regional initiative;
2. the need to establish large ecological reserves;
3. full-fee land acquisition;
4. effective forest practices regulations;
5. an ecologically sustainable economy;
6. development;
7. educational and cultural revitalization;
8. energy efficiency and conservation, recycling and chlorine-free paper.

Right now, the Draft Recommendations—if submitted as the Final Recommendations without major overhaul—will fail to address any of the above issues effectively. Letter writers must explicitly tell the Council it has not yet got it right, and they must explicitly describe what must be done to get it right.

TIPS FOR LETTER WRITERS

1. Write about what you know. That means, do your homework; study the Draft Recommendations.

2. Write from the heart.

3. Describe why protection of the Northern Forests is important to you. It helps to describe an important event such as a camping experience, a childhood experience, your concern about the global decline in amphibians or migratory songbirds, etc.

4. Write in your own words. Do not copy from the Forum or from any other advocacy articles. This is especially important. In October the Council received 87 letters from concerned citizens who had copied the three-point program of the Northern Forest Alliance groups word for word. These letters were not read with the same care as the hundreds of thoughtful, personal letters the Council received at the same time. How do I know? I read through all the 400 letters submitted to the Council in response to its “Findings & Options” and I skipped these boiler plate letters too. Also, several Council members admitted that they skipped these letters. So, if you want them to read the letters you have taken time to write, make it an original. They will read it, and so will I.

5. Send copies of your letter to your congressman or congresswoman and senators. (Addresses: Your Senator, Washington, DC 20510; Your Representative, Washington, DC 20515)

Demand Federal Role in Drafting Final Recommendations

The appalling anti-federal, states’ rights tone of Finding Common Ground is due to the parachismalism of many Council members and the absence of any representatives from the Federal government. The 17th member of the Council, Mike Rains of the Forest Service, stopped attending Council meetings two years ago. His irreplaceable behavior has helped sabotage the Council’s work.

We must insist that a strong federal voice (not Mr. Rains) participate in open Council sessions in which the Final Reas are written. Much as we would like to trust the Council members, we no longer can due to the antifederal bias, the refusal to responsibly study industrial forest practices, and distressing evidence that the Council is discounting the Listening Sessions because of the overwhelming support for responsible environmental policies.

Write Senators Patrick Leahy and your own Senator and Representatives and insist that a representative from the Department of Interior participate in the Final Recommendations deliberations as a member of the Council.

Address for Senators is: US Senate, Washington, DC 20510. For Congresspersons: House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515.
Large Land Sales Continue Throughout Northern Forests

On March 31 International Paper sold 48,182 acres of Northern Forest land in Vermont and Maine to Hancock Timber Resource Group. On April 21 Canadian-based Domtar Industries announced that all 105,000 acres of timberland it owns in the Adirondack Park is for sale.

Lack of state, regional or federal acquisition money means that the public will again be unable to acquire these tracts and hundreds of thousands—probably millions—of acres currently or soon to be for sale in the Northern Forest region.

A year ago, Hancock purchased nearly 240,000 acres from James River/Diamond Occidental, including the 70,000 acre Katahdin Iron Works Tract in Maine which has long been viewed as a critical tract for public acquisition.

In the recent IP sale, Hancock purchased 24,617 acres in the towns of Bloomfield, Ferdinand, Brighton, Newark, Granby, Guildhall, and Maidstone. Hancock also purchased 23,481 acres in western Maine near Bethel. At the same time, the Sunday River Ski Corporation purchased 7,000 acres from IP. Sunday River is the fastest growing ski resort in northern New England, and these 7,000 acres may become ski runs (vertical clearcuts) and condos.

In addition to the recent transactions, numerous other large tracts of forest land with high ecological, recreational and scenic values are available. See "Endangered Jewels of the Northern Forest" on page 4 in Vol. 2 #2 of the Forum. Due to the lack of public funds, these lands may be developed or clearcut, rather than protected. The Northern Forest Lands Council's Recommendation 5 correctly notes that the Northern Forest region is not getting its fair share of federal Land and Water Conservation Fund dollars. Unfortunately, the Council only proposes that the state portion of LWCF be increased. The Council must re-write that draft recommendation to insist that both state and federal funds for the Northern Forest region be substantially increased, and extra funds must be made available to the region to compensate for the past underfunding of LWCF money for this region. (See accompanying box on the Land and Water Conservation Fund.)

Congress should appropriate at least $100 million in land acquisition funds for the Northern Forest region for the next decade.

Failure to protect the 7,000 acre Stratford Bog tract in New Hampshire when it was available four years ago has produced a local disaster. A developer bought most of the land, increased rental of fishing camps on the Bog by almost 2000 percent, and has been intensively logging it for a year and a half.

At every Council Listening Session, the public has spoken in strong support for public land acquisition. The Council's Final Recommendations must reflect the urgency of the public demand for dramatically increased funding for public land acquisition, and the Council must tie land acquisition with the need for protecting biodiversity via the creation of large ecological reserves. Anything less from the Council will undercut its credibility with the public and with Congress.

—JS

Northern Forest Region Consistently Short-Changed in Federal Land & Water Conservation Acquisition Funds

The Council has correctly recognized that the Northern Forest region has been short-changed in receiving Land and Water Conservation Funds in recent years. Considering that a quarter of the population of the United States lives within a day's drive of the Northern Forest region, it is incomprehensible that this region received only 4 percent of the total LWCF allocation in 1991.

A review of the land acquisition budgets for federal agencies reveals that the overwhelming majority of LWCF money goes to organized private and public initiatives.

Here are the FY 1991 LWCF Appropriations to Federal land agencies:

- Fish & Wildlife $101,150,000
- National Park Service $104,133,000
- Forest Service $89,163,000
- Bureau of Land Management $15,649,000

During FY 1991, New England LWCF Allocations were:

- Fish & Wildlife $6,875,000
- Great Meadows (MA) $3,570,000
- Rachel Carson (ME) $2,000,000
- Pettequamsccut (RI) $1,500,000
- National Park Service $3,800,000
- Acadia (ME) $800,000
- Appalachian Trail (est.) $3,000,000
- Forest Service $2,340,000
- White Mountain NF $305,000
- Green Mountain NF $1,035,000
- Appalachian Trail (est.) $700,000

TOTAL $13,015,000

By way of contrast, during FY 1991 several individual programs with broad public and private support received nearly as much as all of New England from LWCF.

- Lower Rio Grande NWR (TX) $9,500,000
- Santa Monica NRA (CA) $12,000,000
- Everglades NP (FL) $11,900,000
- Columbia River Gorge $9,700,000

The moral of this story is that we need both strong private and public support for land acquisition, and we need a greater federal role in Northern Forest regional land protection initiatives.
Why Recommendation 13 Won’t Protect Biotic Integrity

& What Must Be Done To Fix It

by Stephen C. Trombulak, Ph.D.

Let me start on a positive note: I commend the Northern Forest Lands Council for addressing the issue of biological integrity by including a draft recommendation in its report, *Finding Common Ground*, that specifically identifies this as an important concern for the region. Special-interest groups made early attempts to prevent the issue from even being discussed, and later made repeated efforts to take it off the table. However, the Council followed through on its responsibility to address this issue, a responsibility made explicit in the Council’s mission statement as the protection of wildlife and wildland resources, by including in the draft recommendations suggestions designed to address the concerns most residents have for the environmental health of the Northern Forest.

The critical importance of this issue and of developing solutions to protect the biological integrity of the region are clearly spelled out in the Council’s own findings, and in the information made available to the Council by the biologists it invited to provide information.

First, the Council clearly states that the maintenance of biological diversity is of fundamental importance (Biological Resources Subcommittee Findings 2 and 3). Without the complete natural mix of biological diversity at all levels of organization, ecosystems and both present and future generations of humanity are at risk. Simply put, maintaining biological diversity is not a luxury; it is a matter of survival.

Second, the Council correctly notes that although the concept of biological diversity is a complex one, it is not an undefinable one (Findings 1 and 6). Biological diversity refers to the diversity, or pattern of patterns, found in the natural biological world at the genetic, species, and ecosystem levels of organization. Inherent in this definition is what is at stake in developing a conservation strategy: not maximizing everywhere the number of species or saving a few representative individuals of charismatic species; rather it is the maintenance and restoration of natural patterns of diversity.

Third, the Council notes that the biotic integrity of this region has changed, particularly with regard to the loss of old growth, large blocks of unfragmented forest, changed disturbance patterns, and changed species compositions (Finding 8). The Council did not cite specific examples of such changes, but ample evidence in the scientific literature strongly notes the decline in genetic diversity and population size in Atlantic salmon, the decline in neotropical migrant songbirds, the loss of understory plant species, the invasion of numerous exotic species, the local extinction of the wolf, mountain lion, and wolverine, and extensive modification of the region to make their re-colonization difficult.

Fourth, the Council states that protection of biological diversity must be done by looking at a landscape scale, rather than narrowly focusing on specific sites (Finding 6). What this means is that to conserve biological diversity we must operate on a large scale. It is not just that the small-scale approach is less effective; rather the small-scale approach alone will fail.

Finally, the Biological Resources Subcommittee noted that the only conservation strategy that would successfully protect biological diversity is one that includes a system of unmanaged land. Although this did not appear as a formal finding, it was agreed to in a Subcommittee meeting and specifically excluded for political, rather than scientific, reasons. The implications of this finding are clear: providing incentives and education to the forest-products industry concerning the protection of biological diversity are good ideas (Findings 10, 11, 12, and 14), but they are not enough. A truly comprehensive conservation strategy must include guidelines for land-use practices and a system of ecological reserves.

But there my positive note ends. Because given all of these clear statements made by the Council in its own findings, it recommends (Recommendation 13) to deal with this issue boils down to this: The four states should take the responsibility to protect biological diversity by doing inventories, giving landowners information and money, and purchasing a limited amount of land for reserves as long as it passes rigorous scientific justification and is verified by external peer review.

I’m sorry, but this is insufficent to the task. Recommendation 13 falls on a number of counts, both in what it advocates and in what it fails to advocate. If it is allowed to stand in the final recommendations it will undercut the deal of forestland conservation that has already begun which seeks to reverse the tide of regional environmental degradation and will make a mockery of the entire process the Council has used for soliciting advice and information from regional biologists and citizens alike.

Recommendation 13 fails because it does not address the issue of restoration of biotic integrity of the region. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the Council considered "present conditions" to be the base line, and as such there is nothing that needs to be restored. That might be a politically-comfortable position to take, but it doesn’t address the problems we face in the real world. In the real world our forests, including its waterfowl, have been invaded by dozens of exotic species that are killing off native species. In the real world, our forests are no longer home to the timber wolf and mountain lion, who helped keep the populations of deer and moose in check, and perhaps starving their food supply. In the real world, populations of many species are heading downward from historical levels for reasons not only related to that, but also from clearcutting. In the real world we have cleared the size of entire townships, replanted in monocultures maintained at early stages of succession through frequent cutting.

Recommendation 13 fails because it explicitly states that ecological reserves should be a limited component of public land acquisition strategies. The best available science and the Council’s own findings say strongly that reserves must be created on a landscape scale, and that they must not focus on single species but rather on all levels of biological organization, including ecosystems. The best available science says that gene flow and migratory routes must be maintained among reserves in order to allow for viable populations of large-ranging species and opportunities for ecological response to environmental change by all species. The best available science says that reserves must essentially be left to function on their own without extensive management, roads, or ecosystem component (i.e., "natural resource") extraction.

Recommendation 13 fails because it advocates giving sole responsibility for achieving biological diversity to the states, when it is clear that the biological world does not respect state boundaries and that connectivity among reserves will require a regional perspective.

Recommendation 13 fails because it is the only recommendation made by the Council that calls for rigorous justification and external peer review. This might not be so bad if it weren’t for the fact that the Council ignores its own suggestion when it comes to discussing economic issues, such as tax credits and incentives. Not only does the Council not call for such rigorous oversight of these issues, but it ignores its own evidence that such strategies may not be needed. If we were talking about some other issue, it might be easier for us to just shrug our shoulders and walk away. But it isn’t some other issue, and it isn’t an issue we can let slide. Our survival and the survival of countless other species is at stake. The Council must go back and try again.

To solve the problem of Recommendation 13, the Council must go further back in its deliberation process than just the wording of the recommendations themselves. It must go back to the very basis upon which it made decisions as to what was important and what was not; what was to be promoted and what was to be restricted. The biases inherent in the Council’s approach are clearly seen in the three “major threads of the fabric” of its “comprehensive strategy.” The first thread is the “fragmentation of the forest-based econ-
mp." Notice that it places no limitations on this thread; if it strengthens the forest-based economy, it is good. The second thread is equally unrestricted: "fostering long-term stewardship of private land." The third thread, however, is less fortunate: "allowing for public acquisition of land with exceptional public values, where those values are threatened now or in the future, and enhancing management of public land (emphasis added)." The biases of the Council against public acquisition, against large reserves, against a landscape approach to conservation, and against unmanaged land are made obvious, despite its own findings.

(Or of course, it is always possible that the Council is secretly trying to leave the door open for purchase of land for large reserves without raising the wrath of the Unwise Abuse advocates. After all, the maintenance of human populations, food, health, economy, as well as all ecosystems [Finding 2] could pretty easily be considered an "exceptional public value," and the steady decline in population densities of so many native species and the repeated invasions by so many exotic species throughout the entire region could just as easily be considered a threat "now or in the future." But then I read the line in Recommendation 13 about "limited" reserves, and decided that the Council wasn't just being a smug group of conservation visionaries. It was just expressing its real bias, and ignoring its own findings.)

To put the same kind of limitations on the other two threads would drastically change the nature to the Council's work. How about "Strengthen the forest-based economy by emphasizing the needs of the workers and their communities over the profit of the multinational corporations that exploit them?" How about "Fostering long-term stewardship of private land by buying any private landowner that degrades the conditions of entities held in the public trust, such as air, water, and wildlife?" Those don't sound too warm and fuzzy, do they? The Council needs to change the preconditions it sets for itself with regard to the development of a conservation strategy that will work over the long term.

Next, Recommendation 13 must be thrown out. In its place the Council needs to draft a new recommendation that contains the following elements, all of which have been justified repeatedly: regionalism, large-scale reserves, connectivity, restoration, and education.

I suggest something like this:

All levels of government present in the Northern Forest, including local, state, and federal, should create and commit to a new form of partnership to foster the restoration and protection of biotic integrity and human communities in this region.

The principle of restoration and protection of biotic integrity shall have as its goals:

(a) Representation of all native ecosystem types and successional stages across their natural range of variability;
(b) Maintenance of viable populations of all native species in natural patterns of abundance and distribution;
(c) Maintenance of ecological and evolutionary processes;
(d) Responsiveness to short-term and long-term environmental change; and
(e) Maintenance of the evolutionary potential of lineages.

The principle of restoration and protection of human communities shall have as its goals:

(a) The development of employment opportunities that can be maintained over the long-term without degrading their economic basis and that allow individuals to support families;
(b) The development of an economic infrastructure that maximizes the retention within the region of profit generated within the region, and the minimization of waste; and
(c) The promotion of cultural traditions.

It is not expected that precise values be assigned to each of these goals before efforts are made to achieve them. It is expected, rather, that the decisions of the regional partnership be guided by whether or not proposed actions enhance any or all of these goals.

This regional partnership shall, at a minimum, accept as its responsibilities with respect to the restoration and protection of biotic integrity the following:

(a) Assess the status of biodiversity throughout the region in order to improve the effectiveness of ongoing conservation efforts;
(b) Provide all citizens with the information necessary to restore and protect biotic integrity on all lands;
(c) Provide financial incentives to all citizens for measures taken to restore and protect biotic integrity, and create financial penalties for all citizens for actions that degrade biotic integrity.
(d) Plan and implement over the next 50 to 100 years a regional conservation strategy that is characterized, at a minimum, by the following features:

1. The entire region is conceived of as being a mix of public and private land.
2. Land-use practices on private land are encouraged, through financial incentives and disincentives, to promote healthy human communities over the long-term.
3. Public land is dedicated to the restoration and protection of biotic integrity through:

a. the establishment of large areas of land (called ecological reserves) that are, as a final goal, unmanaged by humans. It is recognized that some management will, at least initially, be necessary in many reserves. The removal of exotic species, the closure of roads, the revegetation of degraded areas, and the reintroduction of extirpated species must all be part of the long-term strategy. In all cases, however, the focus of management actions will be the needs of the ecosystems rather than of the human community.

b. the limitation of human activities in ecological reserves to those that are not destructive of biotic integrity. These activities should include, at appropriate levels, recreation and hunting.

c. the establishment of connectivity zones among ecological reserves that have been delineated to meet the dispersal needs of large mammals and the large-scale migration needs of vegetation in the face of environmental change.

d. the restoration of populations of all extirpated species.

4. Land acquired by the public should be purchased from willing sellers only.

5. The funds used to provide financial incentives, to purchase public land, and to carry out restoration on public land should come, in part, from revenue generated by financial disincentives, existing conservation funds, and the savings generated in other segments of the federal and states' budgets through implementation of conservation strategies.

This regional partnership should also focus on specific actions to restore and protect healthy human communities, but I am not qualified to judge how this should best be done, and will therefore leave it to others to suggest. The important points in all of this for me are that:

(a) We need to think regionally. Neither local nor federal government can, or should be expected to, tackle these issues on their own, and
(b) The economic traditions we currently have (i.e., growth at any cost, profit before people, etc.) are killing our cultures and our society.

Something clearly needs to be done.

I realize that this recommendation is long and wordy. Strongly. But it addresses the issues raised in the Council's findings and by a large segment of the public. It will help us to where we need to be.

Dr. Tromblek teaches in the Biology and Environmental Studies Departments at Middlebury College.
Maintaining the Present Level of Biological Diversity Is Not Sufficient

[Ed. Note: The Following comments on the Draft Recommendations were submitted to the Council by the Conservation Biology Group of the University of Vermont.]

Our remarks are in two parts: 1) A General Statement outlining our major concerns and 2) Specific Comments on sections of "Finding Common Ground".

General Statement

The Conservation Biology Group at the University of Vermont is comprised of faculty, graduate students and researchers in the departments of botany, zoology, forestry, natural resources planning, wildlife and fisheries, and environmental studies. The purpose of the UVM Conservation Biology Group is to examine current issues of conservation from scientific, social and ethical perspectives.

Conservation biology is an established discipline which draws upon the traditions of natural science and conservation biology. Conservation biology has been called a mission-oriented crisis discipline: the "mission" is to avert the accelerating loss of biological diversity. As conservation biologists we feel compelled to step out of the "ivory tower" to express our concern about the decline of the natural world. Our concern is not only for humanity's sake, but also for the sake of other creatures.

Critics suggest that conservation biology is a "pseudoscience" based on "quasi-religious theories". Yet value-free science does not exist. Certainly conservation biologists have a bias: we value biological diversity. As in any science, absolute certainty is a rare thing. We may never have all the knowledge we would like, but we can still make intelligent decisions based on our current knowledge and on biologic intuition. Conservation biology is about informed, concerned scientists suggesting ways to protect the things they know best.

The Northern Forest has not escaped the biodiversity crisis. Missing species, altered abundances, polluted rivers, simplified forests, habitat loss or fragmented by roads and development—it is clear that human activities have had severe impacts on the natural conditions of the region. We feel that the Northern Forest is far more than trees and forest products—the water, soil, air, plants, and animals of the region deserve our equal attention. Yet simply maintaining the present level of diversity is not sufficient; the Council has the opportunity to encourage the natural recovery of native wildness.

Ecologists and conservation biologists concur that the best strategy for the persistence of natural diversity is a system of large, contiguous natural areas.

The idea of ecological reserves is hardly new or radical. We have enclosed [Ed. Note: we regret don't have the space to reprint this important article] an article from the prominent journal Ecology titled "The Preservation of Natural Biotic Communities". In 1933 the Ecological Society of America voted unanimously to endorse this strategy, including the creation of "First Class Nature Sanctuaries" with "all the animal species historically known to have occurred in the area...and present in sufficient numbers to maintain themselves".

Why is a system of large ecological reserves necessary? The primary reason is that our existing system of small, isolated natural areas has failed to provide adequate protection against increasing human impacts. Encroachment of exotic and generalist species, growing lists of threatened and endangered species, declines in migratory and wide-ranging species—these changes are evidence that our conservation efforts to date have been inadequate. Ecological reserves allow natural processes to occur unimpeded, provide habitat for a majority of species and serve as controls against which we can compare our management "experiments" on other lands.

There is considerable needless confusion over the buzzword "biodiversity". To simplify matters, we suggest that biodiversity is simply "the variety of life and all its processes". Some have suggested that we can select a "prudent" level of biological diversity. From a scientific perspective, prudence dictates that we retain as much natural diversity as possible. We are not talking about maximizing local diversity, which can be accomplished through intensive management activities such as clearcutting. Rather, we are referring to the long-term retention of natural diversity, which occurs best when managed least.

In many parts of the Northern Forest, establishment of ecological reserves could be accomplished with little displacement of human activities. In some areas simply closing one or two roads or acquiring connecting parcels of land may all that is needed to establish effective reserves. People will not be banned from ecological reserves but scale of human activities will be reduced in these areas.

While we are pleased that the Council has endorsed the establishment of a system of ecological reserves, we encourage you to strengthen your recommendations on this issue. From our perspective ecological reserves are not just useful, they are essential.

In regards to the remainder of "Finding Common Ground" we appreciate the regional perspective the Council has taken and the regional dialogue the Council has encouraged. By looking at landscapes, ecosystems and biogeographic scientists and land managers are beginning to understand the interactions and interconnections between pieces and places. We are supportive of taking a longer view, as the Council recommends, and we suggest a planning horizon of one hundred years. We are concerned, however, that after the Council disburses in September 1994 the individual states will no longer take this larger, longer view.

We believe that people are an important part of the Northern Forest. Exemplary landowners and communities scattered throughout the region are perfect models of sustainability. We believe people and towns should be rewarded for careful land stewardship.

We support the work of the Northern Forest Council, and we encourage the Council to be bold and visionary.

Specific Comments on Biological Diversity

We consider this to be the most important section of "Finding Common Ground." We feel that Recommendation 13, particularly section 13(d), is the single most important recommendation the Council can make to Congress and the states. We support this recommendation with the following changes:

Continued on next page
Conservation Groups Identify Ten Areas Deserving Protection in the Northern Forest

To permanently protect wilderness areas to assure that Northern Forest lands of special ecological and scenic significance are preserved for future generations, we recommend:

Land Conservation: Together, the state and federal governments should create a land conservation program to provide permanent protection for specific wilderness areas in the Northern Forest. These "conservation areas" would serve many important purposes including: (a) habitat protection for the variety of plant and animal species that is essential to the future health of the Northern Forest; (b) assured public access to Northern Forest lands for hunting, fishing, hiking, and other forms of outdoor recreation; (c) insurance against our lack of knowledge about the long-term consequences of human activities on the forest ecosystem; and (d) assurance that future generations will find forest lands of great natural beauty in this region.

As part of this program, the state and federal governments should work together to research critical regions of the Northern Forest. Based on scientific analysis, public input, and local involvement, areas with high concentrations of ecological, recreational and scenic values should be identified. Lands of exceptional public value should be permanently protected through public ownership. Other conservation tools including conservation easements and landowner incentives should also be used as appropriate. Lands should be purchased from willing sellers only. This program will require state and federal funds for the public purchase of lands.

Based on initial research, the groups listed below have identified ten areas with high concentrations of ecological, recreational and scenic values. We recommend that the public consider these general areas for the creation of a system of protected lands in the Northern Forest. These areas are:

- The upper St. John Valley of northwestern Maine
- The greater Baxter State Park area of north central Maine
- The Down East Lakes region of eastern Maine
- The Boundary Mountains region of western Maine
- The Upper Androscoggin Valley including the Lake Umbagog and Rangeley Lakes area of northern New Hampshire and western Maine
- The Connecticut River headwaters of northern New Hampshire
- The Nullahigan River area of northeastern Vermont
- The northern Green Mountains of Vermont
- The Tog Hill core area near the Adirondack Park in New York

The unbroken forests in the Adirondack Park

We urge that analysis concerning the protection of these areas begin as soon as possible.


Maintaining Biodiversity

Continued from preceding page.

Section 13(d) should read "Create ecological reserves as the central component of their land conservation and management programs. The following criteria and objectives should be used in the establishment of reserves (Noss 1997):

1. Represent all native ecosystem types and seral stages across their natural range of variation.
2. Maintain viable populations of all native species in natural patterns of abundance and distribution.
3. Maintain ecological and evolutionary processes, such as disturbance regimes, hydrological processes, nutrient cycles, and biotic interactions, including predation.
4. Design the system to be responsive to short-term and long-term environmental change and to maintain the evolutionary potential of lineages.

We fully support 13(b) and 13(e). Private landowners should be encouraged and supported for taking measures to protect and restore native diversity. We feel that the "Do Nothing Option" whereby a landowner undertakes no active management, extraction, or manipulation should be encouraged and rewarded. We also support private landowner efforts at ecological restoration such as the closing of roads and the removal of exotic species.

Specific Comments on Forest Practices

We are pleased that the Council has addressed the issue of forest practices. However, because the Council states on page 45 of "Finding Common Ground" that one of its missions is to "encourage a sustainable yield of forest products," we feel it is important to make the distinction between sustainable forestry and sustainable forests. A tree farm could be managed to produce a sustainable yield of forest products, but would hardly be considered a forest. Sustainable forests are natural forests, with the full range of species, populations, and processes. Advocates of sustainable forestry should realize that replacing clearcutting with selection forestry may increase the impact on our forests if harvest levels do not decrease. We encourage a reduction in the demands placed on the Northern Forest and a reduction in the scale of industrial forestry.

The Council states that "few have suggested specific forest practice strategies." We offer the following:

- Significant reductions in clearcutting and whole-tree harvesting
- No logging of existing old-growth stands
- No logging within 300' of any stream, wetland, lake or other waterbody
- No use of "broadcast" herbicides or pesticides.
- No logging above 2500' elevation.
- No new construction of forest roads.

Close and put to bed all forest roads not in use for management activity.

We support Recommendations 17, 18, and 19 as starting points. On Recommendation 19, we recommend the following stipulation:

"Only those landowners who comply with the specified forest practices statutes shall be eligible for current use valuation."

Specific Comments on Public Land Management and Acquisition

We feel that increased public land ownership in the Northern Forest is entirely appropriate. We are aware that while land acquisition may be relatively cheap, land management can be expensive. We believe the solution to this problem is to decrease the amount of management on public land. Federal land management agencies currently allocate far less money on a per acre basis to wilderness programs than to timber or developed recreation programs. Public acquisition of large tracts of unmanaged land is a perfect fit for protection and recovery of native wildness.

We support Recommendations 3 through 8 for increased public land acquisition by local, state, and federal governments. We recommend full-fess acquisition as the most effective tool, but recognize the need for a larger tool box. We suggest that public land management should focus on the recovery and protection of native wildness.
Recommendations for Regional Economic & Ecological Revitalization

by Mitch Lansky

[Ed Note: On the following pages Mitch Lansky presents a draft of a comprehensive package of recommendations designed to address some of the most important economic, ecological, social, and political aspects of a regional forest-based economy.]

Note: Even though the enclosed list of recommendations is lengthy (it is as long as the Council’s list), it is by no means comprehensive. I am focusing here primarily on important issues, that I have previously raised in my book and in my articles in The Northern Forest Forum, that, I believe, the Council has not adequately addressed. These recommendations, ideally, should be part of an integrated program, and would have as large or larger an impact on the Northern Forest as many of the Council’s recommendations.

Finding: The biological diversity and stability of the Northern Forests are threatened by forest practices that fragment, simplify, convert, degrade, and pollute the forest ecosystems as well as by development, powerlines, mining, military and other activities that do the same. The recent spruce budworm outbreak shows that this ecological instability can have serious economic consequences.

Finding: The Northern Forest region (especially in Maine) faces a number of serious threats to its social and economic stability and vitality:
* Much of the landbase is dominated by large, absentee landownerships. Profits leave the region and local control over community land use is diminished.
* A significant percentage of high-quality sawlogs is exported to Quebec and elsewhere. Value-added jobs leave the region.
* A significant proportion of woods jobs are taken by Canadians and, recently (for planting and thinning), Mexicans. Jobs leave the region.
* There has been a major loss of jobs over the last few decades due to mechanization and other factors. In some of the areas where these job losses have occurred, there is little economic diversity to create alternative jobs.
* A few large paper companies dominate local markets through vertical integration and oligopsony. Prices for pulpwood have been artificially low. Wages for loggers and returns for woodlot owners have thus also been artificially low. Costs for equipment and insurance have risen faster than returns on wood (until very recently).
* Accident rates for workers have been unacceptably high. Part of the reason for this high rate has been dependence on contracted labor on a piece-rate wage. Low wages per cord have meant pressure to produce higher volumes in less time, making work conditions more hazardous.

In the State of Maine (this may also be true of the Northern Forest region in other states, but we have been given no data) there has, in the last decade, been a significant decline in timber volumes is in species ratios (toward shorter-lived, less valuable species), and a decline in quality for hard woods. These changes mean that future options for social and economic improvement are diminishing.

The massive clearcuts of the last few decades have also reduced options for alternative uses of the woods, including recreation.

The land boom of the 1980s impacted some areas with high public values near water bodies. The massive turnover of industry land and the instability of the industry means that the threat of loss of valuable land to public access and enjoyment continues.

At least in the northern Maine forest practices have been a greater threat to ecosystem integrity, timber supply, and community stability than "development."

In the State of Maine, the timber industry has effectively leveraged the political system to achieve very low property and income taxes. To the extent that these companies (some of which are multi-national and have a bigger annual budget than the states they are in) do not contribute revenues, other less wealthy taxpayers must contribute more. This has helped lead to chronic underfunding of school and other budgets in some areas.

The Northern Forest region has had, in general, higher unemployment, lower average income, lower education opportunities and achievement, greater brain drain, and poorer health care than the averages for the four states.

Mission: The mission of the Council is to promote forestry and local community development policies in the Northern Forest Lands area that are ecologically sound, socially responsible, economically viable, and sustainable for generations to come. The Council will encourage local, state, regional, and federal governmental bodies to integrate their respective policy tools towards these goals. The Council will encourage these governmental bodies to identify current policies, programs, or regulations that promote activities contrary to these goals and to change such policies.

Fundamental Principle: The ecosystems of the Northern Forest have limits. We must live within those limits if we wish to maintain the ecosystems. A society geared to endless industrial growth is in violation of this fundamental principle. The Council therefore will advise govern-
mements to work to reduce, rather than expand, exploitation of this and other forests.

Guiding Concept: The Council will give preference to means of improving the quality, volume, value, and returns from timber before it will recommend tax breaks and subsidies. Incorporating the internal and external costs of production into the price of logs and manufactured forest products, full-cost accounting has many advantages:

* Subsidies can encourage corruption and inefficiency.
* Tax breaks can lead to inequities, as large corporations that can afford to pay do not, putting added costs on other taxpayers.
* Subsidies avoid confrontation with reasons for artificially low prices.
* Full-cost accounting leads to greater benefits for woodlot owners and woodworkers.
* Higher prices also encourage less waste, more conservation, more recycling, and more substitution of more benign products and practices.
* The forest and forest products, assessed at more realistic values, can pay more realistic taxes giving more benefit to local communities.

Guiding Concept: The Council, in its recommendations for local development will favor:

* local ownership over absentee ownership;
* businesses dependent on locally obtained, sustainably-produced resources over imported, non-sustainably-produced resources;
* local, stable markets, over international, unstable markets;
* local value added, over export of raw material;
* conserving, over energy wasting;
* businesses with low added infrastructure needs, over businesses with major infrastructure needs requiring higher taxes;
* technologically-stable, creative, healthful jobs using local labor, over capital intensive, mind-numbing, hazardous work threatened by technological changes and relying on imported labor;
* increased community stability and diversity, over community domination by unstable businesses creating neighborhood eyesores;
* maintained or enhanced quality of environment, over polluting, despoothing processes that require a larger regulatory bureaucracy;
* production of necessary, beneficial products, over trendy, frivolous, destructive products.

Guiding Concept: Rather than promote the expansion of export-oriented branches of absentee-owned, resource-exploiting corporations by creating a better "business climate"

that includes reduced taxes, reduced protection and benefits for labor, and reduced protection to the environment, the Council will promote the Rocky Mountain Institute model: 1) plug the unnecessary leak of dollars from the community; 2) support existing business; 3) encourage new locally-owned business; and 4) recruit businesses that are compatible with the community.

Aerial photo of industrial clearcuts in the Western Hills of Maine. Although the large, mostly absentee landowners have for decades successfully promoted the myth that they have "served the region well," loggers and foresters have testified at NFLC Listening Sessions that industrial forestry is destroying our natural and human communities. The public supports assistance to small woodlot owners who live on the land they manage and to loggers, but unfortunately, the Council has failed to offer programs that get at the root causes of the problems faced by loggers and small owners. As a result, tax breaks and poorly designed recommendations on forest practices and workers compensation will perpetuate the problems and will permit the large landowners to continue to treat the Northern Forest region as a Third World colony. Photo by Stephen German

Now That's Real Land Conversion!

2,000 Square Miles of Maine Clearcut From 1980-1992

Research by the NFLC Land Conversion Subcommittee determined that 39,000 acres (about 61 square miles) of the entire Northern Forest region was "converted" during the period 1980-1992. The Council defined "conversion" as: "the removal of forest land from traditional forest land uses and change of use into non-forest uses, such as residential development." By following this timber industry logic, clearcuts and other nontraditional conventions were not studied.

In that same period, over 2,000 square miles were clearcut in Maine alone, according to Maine State figures. Probably the figures are much higher than what the clearcutters actually reported.
Research the Council’s Regional Replacement Must Do

[Ed. Note: Section 1 of Mitch Lansky’s package of recommendations focuses on “Regional Research” the the Council’s replacement must perform immediately.]

**Recommendation:** The Council recommends that a regional replacement body, with balanced representation from the four states, be formed to continue doing research projects and to give recommendations to local, state, and federal governmental bodies. Funding should be both state and federal.

**Recommendation:** The Council’s regional replacement should do some necessary basic research on forest policy. This would include doing a national and international review (as it did for property taxes, capital gains, and inheritance taxes) of forest policy to determine what systems seem to be most effective at meeting the ecological, social, and economic goals of society.

**Recommendation:** The Resource Inventory Project should identify the remaining roadless areas and low-road density areas, old growth and intact mature forests (that are not fragmented by clearcuts).

**Recommendation:** The Council’s regional replacement needs to do the basic research that the Local Forest-based Economy Subcommittee failed to do:

*Identify trends in forest quality and growth;*

*Examine trends in prices (adjusted for inflation) for raw forest products;*

*Identify trends in landownership, including statistics on absentee ownership, vertical integration, and regional concentration of ownership;*

*Investigate how current policies—including insurance, mechanization, bank policies, imported labor, work conditions, and other factors—discourage increased local employment;*

*Examine why, if everyone agrees that adding value locally is a great idea, it is not being done more (i.e., what are the barriers)?*

*Do a thorough study of why so much sawlog timber is being exported; and*

*Look at external costs created by existing forest-based industries—due to increased infrastructure needs, pollution, need for government regulation, loss of wildlife habitat, and damage to landscape aesthetics—and determine if this is leading to diminished or lost economic opportunities.*

**Recommendation:** The Council’s replacement should fund a study to determine what state and/or federal policies in both this region and the receiving regions are currently encouraging export of raw logs and discouraging local milling of such logs.

**Recommendation:** Based on the results of the previous study, the Council’s replacement should recommend policy changes to appropriate levels of government that will serve to reduce raw-log exports and increase local value-added.

**Recommendation:** The Council, or its regional replacement, should identify state and/or federal laws, regulations, or tax policies that reward damage of the forest and the destruction of jobs by encouraging mechanization and chemicals. This list might include tax laws that emphasize capital over labor, or that give, for example, tax breaks for sale of herbicides.

**Recommendation:** The Council’s regional replacement should do basic research on forest practices, including using existing federal and state data to determine trends and/or the current state of:

*Level of cut;*

*Level of growth (by species and by quality type);*

*Level of stocking of desirable timber;*

*Percentage of types of cutting by landowner class;*

*Changing trends in forest practices;*

*Factors influencing these trends (i.e., road building, labor costs, foreign labor, mechanization, export markets, vertical integration);*

*Sustainability of current rates of cutting by species and region;*

*Degree to which dominant cutting systems fit in with other goals for biodiversity, forest productivity, increased employment, or local quality of life;*

*And, the economics of forest management based on actual case studies.*

**Recommendation:** The Council’s replacement should work to identify barriers to ecologically-sound management (i.e., labor, roads, markets, equipment, financing, etc.) and set up balanced committees to work out strategies to overcome these barriers.

**Recommendation:** The Council’s regional replacement should do basic research on workers’ compensation, such as find out:

*What are the costs in other regions?*

*If rates are higher here, what is the explanation?*

*Why have past attempts to significantly reduce rates failed?*

*What are the factors inherent in current employment practices that encourage high accident rates?*

*What regions (both here and abroad) have lowered accident rates and insurance costs, while increasing workers’ benefits?*

*How did they do this?*

**Recommendation:** The Council’s regional replacement should do a study to identify regional (federal, state, or local) tax breaks, subsidies, or other policies that encourage expanded use of cheap, virgin fiber. It should then advise appropriate governmental bodies to revise or eliminate such policies.

---

Logging truck heading to Dauphina, Quebec. Raw Log exports undermine efforts to diversify the regional economy. Photo by Stephen Garman.
Paper Mills Top List of Toxic Chemical Releasers

Eight paper mills topped the list for most toxic chemical releases in northern New England for 1992 according to the Environmental Protection Agency. In Maine (ranked 35th nationwide for total release) the top seven toxic releasers were paper mills. Overall, nine of the top ten were paper mills. James River’s Berlin mill topped New Hampshire (NH ranked 43 nationwide), releasing almost four times the amount of the second worst releaser, Vermont ranked 52nd nationally. It has no large pulp and paper mills, and its leading toxic emitter, Ethan Allen, Inc. of Beecher Falls released one-tenth the amount of toxic chemicals released by the region’s most toxic mill which belongs to Georgia-Pacific in Woodland, Maine. Five of the top ten Vermont toxic releasers are in the forest products business.

The eleven worst toxic chemical emitters for 1992 in Northern New England were:

1. Georgia-Pacific Corp., Woodland, ME (1,964,204 pounds released)
2. International Paper, Jay, ME (1,254,242)
3. James River Corp., Berlin, NH (1,217,268)
4. S.D. Warren, Co, Westbrook, ME (1,138,585)
5. Boise Cascade Corp., Rumford, ME (1,129,773)
6. S.D. Warren, Co., Skowhegan, ME (1,035,131)
7. Champion International Corp., Buckport, ME (954,187)
8. Bowater-Great Northern Paper, Millinocket, ME (952,550)
10. James River Paper Co. Inc., Old Town, ME (757,040)
11. Lincoln Pulp & Paper Co., Lincoln, ME (658,035)

Source: Associated Press
Recommendations for Public Land Acquisition & Management

[Ed. Note: Section II of Mitch Lansky's package of recommendations focuses on "Public Land Acquisition and Management."

**Recommendation:** The Council recommends that a series of publicly-owned core reserves, both large (hundreds of thousands of acres or more) and small, be set up to protect the full range of native ecosystem types, taking into account space (habitat needs over landscape, including functional corridors between reserves) and time (encouraging or maintaining areas with all-aged structures that include old-growth).

The land will be purchased from willing sellers with federal and state funds. Land purchased in large blocks that is inappropriate for reserves can be landbanked or put in stewardship contracts (see next recommendation). A committee of federal, state, and local representatives will have input into purchase and management of such lands. In populated townships, local people will have even more input into deciding where to set up reserves and how they will be managed.

**Recommendation:** The Council recommends that federal and state money be used to purchase land so as to help correct the current imbalance of a landscape dominated by a single industry (as are millions of acres in Maine). The goal should be more local ownership or local stewardship. Where there has been a large-scale public-land purchase (part of which is for reserves), for example, some of the land can be sold (with management restrictions attached) to local citizens from a landbank. Other land can be kept in public ownership and put into long-term stewardship contracts with local loggers (as is being done on Crown Lands with model forests in Quebec) on a few thousand acres per family. There will be strict guidelines on these lands.

**Recommendation:** The states and federal governments should set up a series of regional experimental forests on public lands where they will initiate studies of ecologically-based forest practices. The emphasis should be on practices that lead to stand improvement (in volume, quality, and value) as well as better ecological stability and aesthetic acceptability. Careful records will be kept of all costs as well as biological and silvicultural results. This research should be made readily available to the public through state forest service, Extension, universities, and to forester, woodlot, and logger organizations.

**Recommendation:** The Council recommends that the states and federal government set the example of ecologically-sound, socially-responsible, and economically-viable forest practices on public lands based on best available information. Careful long-term silvicultural, biological, and economic records must be kept of such practices. If ecologically-sound practices can be economically viable, then private landowners will have little excuse not to adopt them. If the practices are not viable, then managers should determine what the barriers are and work on strategies to overcome those barriers.

**Recommendation:** Public lands officials should make data, including types of practices, yields, markets, and prices for wood, readily available to the public. In experimental or demonstration forests, managers will provide maps and signs explaining management activities for the interested public.

**Recommendation:** The Council recommends that federal and state public lands cease to export raw sawlogs or import foreign labor. Managers should give priority to local markets and local labor first.

**Recommendation:** In areas dominated by public lands, mills should purchase wood from private woodlot owners first. The government should not compete (with artificially low prices) with its own citizens.

**Recommendation:** Public lands should end below-cost sales. Markets should pay enough to cover costs. Below-cost sales ultimately hurt private woodlot owners by allowing prices to remain low.

*Mountain Stream in the Adirondack Park. The Northern Forest Region—especially northern New England states—desperately needs much more Wilderness. Remember, our species evolved in wilderness and has spent over 99 percent of its history in wilderness. So, the next time someone asks you, "How much wilderness is enough?" remind them that '100 percent is not too much." Photo by Stephen Gormen*
Draft Recommendations 3-7 are in a section titled "Public Land Management and Acquisition." Readers are urged to consult Michael Kellett’s excellent critique of this section "NPLIC Retreat on Public Land Acquisition Undercuts Creation of Reserves," on pages 16-17 of The Northern Forest Forum, vol 2, #4 (Council Listening Sessions 1994). The following brief comments are drawn from this article.

Draft Recommendation #3 underscores the problem with the Council in attempting to evade calls for land acquisition at all costs. The Council recognizes that existing public lands are overused. Its solution? More money to more intensively manage them. This is a doomed strategy because management is more costly than acquisition of unmanaged lands, and because no amount of intensive recreation management can alleviate the stress on limited Northern Forest public lands, especially in Northern New England. The only solution to the overuse of public lands is to significantly increase the amount of land in public ownership. Unmanaged land does not require much money to manage.

Recommendation: The Council should emphasize the need to significantly increase the public land base to meet increased recreation and ecological needs. Unmanaged lands are more cost-effective than intensively managed lands that are overused.

Recommendation #4: Betrays the Council’s state-rights, anti-federal bias. Both the states and the federal government should develop pro-active, goal-oriented land acquisition strategies. Other problems with this recommendation include:

Section 4(a) speaks of "exceptional" lands. This term is troubling, because it sends a coded message to anti-environmentalists that only very rare parcels will be defined as "exceptional." To the wildlife living on a given parcel of land, all land is "exceptional." For those of us who require clean air or clean water, all land is "exceptional." For those of us who believe that large native carnivores must be allowed to return, "exceptional" habitat needs will total millions of acres.

Section 4(f) speaks of "the necessity for including costs of future public land management in the assessment of overall costs of acquisition." Anti-environ- rons are very pleased with this clause, because they expect it will "prove" that land acquisition costs too much. However, there are two flaws with their arguments: (1) you can’t put a dollar value on clean air, clean water, a healthy environment, and the quality of life, all of which are benefits of well-managed (or well-managed) public lands; and 2) an honest economic accounting of costs of management would also include an honest economic assessment of the benefits of such lands, including increased tourism revenue, decreased demands on municipal budgets (schools, fire, roads, etc.), etc. So, an honest accounting will certainly demonstrate the wisdom of investing in public lands. A dishonest assessment that only looks at costs, without considering the enormous benefits would be perversely akin to our current economic accounting system that ignores the cost to society and the environment of paper mill pollution (and does not hold the polluting mills accountable for their acts).

Recommendation #5 is very important, but as currently written, it betrays the Council’s states’ rights, anti-federal bias. Accordingly, it must be rewritten. Kellett proposes "changes in Recommendation 5 that support increased federal land acquisition funds and increased state-federal matching grants for state land acquisition, and provide a specific target of at least $100 million over four years." [Ed. Note: make that $100 million a year for the next decade]. Kellett also proposes "a change in Recommendation 5 to delete support of outright grants to states." Note: this is not an anti-state statement by Kellett, but rather a politically naive judgment on his part that Congress has little interest in handing over large sums to the states with no strings attached. Congress will more likely be interested in working with the states to acquire public lands using both state and federal Land and Water Conservation Fund money. The Council’s "states only" proposal is politically naive, and insulting to Congress. It is also arbitrary and foolish to shortchange this region of money to which it is entitled merely to pander to anti-environmental ideologues.

New Recommendations: Kellett also proposes three new recommendations to this section:

"A new recommendation that calls for the public acquisition from willing sellers of as much of the Northern Forest region as possible;"

"A new recommendation, based on the set of criteria outlined in the Northern Forest Lands Study and public input provided over the last four years, that lists specific high-value areas in the Northern Forest that should be preliminary candidates for federal and state public acquisition;"

"A new recommendation for a new federal-state study to refine this list and identify new areas that should be considered for acquisition;"

Recommendations 6 & 7: Kellett proposes transferring recommendations 6 & 7 to the section on Private Forest Land Stewardship because they are not public land acquisition strategies, but rather alternatives to full fee land acquisition.
Local, State & Federal Policies to Promote Healthy Forest Communities

[Ed. Note: Section III of Mitch Lansky's Package of recommendations addresses local, state and federal policies.]

Recommendation: The Council encourages the creation of intercommunity forestry boards for organized townships (in regions identified by watershed, political, or cultural criteria) that represent a balance of stakeholders (who are elected by their constituents rather than by the governor) that can:
- engage in land-use planning to ensure that both ecological and human needs are met on a landscape scale;
- identify and zone (as does LURC) areas of special concern (such as riparian areas, steep slopes, deer yards);
- identify areas where a variety of tools (purchase, easements, exchanges, current-use zoning, forest-practices regulations, contracted agreements, incentives) could be used to protect areas of special ecological or cultural significance;
- regulate forest practices to meet ecological and quality guidelines;
- periodically meet with other regional boards to share successes and failures and to set policy for the larger, Northern Forest region.

LURC (the Land Use Regulation Commission in Maine) will be given authority to do the same for the unorganized territories.

Recommendation: If forestry is to be ecologically sound (i.e., maintain or improve biodiversity and ecological stability), then the logical first choice for forest practices should be the least disturbing practice appropriate to a given site. The Council therefore recommends that state and regional forestry boards incorporate a presumption against clearcutting into forest policy and timber-cutting rules.

Recommendation: The State and federal governments should cease funding university research programs that emphasize mechanical and chemical substitutions for labor that can destroy jobs, harm local communities, and pollute or degrade the forest.

Recommendation: The federal government should impose environmental and economic taxes on foreign forest products produced by environmentally destructive forest practices and/or exploitive labor practices. American citizens should not be encouraged to consume or be forced to compete with such artificially cheap foreign timber.

Recommendation: The Council recommends that federal, state, and local governments set the example to reuse and recycle forest products with a major emphasis on reducing use.

Recommendation: Local, state and federal governments must expand on policies to purchase chlorine-free and recycled papers and wood products grown in an ecologically-sound, socially-responsible manner.

Recommendation: Current-use forestry tax should consist in a basic levy (say, $1.00 per acre per year), combined with a (6 percent, for example) severance tax on stumpage, reversionary lease, and user fees. The stumpage tax, because it will be intermittent, will be pooled by county, and reimbursed to the towns by formula to ensure a more even flow of tax revenues.

Recommendation: The current-use tax break, as in California, can be combined with zoning in areas where development is considered by the state or community to be inappropriate.

Recommendation: As in Wisconsin, there will be public access allowed on lands under current-use tax, with an 80 acre exclusion around residential areas permitted.

Recommendation: Where management plans are required for current-use taxation, the plan must be submitted to the state and contain information about how the forest stand is to be maintained or improved. The forester who wrote the plan should be held accountable (by fine, or if the violations are severe, chronic, and flagrant, by loss of license) for results that degrade the stand, result in poor stocking, destroy essential wildlife habitat, and lead to damage of soil or water resources. If landowners, rather than foresters, are at fault, they can be fined or lose the tax shelter.

Recommendation: Part of forester training for licensing should be hands-on activities on public lands, planning and executing "exemplary" forestry.

Recommendation: New loggers should get extensive training (not just a few days), and experienced loggers should get periodic refresher courses, to be certified professionals with competence in safe, ecologically sound forest practices. Part of the training, which must demonstrate knowledge and ability, should be on public lands and experimental forests where exemplary forestry is being practiced.

Recommendation: Loggers should be paid to manage, not to mine. Their wage should reflect the level of hazard and expertise required, and the level of quality of performance rather than simply the number of cords cut.

Recommendation: Loggers on industry land should be industry employees, rather than be considered "independent contractors." They should be subject to industry benefits.

---

Maine's Large Landowners Don't Pay Their Fair Share of Taxes

Maine's General Fund Revenues

Fiscal 1994

Unorganized Territory, the "North Woods"

This chart shows that the large landowners, who own half of Maine, contribute almost nothing to the tax revenues of the State of Maine, a poor state with a severe deficit. The thin sliver at the top of the chart (twelve o'clock) "Unorganized Territory, the "North Woods" represents the property taxes paid by the large landowners whose ten million acres will net the state approximately $63 million in property taxes in 1994. This is about $0.60 per acre, hardly an onerous tax burden, even for transnational corporations with assets in the billions. Meanwhile, at about seven o'clock, the sliver for "corporate income" taxes represents less than four percent of the entire revenues for the state. Of that, the paper companies pay only about 7.5 percent, or 0.2 percent of the entire state budget. But, that is not good enough for the paper companies and the Maine Legislature. In April the Legislature passed a $20 million subsidy in the form of investment credits for the region's biggest polluters. A bill to ban clearcutting by these same folk was killed by the friendly legislature. The NFLC's claim that excessive property taxes are the number one issue facing the region makes one wonder if it is talking about the same region the rest of us call the Northern Forest.
Property Taxes

Raise Taxes for Absentee Owners ~ Give Relief to Towns & Small Owners

by Jamie Sayen

From the day the NFLC Draft Recommendations were released, Council members have maintained that property tax reform is its number one priority. The Forum does not dispute the need for property tax reform, however, the Council's simplistic and misleading research has led it to overlook the most important issues regarding property taxes.

(1) The Council has failed to distinguish between the large industrial and non-industrial (mostly absentee) ownerships that comprise approximately 15 million acres in the rural, small, non-industrial ownerships characterized by owners who live on the land they own and manage (approximately 11 million acres). Property taxes in some states may be unfairly high in some of the rural communities that have to support schools, police, etc. Reforms targeted at these areas make sense. However, rural communities with most of the land in current use, earning income from crops, livestock, forestry, and energy revenues, and the needs of these municipalities must also be addressed.

On the 15 million acres of industrial and large non-industrial lands, tax rates are, in general, absurdly low. While there may be some exceptions to this statement, consider the following.

*Maine: In the 10 million acres of northern Maine's industrial forest, the average property tax is $0.60 per acre (yes, 60 cents per acre).

*New Hampshire: In the unincorporated townships of New Hampshire, the paper companies, with assets in the billions of dollars, pay an average of $0.23 per acre (yep, 23 cents per acre).

*New York: Large landowners pay higher taxes in the Adirondack Park, and they mean that these taxes are killing them. However, almost all of the large, private landowners in the Adirondacks have exclusive recreation leases on their lands. This means the public is forbidden access to nearly three million acres in the Adirondacks. When I suggest to some of these landowners that I would support a major reduction in their property taxes if they would permit public access on their lands (thus foregoing the exclusive leases) the landowners refused. You see, they get more in leases per acre than they pay in property taxes.

Property tax reform on the 15 million acre absentee-owned portion of the Northern Forest region is called for. We need to raise property taxes on large corporate and large non-industrial lands to equitable levels. Why should you and I subsidize the corporate freeloaders?

(2) The Council has failed to examine the entire equation of landowner expenses and income. Essentially, the two most significant factors for landowners are: property taxes and stumping pad. If landowners are receiving fair value for stumping, property taxes can be set at a rate that permits them to pay for schools, roads, etc. If landowners are not receiving fair stumping value, then the needs of towns conflict with hard-strapped small landowners. But, the Council did not examine stumping pad paid to small landowners. If it had done as thorough a study of stumping as it did on taxation issues, it would have found that the mills use their large land holdings to depress stumping prices. Thus, the Council's study is incomplete. I strongly recommend that landowners should receive fair value for stumping. Raising stumping payments, not lowering property taxes will make landowning more feasible and provide towns with adequate taxes to operate essential municipal and school services.

(3) The Council has relied on studies that are poorly done. The study done in 1992 by Hugh Camp conveniently "proves" the assumption the Council had previously been operating under: that a new owner would buy a farm for $2 an acre and make it impossible to retain timberland. This study has been criticized by many (see the comments of Jerome McCall of the NY State Division of Equalization and Assessment on page 28 of The Northern Forest Forum vol 2 4 Council Listening Sessions 1994).

In his "Comments on Property Tax Study" (July 6, 1993) Mitch Lansky showed the Council that its own studies misstated the reasons for property taxes greater than $2 an acre as "making it impossible to turn a profit." The accuracy of this statement comes from Lansky's "Comments," debunks the myth that property taxes above $2 an acre are excessive.

(4) Since opponents of acquisition (often the same people who are clamoring for more tax breaks) cite limited government funds as a reason for opposing land acquisition, the Council must examine the most effective use of limited funds. Will tax breaks without guarantees of sustainable forest management be a wiser use of limited funds than full fee acquisition of lands for ecological reserves?

(5) At a couple of Council Listening Sessions, small landowners have observed that most of the Council's recommendations would benefit them personally, but that they nevertheless oppose the proposed tax breaks because they do not wish to tax the burden on to their neighbors. Message to Council: clearly identify who will have to pay more if landowners have to pay less.

(6) Interestingly, Charles Niebling, Executive Director of the New Hampshire Timberland Owners Association, opposes any change in property taxes.

Council's Own Studies Debunks its Claims on Property Taxes

The Council maintains that if forest land taxes rise above $1 or $2, landowners cannot afford to manage their land for timber.

This assumption was based on a theoretical model in the Canham study, but was not based on actual figures from actual landowners. Indeed, the model used by RSG (Forest Property Taxation Programs: A Report to the Northern Forest Lands Council) by Resource Systems Group, Inc., Ad Hoc Associates, and Professor Douglass Moe of "peace" that managed lands provide higher value timber would seem to contradict Canham's assertion.

RSGY model (pg. 439) suggests that for a hardwood site: with management problems, the NPV (Net Present Value) at 5% discount rate for 90 years would be $354 per acre; without a management plan the NPV would only be $290. The $55 dollar difference was used to calculate the "benefits" of requiring management plans under Tree Growth.

The present value (PV) of various annual, per acre taxes of forest land, at a 5% discount rate over 90 years is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tax ($)</th>
<th>PV $ PV @ 5% ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>19.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>39.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>59.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>79.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>98.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>118.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>138.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>158.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>177.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>197.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>217.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>237.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>256.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>276.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>296.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>316.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>335.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above chart it would appear that for the "no management" figure, a tax of $14 per acre per year would still leave a small profit and for the "managed" forest a tax of $17 per acre would leave a small profit.

(5) The net value of the wood in RSG's model ($455) differs greatly from the values (admittedly determined by a very different process) attributed to hardwoods under Tree Growth (anywhere from $36.70 per acre in Hancock County to $60.60 per acre in Somerset).

One factor for this large difference is markets. The RSG model assumed that all wood was being sold for lumber—it did not even account for firewood or pulpwood markets for tops, branches, and crooked wood, which would have increased returns even higher.

In Maine, however, very little hardwood is going to lumber markets. It is mostly going to pulp and biomass markets that pay very poorly for stumping. The average acre also holds low volumes of wood (around 15 cords)—despite 20 years of Tree Growth. At a conservative acreage rate of 2% a year (it should be 3%) this would mean a yield of 0.3 cords per acre per year. If the average stumpage for pulp and biomass is only (this is just an estimate) $7 per cord, the value of the annual growth would be $0.21 per acre—still considerably more than the Tree Growth tax for hardwoods.

If the stand is holding 23 cords and (they can easily hold much more), and if the annual acreage rate is 2%, then the annual growth would be 0.46 cords per acre per year. If trees are managed for lumber, and the average stumpage for hardwood lumber markets is $35 per cord (an estimate derived from RSG figures), then the value of annual growth would be $16.10 per acre per year.

The point of this exercise is that improving timber management and finding better-markets for pulpwood will far more than tax reductions. Indeed, the towns could get more revenues from forest land and still allow landowners a reasonable profit.

---From Comments on Property Tax Study (July 6, 1993) by Mitch Lansky.
Establish Woodworker & Woodlot Coops & Regional Community Land Trusts

Recommendation: The states should encourage and facilitate the formation of woodworker coops committed to ecologically-sound silviculture. The coops (some of which already exist) give workers better wages, better insurance deals, and better access to silvicultural equipment and information. These coops can establish long-term stewardship contracts with smaller landowners to the benefit of both parties. They can work to ensure full truckloads (from smaller land parcels) to best paying markets.

Recommendation: The states should encourage and facilitate the formation of regional woodworker associations that can educate members, and collectively bargain for better work conditions and wages.

Recommendation: The states should encourage and facilitate the formation of woodlot coops. These organizations can cooperate:
- purchase equipment and forestry services;
- market logs and pulp to assure full truckloads at best prices to highest-paying markets;
- bargain with mills for better prices;
- share information for improving forest practices;
- agree to abide by forest practices codes that will result in certification for better market shares or higher-paying markets; and
- set up value-added markets, such as portable sawmills, for members.

Poverty & Unemployment
The Legacy of Industry Domination

Despite the cliché that the timber industry "served the region well," the Northern Forest based on 1985 figures (map at left) in the region unemployment in 1986 (map at right) was Council's recommendations on economic ignore the fact that over 3,000 paper mill jobs logging jobs in the Maine Woods have declined (especially the dominant paper industry) has Lands Study discovered that per capita income was lower than the rest of the nation, while generally higher than the national average. The revitalization ignore these findings, and they have been lost in Maine since 1985, and that from 6,500 in 1970 to 2,900 in 1992.

Recommendation: The states should encourage and facilitate the existence of regional community land trusts that can pursue and maintain special community forests for biological, recreational, and/or income-producing purposes.

Northern Forest Economic Development & Resource Center ~ A Proposal

by Northeastern Vermont Development Association

[Ed. Note: The following proposal from NVDA addresses the issue of what comes after the Council expires. NVDA proposes the creation of an independent organization to work within Vermont and New Hampshire to implement the Council recommendations, particularly economic strategies. If you wish to comment on this proposal, contact Christopher Hamilton, NVDA, Box 640, 44 Main St., St. Johnsbury, VT 05819; tel 802 748-5181. Fax: 802 748-1223.]

The Northern Forest Lands Council's recommendations call for a variety of studies, projects and initiatives to maintain the traditional way of life in the North Country. In general, the recommendations make a good attempt at addressing the important issues. However, they need to be effectively implemented. In order to do this, we propose the creation of the Northern Forest Economic Development and Resource Center. The Center will be an independent body that will work on forestry issues in Vermont and New Hampshire. The Center's role will be to promote, coordinate, and carry out the Council's recommendations.

The challenge will be to sustain the communities and jobs while conserving the resources for generations to come. Instead of creating centralized government, the Northern Forest Economic Development and Resource Center will empower local people to recognize and solve their own problems, and to find ways of having people working on the land and long term protection of the natural resources. The Center will meet these challenges by focusing on three key components to maintaining the traditional way of life: communities, jobs and the environment.

Local Communities: All politics are local; all issues are local. The Center will work closely with municipal officials and community leaders to ensure the integrity of the communities is maintained. To effectively design and implement a long term strategy for forest and local economy. Creating a strong and sustainable economy is central to maintaining life in the North Country. Promoting economic development would be key in the Center's mission which will complement existing development councils by focusing exclusively on forestry related industries. Important components to the scheme will be creating a revolving loan fund for small-to-medium sized wood processing facilities, providing technical assistance in financing and marketing of forest products, and assisting in promoting the non-traditional economic uses of the forest through recreation and tourism.

Land Conservation: Maintaining healthy forests are important for every aspect of life in northern New England. As society puts increasing pressures on landowners, the ownership patterns and management of the land has changed. Maintaining the hunting camps and public access to private lands is important, yet as public use and property taxes increase, the landowners are looking for new ways to hold onto and conserve their lands. The Center would work with landowners and interested parties to balance the competing uses of the land.

Located in the Northern Forest: To be effective the Center needs to be located where the issues and policies most directly affect the people. It needs to be an integral part of the community within the Northern Forest, possibly Island Pond.

An Independent Organization: Creating a new organization will allow the Center to stay focused on the tasks instead of being restricted by past policies and directions of an existing organization. At least initially, the Center would by funded by public money from the local, state and federal levels.

New Hampshire/Vermont: The history, demographics, scale and issues relating to forestry are very similar in New Hampshire and Vermont. Having the Center work in both states makes political, financial and legistical sense.
Council Must Promote & Support Local Agriculture

Some Recommendations for Local Agriculture

Preface: Until the full costs of industrial agricultural products imported into our region are included in price, small farms here are at a competitive disadvantage. Costs that must be factored in include: environmental and health costs, and irrigation and transportation subsidies. Yet, we all benefit from the existence of these farms through fresher food, a diversified landscape, and a local economy more sufficient unto itself.

—Michael Phillips, Lost Nation Cider Mill, Northumberland, NH

Recommendation #1: Government and conservation groups should direct more money toward the purchase of conservation easements on producing farms in every town.

Recommendation #2: There should be a stated policy goal to produce at least 50% of our food locally. New England now imports 90%. Schools, hospitals, etc. should be encouraged to have “buy local” programs based on more than just lowest price.

Recommendation #3: Direct some of the sportsmen’s fees into government purchase of deer fence around apple orchards.

Recommendation #4: Educate the public on the full meaning of buying land. Again, the “lowest price” does not reflect full cost. Local and state governments need to advocate more aggressively for the local economy in the fullest sense.

Recommendation #5: Provide grant money for innovative local agriculture based on sustainable management. Case in point: utilize the waste heat of a paper mill to heat a winter producing greenhouse for a local supply of lettuce, greens, etc.

Recommendation #6: Help towns establish farmers’ markets. Co-ordinate a rotation of markets in less populated regions so farmers can reach enough demand to justify their efforts.

Michael Phillips and David Craxton and Sadie stand at the doorway of their Lost Nation Cider Mill in Northumberland, NH which they operate with their wives Nancy Phillips and Andrea Craxton. In addition to wonderful fresh-pressed organic ciders, they operate a Community Supported Agriculture cooperative venture, the Lost Nation Community Farms, along with Allen and Linda Holmes. The food tastes great, the money remains in the community, and the soils are lovingly cared for. The plumes of the Northern Forest Lands Council on the subject of local agriculture speaks volumes for its bias against a locally-controlled, diverse economy. Photo by Stephen Germain
Recommendations to Diversify & Strengthen Northern Forest Economies

by the Forum Staff

The NPLC has heard greater public support for building economies from the grassroots up than from the top down.

Letter writers should reiterate support for local economies. The Forum suggests that recommendations should: (1) create an infrastructure for local businesses to capitalize on the sustaining of a healthy, regional ecosystem, and (2) change the macroeconomic factors that impede the development of a truly sustainable economy.

Local Infrastructure

Fostering economic prosperity at the grassroots requires strategies that will proceed with conservation initiatives. Action is needed in these areas:

Tourism: The Northern Forest and its communities need to be promoted as destinations—worth spending time in, not just passing through. To this end, we need:

- A regionally coordinated trails initiative to build on local, state and federal (ISTEA) projects that promote tourism based on biking and hiking trails, cultural by-ways and historic corridors;
- Integrating the above with re-emergent public transportation, particularly rail transportation, through the Northern Forest;
- Identifying, initiating and investing in the cultural institutions that present and translate the Northern Forest’s cultural and natural history to visitors.

Value-Added Production

Government can most effectively foster the adding of value to wood products and other natural resources by directing efforts to the small producer. Efforts should be coordinated with similar initiatives to develop markets for the small farmers of this region.

- A regional inventory of small producers, vendors seeking local products, and potential as well as existing product lines could promote import replacement, links between suppliers and manufacturers, and cooperative marketing opportunities.
- In the same manner that Extension services have coordinated regionally in their effort to assist the farmer, Extension in conjunction with County Forestry programs and other local agencies should be funded to provide assistance to the small manufacturer, artisan and woodlot owner. This could provide a framework services to help negotiate and simplify compliance with government regulations, market research and cooperative wholesaling of timber or retailing of goods.

- With the acquisition of public lands, some should be designated as Economic Reserves, to foster the growing of high value sawtimber designated for local businesses to harvest and manufacture.

- Expand USFS Rural Community Assistance Program: We support the continued funding and expansion of this program aimed at assisting "Forest-dependent" communities because of their emphasis on community-based initiatives. Overall, these programs (including Rural Development Through Forestry, Economic Diversification and Economic Recovery) are aimed at communities which are affected by, or in the proximity of national forests. Unfortunately, this may exclude many communities in the Northern Forest region due to the paucity of public land. We support provisions which would ensure broad eligibility among Northern Forest communities. We also emphasize the complementarity between economic assistance and conservation programs such as the Forest Legacy and Stewardship Incentive Program) which are found in the same title of federal law and are up for reauthorization in the 1995 Farm Bill.
- Support the Creation and Funding of CDFI: Lack of access to capital has been frequently cited by small business persons as a barrier in the Northern Forest region. While a number of state and federal economic assistance programs exist, many do not lend to small, resource-based businesses or do not provide adequate flexibility. Starting with a committment to locally-based social and environmental responsibility, Community Development Finance Institutions pool a variety of funds to meet the needs of small business. A bill to invigorate CDFIs through a $144 million CDFI Fund recently passed both houses of Congress and is awaiting conference and President Clinton’s signature. Northern Forest states should be prepared to take advantage of this legislation and work to establish new CDFIs in the region.

Educational Initiatives

Educational initiatives are broadly supported to involve children of the Northern Forest in comprehensive efforts to:

- Promote awareness and literacy in the natural landscape, and to step beyond this to involve students in studying biological diversity and conducting ecological restoration;
- Foster apprenticeships in traditional economic arts and activities that promote connection to our natural and cultural heritage.

Macro Factors

The Council should also recommend changes to the macroeconomic environment that inhibit sustainable economic activity:

- Urgent federal mandates compelling greater recycling, particularly of paper, fewer toxins in production, and greater re-useability of products;
- Initiate a Regional Task Force on Raw Log Exports.

Throughout the region domestic wood products processors, timber brokers, and conservationists are increasingly concerned about the level of raw log exports in the Northern Forest region. From the data that exists, it is apparent that at least a third of the highest quality sawlogs in Maine and Vermont are exported in raw form. However, regional and national data is intermittent and inconsistent and lacking altogether in New York and New Hampshire. International wood markets are increasingly looking toward the Northern Forest for supplies. We support a much more focused public discussion than the NPLC provided, especially in the area of state’s rights to limit raw log exports, since the increase of exports is one of the major obstacles to local value-added processing and jobs within our region. Raw log exporters should not qualify for tax breaks such as capital gains, estate tax relief, and current use. There should be a five year phase down period beginning immediately. Congress should give states explicit authorization to influence the destination of raw logs.

- Direct greater federal monies to local and regional energy conservation efforts;
- Study the implementation of a national green fee system intended to promote sustainable economic activity by identifying damaging environmental practices and taxing them so as to create a level playing field for the small scale producers who already internalize environmental costs by behaving sustainably.
Council Must Directly Address Threat of Development

Although the threat of development was the pretext for launching the Northern Forest Lands Study and the Northern Forest Lands Council, the Council's Draft Recommendations mysteriously fail to address development. True, easements are promoted, and they are of value in limited situations. However, they are only one tool, and a rather expensive one at that.

To address the very real threat of undesired development, the Council's final report must include the following three recommendations:

* States should institute a "Land Gains Tax" similar to one in Vermont to discourage real estate speculation.

* States should institute "Existing Use" or "Current Use" zoning in regions dominated by forestry and/or agriculture. Participation in current use taxation programs should be combined with zoning, as is the case in California.

* Congress should eliminate the income tax deduction for second home mortgage interest payments. No subsidies for second homes while millions still do not have first homes.

Problem of the First Home: Additionally, Congress and the states should investigate the problem with the "first home." So long as most of urban and suburban America is riddled with crime, over-development, pollution, undrinkable water, and a lack of public lands for healthy recreation, wild areas such as the Northern Forest region will remain vulnerable to development threats and excessive recreation demands from people fleeing their first homes. To protect the Northern Forest, the rest of the Northeastern states must be made livable and provide enjoyable recreation opportunities. A tall order, but a necessary one.

-JS
We Need a Northern Forest Restoration Council

by Jamie Sayen

Abstract: The public wants the regional initiative begun by the Northern Forest Lands Study and Northern Forest Lands Council to continue. We cannot adequately address ecological protection, regional economic revitalization or a variety of other issues without regional collaboration. However, many fear a federal takeover and loss of state and local control. This essay proposes the establishment of grassroots community and watershed task forces that work with and guide a regional "Northern Forest Restoration Council." This NFRC would contain representatives from local, state and federal perspectives, and it would help increase our region's clout in Congress. It would not dictate to the states or the communities. Rather, it would take its direction from the grassroots, while serving to coordinate the work of the community task forces with state and federal agencies. This essay is offered to stimulate thoughtful discussion and the Forum will be pleased to publish creative responses.

Just before David Brower testified at the Lancaster Listening Session on April 11, he asked me what the "Draft Recommendations" said about ecological restoration. Sadly, I had to answer, "very little." He then proceeded to distill over 60 years of environmental defense into three minutes of riveting testimony on the need for us to restore the Northern Forests and to promote new jobs in ecological restoration. Later, he told me, "We need a Northern Forest Restoration Council." The issue of restoration—ecological, economic and cultural—symbolizes the tragedy of the Northern Forest Lands Council's "Draft Recommendations" (DRs). Instead of a forward-looking blueprint for rebuilding the natural and human communities of the Northern Forest region, the DRs are a backward-looking patchwork of recommendations designed to buttress a failing, inequitable status quo. Instead of offering a master plan for healing our damaged communities, it proposes subsidies and assistance to those who have benefited from the inequities and destructiveness of the past and present.

I believe that an essential component of any forward-looking plan is the establishment of a regional council that serves regional and community task forces in a variety of ways. Opponents will throw up their arms and say: "This is another layer of unnecessary bureaucracy!" or, "This is a Trojan Horse for the federal government to dictate to us!" or, "This is usurpation of state's and municipal rights!"

They are wrong. I share a loathing of excessive bureaucracy. I do not believe that big government is the solution. I agree that the roles of local and municipal government must be strengthened, not undercut. But, I also believe that current governments are failing to promote sustainable natural and human communities, and that under current governments, we have an absence of true democracy. This is one of the critical lessons of the NPLC process: under the status quo, local communities have been disenfranchised by absentee corporate owners, by some municipal officials who would rather grandstand and bash environmentalists than address the failure of their community and regional economy, and by state legislatures that have done the bidding of big timber for over a century even though it has produced a legacy of poverty and social malaise that was documented by the Northern Forest Lands Study (pages 33-37), but, unfortunately, ignored by the NPLC.

Uncle Sam is no more angelic: we need only recall the Vietnam War, Watergate, the Iran-Contra scandal, $500 Pentagon adtrays, Star Wars, and the EPA's collusion with the chemical and the paper industries to thwart effective regulation of dioxin and the hundreds of other toxic organochlorines these billion-dollar corporations release daily into our environment.

So, there's enough blame for the plight of the Northern Forest region to spread to all levels of government. Those who claim that only local, or only state government should be involved in Northern Forest issues are not wise. Probably they are not being honest either. The extreme "states' rights" bias of the Council reminds me of the call for "states' rights" during the Civil Rights era. States' rights advocates wished to obstruct the extension of civil rights to blacks and other non-whites, and they believed that the best way to perpetuate inequalities and injustices was to keep the feds out.

Today, large timber companies rightfully believe that the best way to retain their unfairly low tax treatment, to avoid meaningful forest practices regulations, and to retain control over the region is to promote the states' rights message contained in the NPLC's Draft Recommendations. It's a lot easier to subvert the will of the people behind closed doors in the state house than it is in a free and open environment.

But, champions of states' rights have offered no evidence that the status quo in state government can—or will—address the current crises that it could exacerbate over the next 100 years. Instead, they have engaged in fear-mongering to frighten locals and obscure their responsibility for solving the local, economic and cultural crises of the Northern Forest region.

Local control advocates probably fail in two camps. One camp is composed of anti-environmental ideologues—"property rights" zealots and some elected and appointed local officials who prefer to blame environmentalists for the failure of the status quo. Those who attended the Berlin Listening Session were subjected to the spectacle of officials from Berlin and Gorham grandstanding about "local veto power" over any initiative that might protect the environment. Yet, curiously, these same officials offered no constructive thoughts on how to rebuild an economy that has lost 600 out of 1,700 mill jobs in the past five years because a paper company headquartered in Richmond, Virginia—with over 70 percent of its employees in local control—decided to terminate these jobs. Nor did these officials address issues such as dioxin in the fish or the hydroelectric dams, or the widespread cancer and emblypsia that afflicts citizens of their communities.

A second group of local control advocates consists of thoughtful citizens who honestly believe that town government is the appropriate level to address Northern Forest problems. I disagree with these folk that local government can address the issues. Each regional and global issues as: air and water pollution, dealings with transnational corporations, and a declining regional economy. I share their faith that there is much we can and must do on a local level, and that we must— whenever possible—address problems on a local level.

***

It is because of my strong faith in the basic decency and collective common sense of most people, that I propose the establishment of watershed and community task forces to continue the work only barely begun by the NPLC. The passion for these task forces exists: concerned, caring citizens who have participated in the NPLC listening sessions. If these individuals band together and begin addressing local environmental, economic and cultural problems, we will be well on our way to sustaining the exciting rebirth of democracy in the region that the Council has helped to foster.

Local task forces must be composed of a broad cross-section of caring citizens. We must end the domination of local politics by two groups that have worked effectively to disenfranchise local people for so long: those local officials who only do the bidding of the absentee owners of much of the region, and reactionary ideologues who oppose environmental protection and sow fear and divisiveness in the community.

Anyone familiar with the workings of the state government's regulatory agencies is most familiar with the Maine and New
Hampshire legislators will realize that the reason these governments are so hostile to initiatives to promote sustainable natural and human communities is that they are a reflection of the toxic politics of local disenfranchisement. So long as the state legislatures are dominated by 65-year-old white males with financial and sentimental ties to the power-elite (paper companies, the real estate lobby, etc.) there will be no meaningful regulation of abusive forestry, no protection from dioxins and other organochlorines, nor progressive strategies for economic restructuring coming from our various state houses. And, so long as our communities remain disenfranchised, we will send these political troglodytes back to the legislature.

So, local empowerment is key to effecting overdue reforms within state government as well as reforms on the local level. But, is that enough? No!

Many of the problems identified by the NPLC and by the diverse perspectives that have participated in the NPLC process require regional collaboration and federal funding and assistance. Approximately (two-thirds of the NPLC’s 33 Draft Recommendations) involve federal programs or federal funding. It is politically naive (not to mention insulting) for the Council to pander to the panicky anti-federal bias of the current un-democratic local and state governments and maintain the fiction that the only role for the feds in the Northern Forest region is to give us lots of money (much of it in the form of tax breaks for those who have cleared our forests and opposed the implementation of meaningful forest practices regulations) with no strings attached. It just doesn’t work this way.

It would be equally foolish for someone to claim that the feds can come up here, solve all our problems. The anti-environmental ideologues want to confuse you into believing that this is what advocates of a regional strategy desire, but they are either mistaken, or they are not telling the truth.

We need local, grassroots democracy, and we need regional collaboration. The two are not mutually exclusive; they are inseparable in this age of global economics. On matters where your expertise is greatest, local task forces should lead the way. On matters that transcend the resources and/or jurisdiction of local government, collaboration is required.

If we are going to rebuild our regional economy so that it is no longer hostage to one dominant industry that is ecologically destructive, owned by absentee capital, and prone to chronic economic boom and bust cycles, we need to act as a region, and we’ll need the sort of funding that can only come from the state and federal treasuries.

If we are going to restore the ecological integrity of the region, we’ll need to integrate local restoration and protection initiatives with regional strategies to establish large, buffered, connected ecological reserves. To purchase lands for reserves will require considerable federal funding. To refuse to address reserves on a regional scale is to condemn future generations to ever greater environmental degradation and a rapidly declining quality of life.

The question then becomes: how do we address local and regional issues most equitably, most effectively? I propose a strategy that promotes—to the greatest degree possible—local control within a nurturing regional context.

Specifically, this calls for the emergence of community and watershed task forces throughout the region and the creation of a Northern Forest Restoration Council (NFRC) that works with the local task forces, helps coordinate their collaborative efforts, and serves as a conduit to the federal agencies and federal funding. The NFRC will be essential to mobilize and sustain the regional Congressional caucus so that we begin to receive our fair share of federal funding for land acquisition, for economic revitalization, and for cultural and educational revitalization. Most important, this NFRC must be governed by the local task forces; it must not be another “top-down” layer of bureaucracy.

Sure, there are all sorts of ways to abuse this proposed scheme. We can—and do—abuse everything, from our children to the environment, to political power, to religion. But, unless we opt for utter paralysis, we have to try something. The current methods of governing are failing miserably. If we, the caring citizens of the region, exercise eternal vigilance in defense of the environment, the rights of all species, the rights of future generations, and of democracy itself, we can escape the current tyranny of passivity and disenfranchisement.

Finally, I do not pretend that this short essay could possibly solve—or even address—the full array of problems we face in the Northern Forest. But, failure to engage in free and open discussion of our problems is the worst thing we could do. The NPLC’s listening sessions have offered us the chance to begin that free and open discussion. This essay is a contribution to such long overdue discussion. If you have better ideas, please share them with us. The Northern Forest Forum will gladly publish your thoughts. Other forums will also welcome this dialogue.

But, let’s focus the discussion on the quest to find workable, dynamic strategies that will help us meet evolving needs and unanticipated problems well into the twenty-first century and beyond. David Brower is fried of quoting a friend who said: “I don’t need a lawyer who can give me 100 reasons why this won’t work; give me a lawyer who can tell me how to make it work.”

Don’t just criticize this proposal; give us a more workable one.

Maine Woodsman Laments Destruction of North Woods

by Martin Leighton

[Ed. Note: For six decades, Martin Leighton of Guilford, Maine, has made his living in Maine Woods. Since the age of five, he has picked spruce gum, and fiddleheads; he has trapped and guided; and he has worked as a horse logger, a scaler, and a mill worker. He has seen the Maine Woods converted from a forest of large old trees to a tangle of clearcuts. And, he has observed the impact of industrial clearcuts on the streams, rivers, lakes and ponds of the region. In this article, he offers a firsthand account of the demise of the Woods he knows and loves so well.]

The special edition of Natural Geographic tells how the world has overused and contaminated fresh water. It is a grim fact that we are in short supply of drinking water. We are reading a lot lately of fish populations of the oceans worldwide. With overharvesting and contamination, many fisheries face impending collapse. Fishermen know how serious the shortage is, they defy regulations designed to save the industry. They have families to feed and payments to make.

I have seen the forests of Maine go from old growth to nearly the plight the fish are in today. My first look at the Maine woods was before the big demand started in the early 40's. Before that time, most cuts were done by small crews with bucksaws and crosscuts. They were after small amounts of one species at a time. This left a much under-harvested forest.

I was picking spruce gum to sell to Eastern Gum Co. in Monson by the time I was five years old. This, fishing, wildflowering, and other things kept me in the woods for much of my childhood. I saw old growth forest. [Ed. Note: Mr. Leighton uses the term "old growth" to describe a mature forest with large trees; he is not necessarily using the more technical term that means a stand that has never been entered for logging] every day. Fine with a diameter of 40 inches or more, spruce to 24 inches, balsam to 16 inches, white and yellow birch, maple, ash, and beech to 30 inches were all commonplace. In these years I was blissfully unaware that anything would ever change. The enjoyment of those days are far beyond description. Had I known what was to happen to this pristine forest, I would have gone further and enjoyed it more. Thinking back, it seems impossible that it could have gone from so much to so little in the short little moment of time I have been here.

The end of old growth started with the demand of wood products in 1941. This, like populations and money, have increased ever since.

At this time, Vic Aikens came to Piscataquis Co. He bought pulp wood for Brown Paper Co., Berlin, NH loaded on railroad cars. This was the first time all species of trees were used for making paper, the first with the bark still on. This was the birth of the volume wood buyer. This practice was here to stay.

The Ivy Tscomb farm is a good example of the farm woodlots of that era. Ivy was born there last century. Wood sales in this area were more meager than eking out a living from the small farm. The trees just grew. In 1942, this was densely populated with old growth spruce, balsam, hemlock, and cedar.

Arthur Bessey was a prudent woodman who saw and took advantage of the opportunity: wall to wall old growth wood and an unlimited market. He put crews to work with bucksaws and crosscuts. On some lots he bought cutting rights; sometimes he bought the land. Wood was cut, piled on skids year round. Steding was done by horses in the winter. Arthur purchased the standing trees for a set amount on Ivy's farm. Ivy did well; Arthur did well—more money running around than had ever been dreamed of before. What was done here, was done on quite a few woodlots at this time. All mature and wanted, all were cut. Maybe 60 acres on this farm.

This was the first clearcut I ever saw. If only it could have been the last! The summer sun went to work on this unprotected land. Seedlings came in slowly and grew slowly.

About 1988, one man with a skidder cut these trees again. He picked the spots with the largest trees. Not many over 8 inches. Different! The amount of wood cut, like the trees, was very small. This was 50 years of growth. If it had not been cut for another 50 years, growth would have hardly started back to its 1942-status 100 years earlier! Ivy and Arthur were not greedy men. They were changing an over-abundant commodity into more money than enough for the meager living that was common prior to this. It never crossed their minds that they were creating a dried out wasteland. They had no way to know they were starting to overcut. How could it all ever be used? It was growing faster than it could possibly be cut. That has changed many times, in many ways.

In this new era of demand and small clearcuts, the profession of forestry moved quickly. Needs were seen that had never been there before. One that was promoted, and soon widely used, was selective cutting. Trees to be cut were marked with paint by foresters. Properly done, this left a good growth of healthy young trees, a good canopy to protect the land and root system; it retained moisture, and let in enough sun to promote growth. It was simple, and it grew large trees of good quality, faster than anything tried before or since. But it was only as good as the tree marking and supervising of the cut, and time and money gives to grow faster. I have seen cuts done this way in which a large volume of wood was cut, thus allowing remaining trees to grow a like amount in twenty years. One cut comes to mind that went 35 years before it was cut again. It had larger trees and a greater volume than the earlier cut. Some of these trees, balsam 18 inches dbh, were losing quality and should have been cut sooner. My hat is off to the science of forestry that produced this method, and the people who carried it out. It lasted effectively through the horse era and slightly into the machine age at which time our old growth started vanishing at an exhilarating pace.

The machine age has been more destructive than anything else by a million fold. It has left thousands of acres so completely devastated by stripping them of trees, cutting, and lumbering. It will take many centuries of no cut to have forests like I have seen and described. People write and talk about tree growth. They talk of growing wood fiber to supply mills. No one even suggests having old growth forests again. We won't. Only in preserves.
The machine age was born from the demand of the spruce saw log. This demand by you and I, the consumer, has, and is, changing the very face of this planet. Without our green dollars buying wood and wood products, there would be no demand.

In 1963, one of the last growths of virgin red spruce was cut on T. 7 R. 17, Baker Lake. At the time of the first cut in this region, last century, this stand of spruce was too far from driveable water and was spared.

This cut, I believe, had the best forest planning ever in the Maine woods. The first machine of the machine age, the skidder, had made it's appearance, but in the North Woods it had not judged the use of the twitch horses. They were used on this job. Leaving spruce under 12 inches dbh was the rule at this time. In this stand of virgin wood, some of them 230 years old, it was decided to leave trees under 16 inches. It still gave a much larger yield per acre than most. In effect, they cut the old and left the young.

Horses twitched these trees to the first winter truck roads on this township. Demand for spruce saw logs was not, quite to full blossom yet. Pingeri lands in this region, managed by Seven Islands Land Co., were cutting logs, not pulpwood, as no pulp mill was in their ownership. Their logs, at this time, were keeping the row of saw mills just across the border in Canada satisfied.

Although those old winter truck roads cut to Baker Lake have become spruce thickets, the forest between them, which was cut in 1963, is a park like growth of huge spruce. People like Mickey Anderson and Gordon Cousin have every right to be proud they were a part of that forestry.

A short time later, the demand for spruce saw logs became so intense, the price went up until the paper companies, to satisfy their stock holders, started selling sap to their log mills.

This demand and price multiplied so fast, everyone soon sold all sound spruce over 5 inches at the top end to the saw mills. This, and the increasing demand for paper products, meant cutting more acres, and faster. This brought on that 'lost age. Harvesters, grapple skidders, delimbers, and others that made the ground tremble as they drove their logs.

They came to fill the demand you and I were and still are creating. The paper companies, land owners, and lumbermen are only filling them. The wood products we buy, they supply.

Clearcuts started appearing by the thousands of acres that made the one on Ivory's farm in 1942 look like a rose garden. A few years into this, the main wilderness became a maze of roads with more herbicide clearcuts than forest.

The huge volume of wood harvested during this machine age, and the millions of dollars generated, brought out the greed that is inherent in mankind.

Some, working hard in this era amassed a fortune. They have known for some time what the huge trail of destruction behind them is doing to the future. Their ever-growing bank accounts cancel all concern in that direction. Greed, absolute GREED.

Loss of habitat and water quality took its toll on fish and wildlife, except for moose, which multiplied on the thousands of acres of young hardwood brush filling the clear cuts, unless poisoned with the herbicide Roundup, used to promote the growth of more needed softwood.

Graduate foresters, coming into the job market in the early 1970's had studied methods such as those used at Baker Lake. Practices were changing so fast and new ones instituted, the mind could hardly keep abreast. Good workable forestry that would produce in the future has been lost in the mad scramble.

These new roads throughout the forest lands, brought unending numbers of people with guns and fishing gear who decimated the fish and game far more than the loss of habitat and water quality. No longer any sanctuary for them.

Big game hunters now hunt the North Woods from their Cadillacs. They complain about the wood cutting, and the charge for using the roads. This total access for so many humans has done more damage to the fish and game than the loss of habitat and water quality.

Not only the woods this writing describes, but he results of the great forestry I have written about have been largely devoured, much before reaching their potential. In the past 25 years, many thousands of cords have been cut using trees 4-6 inches in diameter. Much more than that has been trashed. This is tomorrow's crop we are not going to have.

Ragmuff Stream runs into the West Branch of the Penobscot River below Hanger Bridge. It's entire watershed is flat land at great growth of soft wood. This area was made to order for the harvester. Here is where it went to work. The entire watershed was cleared right to the very trickle of its headwaters. Prior to this, people canoeing the West Branch paddled or poled up this beautiful stream. Now, in the Spring run off, it runs bank full, as long as the melting snow is feeding it. It quickly diminishes after that. Now in the summer, you can leave your canoe where the stream meets the river and walk the stream bed. You will see, except for the meaningless little strip of trees on each bank, stumps and herbicided clearcuts everywhere. It's a good candidate for the worst example of clearcutting on Earth.

With the demand growing, and much less to draw from, I feel sure you will never see a respectable forest with large quality trees again. A wasteland of machine runs have become waterways to hustle the water from this now-parched land to the ocean. With it flows silt to fill the streams, rivers, and the ponds. Nutrients, grease, oil, and other pollutants contaminate the water, the most precious thing on Earth.

This is one hell of a way to treat this rich, beautiful planet we, at birth, inherit. Can we, supposedly intelligent creatures, believe we can go on destroying the natural resources needed to sustain life, and still have life? I shall let you ponder on that. I already have.

---

**Thesaurus of Old Growth Forest Concepts**

*Compiled by Charles Coghill 1994*

**Age/Origin**
- ancient
- native
- old-age
- original
- pre-settlement
- pre-colonial
- pre-discovery
- primitive
- primeval
- relict
- remnant

**History/Integrity**
- intact
- natural
- uncut
- undisturbed
- unmanaged
- unspoiled
- pristine
- timeless
- virgin
- wilderness
- wild (wood)

**Development/Dynamics**
- climax
- decadent
- forest-grown
- overmature
- potential
- stagnant
- steady-state
- self-maintaining
- stable
- terminal
- uneven-aged

**Aesthetics**
- cathedral
- great
- exemplary
- massive
- magnificent
- majestic
- superior
- spectacular
- handsome
- venerable
- well-developed

---

**Letter Writers' Guide Special Issue**

*The Northern Forest Forum*
Listening Sessions Update

Public Demands Land Acquisition, Ecological Reserves & Good Forestry

Compiled by Jife Hubbard

Ed. Note: The Forum is pleased to present brief summaries of some of the features of the Council’s 20 Land Listening Sessions. Because transcripts for most of the sessions were unavailable at press time, we have had to rely on spoken pronouncement for names of speakers. Accurate verbatim transcription of names and content may have been mis-spelled. We sincerely apologize for spelling errors.

#1 Bethel, ME, March 23

The Northern Forest Lands Council began its public Listening Sessions process on a warm day that forecasted Spring. The character of the event was reminiscent of the natural processes just beginning in the North Woods. After months of cold and snowy things began to move once again under the increasingly intense March sun. Along with the thaw comes a certain amount of excitement and a bit of chaos. A throng of three hundred arrived for the event that began with press conferences held by both the “Property Rights” advocates and the Northern Forest Alliance (a coalition of 22 conservation groups working to protect the Northern Forest). The “Property Rights” brought in a veteran of their campaign in the Pacific Northwest who was outraged that the Federal government was attempting to conserve the habitat of some of these creatures. He claimed, had guaranteed him a sustainable cut of old growth timber “in perpetuity.”

The Listening Session began at 7 PM at the Bethel Inn Conference Center. The ground rules were: all who wished to testify wrote their name on a card that was put into the hopper and the speakers would be drawn at random. The process was designed to ensure that we had a wide and diverse group to hear and there was enough time to be heard. Emily Schelly, one of a spirited group of student activists from Bates College was the first to speak. As a lifelong resident of the Northern Forest, she expressed her concerns for the future of the irreplaceable biological resources that have been so eroded by careless logging practices. Brian Belcher, a forester for Boise Cascade, spoke next. In sharp contrast to Emily’s concerns, Brian was adamant about keeping the Federal government out of the hair of people trying to make money from timber in the Northern Forest. Local control was his charge, yet he failed to explain why his Idaho-based conglomerate would be any more appropriate regulating body than the Federal government in Washington D.C.

As the session continued it became clear that those expressing interest in restoring the health of the communities of the Northern Forest and those of us who spoke, expressed a desire to see the Northern Forest preserved more effectively than the status quo could provide.

Kenneth Hawker spoke in condemnation of the paper companies who he called the enemies of forest health. Stephen Perry, representing the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners rallied against the export 80% of the region’s log production. “We are exporting our livelihood” he summed up. Cathi Johnson of the Natural Resources Council of Maine, spoke powerfully for full fee public land acquisition from willing sellers. Cathy referred to several “Jewels” of the Northern Forest that are currently for sale in Maine, a state that has less public land than virtually any other. Cathy’s testimony apparently was all Ted Johnston needed to hear, for he left after she spoke.

Brad Meiklejohn of Randolph, NH took the concept of land acquisition a step further by outlining the creation of a system of wildlands needed to preserve and restore the biological integrity of the region, including wild cores conserved by communities and protected by legislative action. He acknowledged that this idea may be seen as radical but in actuality is refreshingly sane in contrast to the wanton destruction of species that represent a million years of evolution for the benefit of an industry which if it continues at its present rate has a severely limited future.

Dale French, a property rights maven from the Adirondacks, succinctly stated the misconceptions held by his camp; Federal intervention would bring the establishment of reserves that would drive people out forcing our children to work in some “cesspool of a city” because there would be no work. Dale neglected to mention raw log exports, overly destructive forestry practices, and mechanization as impacts on the local job market. Brian Bishop, a heavy hitter from Rhode Island, came to lend his voice to the debate on behalf of the property rights wing. Unfortunately the majority of his comments were completely incomprehensible.

Suzanne Hedrick was the speaker of the evening. In her three minutes she stated herself as a lifelong resident of the state of Maine whose father, a paper company employee, imbued her with a deep love of the woods. Her family makes it living from various wood related occupations from forestry to logging. The stripping, ravaging, and raping of the forest (the evidence of which lies along the commercial trail of Portland) has broken her heart. Suzanne, mentioned that people in Rhode Island often must boil their drinking water, so she didn’t know what we could learn from them as far as protection of the Northern Forest is concerned.

#2 Camden, NY, March 24

Roughly 100 people showed up at Katie and Karl’s Restaurant in Camden, NY on March 24th. Camden is in the Tug Hill region of New York, an area that forms the western boundary of the Northern Forest as defined by the Northern Forest Lands Study in 1988. Representing the Northern Forest Lands Council and the Northern Forest Landowners Association were Bob Bendick and Bob Siegemann.

Once again this listening session was dominated by those who supported drastic change in the policies of the region to restore the health of the Northern Forest (18 of the 20 who spoke). Some speakers expressed concern regarding the funding and implementation of reforestation projects by the NFLC. The comments made during this listening session illustrated that this process of public comment would be dynamic. The landscape of this debate was proving to be an evolving one, and in Camden a group of well informed participants came to discuss the options.

Robert McNamara spoke first supporting the documentation and the process, while voicing concerns regarding the implementation of the recommendations. His letter was a response to the comments of Robert Stenson, a retired engineer. He stated that the eventual implementers must recognize the urgency of restoring system health. Jason Kahn, a science teacher from Chatham, NY also applauded the process but was concerned that the preservation and restoration of wilderness was not addressed strongly enough. Jason advocated the creation of an Ecological Reserve System of ten million acres or more, a very plausible concept that would “…create a wilderness rivaling any on the continent.”

Mary Alice Kennicott, one of many well informed National Audubon Society members to speak, stressed the need for a permanent Northern Forest boundary to facilitate the eventual enactment of regional programs. Mary Alice also called for a system of wildlands to protect biodiversity. Mary Dwelling, another member of the Audubon Society, spoke in favor of regional identification. Restoration of the wolf, lynx, and cougar were also priorities.

Another group met in a productive voice to discuss the Waterloo Institute for Environmental Studies (WIES) of the University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. The associates of WIES spoke on the conservation of fish and wildlife in the Northern Forest. The future of the forest was seen as critical, and it was recommended that a long-term plan be developed for the area.

In conclusion, the northern forest is in need of protection, and the listening sessions provide a platform for stakeholders to express their concerns and ideas. It is crucial for the implementation of effective conservation strategies in the region.

Letter Writers’ Guide Special Issue

The Northern Forest Forum
needs to listen past the inevitable pat on the back given by those who testify and address the concerns that have been so restlessly voiced. For example, of the twenty people who spoke this evening, three came for large scale land acquisition from willing sellers for the preservation and restoration of wilderness. The public has come out to these sessions to deliver a strong message to their representatives serving on the NFLC, and it would be irresponsible for the Council not to relay this recommendation to Congress this Fall.

#3 New York, March 28

On March 28th nearly one hundred people came to the New York Hilton in Mid-town Manhattan to continue the process of public comment on behalf of the conservation of the Northern Forest. The crowd was made up of transplanted Northern Forest dwellers, people who split their time between the city and the forest, and people who live in the Northern Forest who decided to come to the city and be heard there. Regardless of their backgrounds each of the 32 people who spoke voiced support for drastic measures aimed towards the protection of the Northern Forest. Furthermore, of those 32, 21 specifically called for public land acquisition to protect and restore biodiversity.

Bearing witness to this overwhelming outcry for a proactive approach to the restoration of the ecological integrity of the Northern Forest were New York NFLC members Bob Bendick and Neil Woodworth, and John Hargrave from the New Hampshire delegation.

Sam Pryor, president of the Appalachian Mountain Club outlined his organization’s response. He told the Council that this is the time for bold collaborative action on the part of all involved to preserve the forest for future generations. More specifically he called for: 1) A land acquisition strategy utilizing local, state, and federal partnership; 2) more thought given to how the Draft Recommendations can be strengthened to stimulate and diversify local forest based economies; and 3) a regional body to continue this work once the NFLC dissolves to implement the programs in the Northern Forest. Regarding local economies, Liz Kramer, a certified public accountant, stated that while funding is proposed for further subsidization of the timber industry there is little mention of funds to enhance local small business ventures.

Tim Burke, the Executive Director of the Adirondack Council, advised the Council it has the ‘political support’ to strengthen the final recommendations to Congress. Tim also pointed out that the NFLC cannot leave it to the states to solve the problems of the Northern Forest. Congress recognized that this region faces unique pressures and for that reason initiated the Northern Forest Lands Study to begin to address these issues regionally. For the NFLC to recommend that the states deal independently with them is a step backwards in the process.

The thorough thrashing of the concept of the industrial ‘working forest’ given by Margaret Hayes Young, and the crowd’s subsequent reaction, made it abundantly clear that those who came to this listening session came to speak on behalf of restored forests and health. They were not interested in deciding how to dole out “welfare for Fortune 500 companies” as Margaret put it. The voice emerging from the listening session in New York City was strong and clear. The Council must do everything in its power to restore the communities of the Northern Forest, not by continuing to stampede tax incentives to multinational absentee corporations, but by restoring ecosystems and facilitating the growth of a locally controlled ecologically sound economy.

#4 Abbots, ME, March 30

On March 30th just under one hundred people from Abbots Village, Maine and other surrounding forest communities convened at the Abbots Town Hall to deliver a clear message to the Council: to protect Maine forests for today and the future logging practices must be addressed.

Of the 26 people who testified, nine identified themselves as foresters or loggers. Of those nine, seven specifically addressed the need for stronger forestry practices regulations. The sentiments expressed by the forest workers were echoed by four participants who testified as wilderness guides. Canoe and rafting guides

In one of the most eye-opening listening sessions, seven of the nine foresters and loggers who testified at Abbots Village in the heart of Maine’s timber dependent communities, attacked current industrial forest practices. Although the Council refused to address forest practices until November 1993 (long after it would have been possible for the Council to conduct any kind of useful research), it now knows that the general public, residents of the Northern Forest region, and the loggers and foresters who work in the woods are fed up with the current ecosystem destruction that we call ‘industrial forestry.’ The Council’s credibility will, in no small measure, be judged by whether or not its final report contains recommendations that truly address the crisis on forestry. This photograph is of Maria McKeague of Bowater–Great Northern Paper in an 800 acre clearcut/black spruce monoculture plantation. Mt. Katahdin is in the background. Photo by Stephen Gorman.

As the testimonies began, the mood of the room was undecided. Milt Baston, a guide and woodcutter, was the first to openly question the future of timber jobs in Maine due to cutting practices. This took no small amount of courage for up until then previous speakers had been followed by stony silence from the crowd. There was no rousing applause, yet it was clear that Milt had opened a can of worms. Then came Joe Koler, a forester who said the work he had done seen in the woods was substandard. Corporate foresters were decimating waterways with the usual tools of their trade: clearcuts, highgrading, herbicides, and monocultures. With Joe’s eloquent and well-founded words, the mood of the evening was set, and applause was routinely offered by the crowd as speakers continued to point out the tragedy of forest management carried out by what Jeff Norris, a lifetime native of the Northern Forest with a degree in economics, described as the ‘Evil Empire,’” referring to the corporate boardrooms of Stamford, CT and Atlanta, GA.

Martin Leighton, a gentleman who began his career in the woods of Maine at the age of five gathering gum, and began cutting at the ripe age of eight began cutting wood, spoke of a forester who began selectively cutting back in the fifties. This prudent manager now has more good wood in his stands than most everyone else in the region and it appears that he will remain a productive supplier.

Another man with a lifelong commitment to the lifestyle of the woods was Pat Wing. Pat demanded that the council address forestry practices, and stated that without doing so the work of the Council would be no more worthwhile than, “...pouring sand down a rathole.” Lynne Ricker expressed concern that the logs arriving at her family’s hardgrow mill in Maine have been diminishing in size. Where the minimum nine inch log formerly came from the top of the tree, Lynne voiced her dismay that it now was the base log. To end the session Pat Wing stood up once again to offer a proposal to save Maine’s forests: no tree under ten inches in diameter should be cut with the one variance that up to 40% of an inferior species may be removed from a stand over a ten year period. Pat’s proposal was greeted with joyous applause that signified not only approval of the idea but a deeper appreciation from all involved that this dialogue, though long overdue, is taking place.

I overheard two loggers on the way out of the Town Hall remarking on how productive this meeting had been in the absence of the so called property rights lobbyists. The people who live on the land once again have shown that their voice is one of reason and concern.
#5 Berlin, NH, April 4

On April 4th the NFLC traveling roadshow set up its tents in the mill town of Berlin. Prior to this session an organizer for the Northern Forest Alliance (a coalition of twenty-four conservation groups) had received telephone threats aimed at her and her animals from anti-environmentalists. This is par for the course when dealing with some of these troglodytes. Threats against health and property are a part of the strategy often employed in the attempt to disrupt the process of meaningful discussion. To their credit, those working on behalf of the Alliance were not intimidated by these childish tactics. They worked hard to convince the local citizens concerned about the Northern Forest to show up and speak their minds.

Two hundred and thirty people showed up for the session that was held in the auditorium of the Berlin Town Hall. Of the 39 people who spoke, 15 could be characterized as proponents for protection of the biological and cultural qualities of the Northern Forest, while 16 concentrated on bashing the former.

As testimony began, it became evident that either the lottery system of picking names out of the box was fixed, or that a secret codicil was being applied because the first two speakers of the evening were Mitch Berkowitz and Kelly Goodard, the Town Managers of Berlin and Gorham respectively. Their points were similar, both touching on the need for further funding for the management of existing public land before any new land is purchased. This is a point the Council has adopted in their Draft Recommendations. Rather than acknowledging that existing public lands in the region are badly over-crowded and insufficient, the Council has suggested that further management can halt the ecological degrada-
tion. [Ed Note: Unmanaged public land is less expensive to maintain than intensively managed public land. Let’s spend public money on land acquisition, not bureaucrats’ salaries.]

These municipal voices were followed by Jim Meiklejohn of the Randolph Conservation Commission, who pointed out that all members of the ecological system of the North Woods should be con-
sidered as equals. Jim’s son Brad, a conservation biolo-
ist, spoke later and complemented his father’s point by suggesting that the State’s motto “Live Free Or Die” should apply to all the creatures of New Hampshire. Brad also helped those still struggling with the meaning of the term biodiversity by defining it as, “the full variety of life and all its processes.”

Concerns for the dwindling biodiversity of the region were widely voiced, and this in itself can be considered an accomplishment. Of the eleven people who brought up the issue of biodiversity eight did so in a positive light. David Publicover, Ph.D., a forester and timberland owner from Bartlett pointed out that the need for a system of large interconnected reserves was unanimously identified by the scientific community as crucial to the survival of the remaining species of the Northern Forest. Jack Bourbeau, a sportsman from the area, also commented on the need for large contiguous property for species such as the bobcat. Jack also referred to the decline of the woodcock as further evi-
dence of the failing health of the forest. Brad Wyman of James River Paper also stated that biodiversity must be preserved for future generations, and that he could support management reserves after an economic cost/benefit analysis.

There were some constructive ideas offered by Berlin city officials, notably Dennis Cote, City Planner who called for the further development of the value added sector of the economy to stop as Carl Demereau put it the “hemorrhaging of raw forest com-
modities.” Dennis also advocated the development of Heritage Based Tourism programs. This is a growing trend throughout the nation that offers the opportunity of both a cultural restoration and a celebration of the rich history of the Northern Forest.

Of course these voices of reason were inter-
spersed with the rantings of those who have missed the point of the debate, and are content to attempt to inten-
sify the legitimate fears of job loss among their town-
people. According to the Berlin town manager, James River has in the last few years slashed local employ-
ment in its Berlin and Gorham mills from 1,700 down to 1,100. Rather than providing productive, creative solutions to the economic squeeze Yvonne Culone, Mayor of Berlin, offers, “We cannot have the joy of our mountains without money.” Mike Waddell, Gorham Selectman continues to attempt to polarize the issue by claiming that, “We hang from our fingers on the brink of economic ruin, and the conservationists are standing on them.” Cheryl Johnson, President of the New Hampshire Landowners Association warns that a small land acquisition from a willing seller is bound to become a, “land grabbing whirlpool” ultimately putting the control of the region in the hands of the Federal Government.

With leadership such as this, in conjunction with the ungodly stink that began to waft through the room about halfway through the session from the mill next door, it is not surprising that the people of Berlin and Gorham are beginning to follow the advice of people like Jenny Brown, a teacher from Gorham, who said, “We need to stop yelling about our rights and increase our awareness of our responsibilities.”

#6 Island Pond, VT, April 7

On April 7th the NFLC held its sixth Public Listening Session at the Brighten Elementary School in Island Pond, VT. Roughly 80 people braved the snowy evening to speak their minds, or listen to those who chose to do so. All four of the Council members from Vermont attended the session.

Speaking first in the school gymnasium was Karen Coffey from Irasburg. Karen commended the Council on the process of press pass and also raised the issue of public com-
pulsion and praised it for deciding to include forest prac-
tices in the report, a subject the council had at first refused to touch. Karen also pointed out that the satisfaction with the role the Council has taken in its Draft Recommendations concerning the protection of the headwaters and riparian zones of the rivers in the Northern Forest. While it remains to be seen how hard the Council will push for forest practices reform, the public has made it clear that it wants the subject addressed. David Sargent demanded the Council acknowledge the urgency of addressing the issue, “[these] berry patches are getting bigger than where there are trees standing,” David said he hoped to be able to sit on a mountain ridge and hear the wind blow through the trees in the future, and wondered how long it would take these clearcuts to grow back.

Chris Hamilton, planning coordinator for the Northeastern Vermont Development Association com-
plimented Karen’s concern for the natural systems of the Northern Forest with some suggestions on how the economic opportunities of the people of the region could be enhanced. Chris advocated a revolving loan fund for the start up and expansion of small to medium wood processing plants for the value added sector of the economy. He also shared his vision of a Northern Forest Economic Development and Resource Center to be centrally located in Island Pond. The NFDERC would administer the revolving loan fund and assist in regional marketing initiatives.

Later in the evening Andrew Whitaker offered a perspective that addressed the concerns of both Karen

While elected and appointed official of Berlin and Gorham were too busy with environ-bashing to address the eco-
nomic and ecological crisis in their communities, Berlin Development Director Dennis Cote offered some thoughtful suggestions to the Council regarding the need for greater value-added opportunities for the region. He also promoted "heritage-based tourism" that showcases the rich natural and human history of the region. One of the foremost attractions to the Upper Androscoggin Valley is the beautiful Androscoggin River which attracts white water enthusiasts, bird watchers and other lovers of the outdoors. In this photo, Sally Mahoney and Kevin Slater, Maine Guides paddle the Androscoggin River near Errol, NH. Photo by Stephen Gorman
and Chris. Andrew spoke of the true capital of the region that most needed protection, the ecological integrity of the massive holdings of the large landowner Andrew pointed out that "ecoology is the infrastructure" of a land tourism based economy. Backcountry acts not only as an ecological reserve but also as an economic one that will perpetually attract those seeking opportunities unique to wildlands.

As with previous sessions, taxes were brought up. Edward Sawyer, a forester who owns forest land in ME, NH, and VT said that he does not believe in the current Use program because there is, "no free lunch!". Ed stated that he did not want his neighbors to pay his taxes, and that he certainly didn't want to pay taxes for large corporations. He suggested that the huge tracts of corporate land be broken up into 2,500 acre pieces for homesteaders. Steve Mitchell, a logger from Danville spoke of the need to prevent large corporations from turning a profit. In one case study Steve mentioned a 50 acre softwood lot he had cut over a 17 year period which was not a profit. Steve calculated that if he could raise the lot would yield $18.75 per acre over 40 years. With the data he has collected, Steve believes the land is producing money at a far greater rate than the Executive Summary indicates.

Education was brought up often at Island Pond. Cassidy Renfroe, an eighth grader from the school that played host to this session, recommended that a program akin to the Bridge Program (in which eighth graders study the forest and the value of its resources) be implemented to allow children to explore the working of the Northern Forest.

The Listening session at Island Pond was a truly productive one at which participants offered constructive criticism to the Council in a friendly, supportive manner.

#7 Portland, ME, April 8

Portland, Maine was a well attended session at which 46 people spoke to a crowd of 130 people. The topics focused upon were many and varied as one might expect from an urban setting with proximity to the lands of many small woodlot owners. All of Maine's Council members except Ted Johnson were there to listen to the testimony of the people.

Topics that dominated were: the need for a simplifed, equitable tax system; the strengthening of the section in the Draft Recommendations concerning biodiversity, and outrage expressed over current forest practices.

Regarding taxes, land owners complained that because of the subsidies granted to corporations to the North, the tax burden on the small woodland owners of Southern Maine is too heavy. Joseph Bertling, a man trying to hold onto 1,200 acres that has been in the family for three generations claimed that he is unable to pay property taxes through his stumpage fees. Concerning biodiversity, Ross Newcomb pointed out that "habitats are being ripped off. We'll never get it back - we'll never go back". He called for large, connected, buffered reserves, a common demand at these sessions which indicates that the public has assimilated the emerging concepts of conservation biology. Nancy Chandler of Phippsburg offered a clear conception of how a large system of this type could be established by connecting the regions of Baxter State Park, the western lakes, the White Mountains of New Hampshire to form an Eastern core of wildlands for the Northern Forest Region.

People also expressed concern that such reserves would displace too many landowners, yet demographic data collected by the Maine Audubon Society and The Appalachian Mountain Club has shown this not to be true. The population density in this region is less than 3.1 individuals per square mile, it would be quite simple to work around human communities in the creation of the core and corridor system. People also expressed concern that every acre placed in a reserve would put a greater demand on that property left in production.

Local woodlot practices were widely acknowledged to be far from acceptable throughout Maine. The majority of the comments were directed at the corporate landholders of the North. "It's been these

#8 Lancaster, NH, April 11

Four years ago the northern Forest Lands Study held a public hearing at the Central Town Community House. This was a contentious meeting at which Forester Jamie Seday testified that forest health was of primary concern, and that this health could only be brought about by large scale management decisions. His comments were received coolly. Because he spoke first, the remainder of the meeting was long and lonely. He was the last and last to speak on the topic of ecological integrity.

This evening in Lancaster it worked the other way around. Tony Yeski spoke first, introducing himself not as a logger, but as an American. Tony voiced his objection to the Draft Recommendations because of its bias towards the common good rather than the good of the individual. While there was a smattering of like minded "Property Righters" testifying during the evening, the words of the North Country Peace Network read by Michael Phillips were more typical: "We want to challenge the assertion that individual is the one determinant for human action."

After four years of local debate, the discussion of the future of the Northern Forest has transcended the original statements between environmentalists and representatives of the timber and paper industry. Those people who attended this session came with ideas that were both well conceived and constructive. John Gica outlined a plan for future land offered for sale by the paper companies in which the first opportunity to buy would be given to the local government, followed by local conservation groups. These options would then be followed by state and then Federal acquisition. Winnie Ward of Jefferson called for large ecological reserves to protect biodiversity and to rest the wildlife.

The most ambitious proposal, the first million acre Thoreau Regional Wilderness Reserve would be created in the portion of northern Maine that is white on this map. No one lives in this region.

Opponents of ecological reserves charge that humans will be thrown off their land. This is untrue. The most ambitious proposal, the first million acre Thoreau Regional Wilderness Reserve would be created in the portion of northern Maine that is white on this map. No one lives in this region.

Earth Island Institute Chairman David Brower attended the session and spoke on behalf of the restoration of natural and human communities. He called for tree-free paper made from post consumer waste and kenaf, an alternative fiber more cost effective to grow than trees. This would help alleviate the pressures on both the forest and on growing landfills nationwide (landfills being 40% paper).

Sharon Francis, Executive Director of the Connecticut Riverkeeper Commission, spoke of her frustration regarding the lack of attention in the Draft Recommendations to protection of the rivers of the Northern Forest. She suggested an additional recommendation be added to the report increasing riverfront setbacks for buildings, and creating transition zones for agriculture. Sharon urged the council to go beyond mere study of forest practices and implement recommendations ending clearcutting to preserve the headwaters of these rivers.

Carlton Schaller of Littleton, after voicing his support of the process set in motion by the NFLC, put the discussion of property rights in perspective by pointing out that real property rights must be seen in the context of being so richly blessed by the land.

#9 Montpelier, VT, April 12

On April 12th in the Noble Lounge of Vermont College the NFLC held its ninth Listening Session. One hundred and thirty people attended the session, and 24 opted to speak. All the Council members from Vermont were there to listen.

Robert Norman spoke first, calling for recommendations that would mandate long term management plans for large scale operations. This, he argued, would help to stop speculators from buying land, stripping it, and selling it off. Richard Hoffman continued the constructive criticism of the draft recommendations by

Population Density
of Northern Forest portions of Maine, New Hampshire & Vermont
(Note: Townships that are white have zero population year-round)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual acres, mi²</th>
<th>3.3</th>
<th>4.2</th>
<th>12.5</th>
<th>25.0</th>
<th>50.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
calling for a more regional approach. "A piecemeal, parochial approach will prove inadequate." Specifically, he called for the establishment of a regi- onal system for dealing with the problems of forest management and worker's compensation insurance. Such a system would be better suited to deal with the problems specific to the Northern Forest. It would also be locally implemented.

Biologist Steve Trombulak had some specific advice regarding the sec- tion on biodiversity, advising the council to go back and try it again. He question- ed the wording of the section stating that ecological reserves would constitute a "limited component of their [states'] public land acquisition and management programs." He summed it up stating, "limited reserves means limited protection.

Similar dissatisfaction was voiced regarding the strength of the forest prac- tices section of the Draft Recommendations. Paul Council thanked the Council for addressing the issue but insisted that the wording be bolder. Paul suggested that the wording in the first sentence of recommendation 17 be changed to, "Changes are nec- essary to address inadequacies in pro- grams..." As it is worded now, the Council is recommending only that each state conduct objective assessments of those programs.

Eric Solberg offered some recom- mendations to bolster the scant section on economic development by focusing on the export of unprocessed logs and wood- chips, favor taxes for recycling, and shift emphasis of vocational schools to small-scale, self-employment skills.

Chris McGorry Kilya recommend- ed including wilderness in current use tax status, thereby providing tax aid to those landowners wishing to keep their land wild. Chris also insisted that fund- ing for public land acquisitions be pri- oritized to first protect and restore biodi- versity.

Kathleen Fitzgerald added a charge stating that "the forest's health has been put on the back burner." She added that we are in the midst of an "extinction spasm" that must be stopped. Any recom- mendations the Council eventually gives to Congress must have the restorations of ecosystem health as its primary goal.

#10 Ellsworth, ME, April 13

The listening session held at the Ellsworth Holiday Inn was so fully attended that Executive Director Charlie Levesque was forced to put a set of speakers out in the lobby for those who could not fit into the original space. The 250 people who showed up were greeted at the door of the hotel by members of the Student Environmental Action Coalition dressed as trees. The trees carried signs supporting the use of tree-free unbleached paper.

All the Council members from Maine had attendance there to listen to the 38 people who spoke. Beadie Parker from Camden, Maine, warned that by competing with forest products markets worldwide the Northern Forest is bound to fail. We can't grow the wood as fast Southern climates, nor can we compete with the low wages of Southeast Asia and South America. If we choose to attempt to do so, no one should be surprised when the forest is drained of both natural resources and future economic opportuni- ties, as well as any vestige of natural forest health. Beadie also urged the Council to address watershed protection to insure a supply of fresh water for the future.

Brooks Mills warned that forest practices would be difficult to enforce because of the subjective nature of forestry. As a forester, Brooks stated that he may know better how to nurture a stand of trees than the person assigned the task of regulation. While this atti- tude is understandable, it does little to address the health of the forest managed by those foresters less apt at interpreting the vested interest in a stand of trees, and needs badly to be addressed in a more than cursory way.

Steve McAllister of Rockport drew a parallel between the collapse of the Gulf of Maine fisheries and the impending dis- aster in the Northern Forest. "Unless there is a revolution in the way we approach our natural resources we will end up with what we're headed. There is NOTHING revolutionary in the Draft Recommen- dations."

Charles Craig called for a clear dis- tinction between small landowners and the corporate lands of the Northern Forest. Small landowners do not devas- tate the land as he has seen it along Pinkham Road in northern Maine. "It looks like two great armies met here and clashed," he said.

Andrea Perry recalled her child- hood in New Sweden where Irving is a major landowner. Andrea recounted a visit made to her grade school by an environmental representative who came to tell the children of the "new orderly forest" that industrial forestry would bring.

When one child asked about the fate of the birds that lived in the trees that were to be cut down, the man from Irving assured the student that it was okay because the people cutting down the trees would remove the nests before the tree was cut. So far according to Andrea Irving's clearcutters have not grown back. What New Sweden has gained from the industrial forestry practices of Irving have been new flooding, and signs on Irving property that are thinly veiled threats to the effect that if you complain about our forest practices we will deny you future access to our land.

Scott Dickerson, a land use planner and graduate student at the College of the Atlantic, reminded the Council that there is concern among scientists that ecological reserves are necessary to pro- tect biodiversity. Rider Scott from Presque Isle demanded action, "Let's not hide behind more studies, more research... Let's stop joking around."

#11 Concord, NH, April 18

A crowd of over 200 people crammed into the auditorium at the New Hampshire Health and Human Services Center to speak to the four members of the NPLC from the Granite State. Once again the perspectives offered were diverse, yet the message was the same. The public continues to direct the Council to preserve and restore the Northern Forest in the most effective manner possible.

Many spoke of the danger of aban- doning a regional approach. Chase Roper from Wilton commended the Council on its work, but said it was skeptical of the emphasis put on the states as an agent of change. "We're talking about a region here," she reminded Council members. Anne Melvin of Barrington recommended a regional partnership of state and federal agencies. Andrew Roper, the chapter chairman of the Sierra Club, under- scored the importance of a regional approach to protecting biodiversity by stating, "I have yet to find a fish or deer that knew where the state line was."

Forest practices again were the sub- ject of much discussion. Michael Quinn, the Chairman for Clean Air for the American Lung Association, testified that preserving air quality should be a criterion when the impacts of current for- est practices are studied. He also spoke of the severe limitations of individual states to address air quality. John Carrigan of Trout Unlimited recognized that because of the potential for distur- bance of aquatic ecosystems involved with logging operations, good forestry is necessary to ensure good fishing.

An idea that has gained momentum throughout the hearings has been the demand that any tax breaks given to owners of forest land must be tied to sustainable forest practices. Brock Evans, Vice President of the National Audubon Society said that N.A.S. could support capital gains tax relief if it were tied to sustainable forestry. Brock also put rest to the misconception that he and the Audubon Society wanted to take the Northern Forest away from its inhabi- tants. He said that the Audubon Society was committed to keeping the people on the land and working with them to develop sustainable timber harvesting techniques.

John Hardy from the Society for the protection of NH Forests called for the establishment of a regional Ecosystem Management Research Center for the Northern Forest. Henry Swan the manager of 500,000 acres of woodland in the Northern Forests also acknowledged the need for forest prac- tice regulations to be enforced by state agencies. He also endorsed recommen- dation #3 regarding biodiversity, and pointed to the need for developing mar- keting strategies for forest products. A discussion ensued on the absolute need for the Council to recom- mend that forest practices be regulated by asking, "What is good is common
ground if it is barren and infected with fire.

In addition to the need for forest practices reform, the public has also expressed the necessity of public land acquisitions to aid in forest preservation. One of the more significant conservation efforts is the Pat Flood of International Paper which owns 1.4 million acres in the Northern Forest Region suggesting that the next step in the recommendation #4 calls for the refinement of each state’s public acquisition programs. The report endorsed the idea of a local, state, and federal partnership to administer the creation of the Ecological Reserve System and to maintain the Garden of Eden and we are its stewards.” Fred Scott, recognizing that this is a revolutionary process aimed toward regional protection said, “We’re bound to err. Let’s err on the side of conservation.”

The public comment period has proven to be inspirational. As Digit Taylor stated, 75-80% of Americans consider themselves conservationists. The NELC deserves tremendous credit for allowing the people of the Northern Forest Play such a powerful role in the comment process. John Colens of the Council has provided leadership in avoiding the trap of the false dichotomy between ecological awareness and jobs. Never did we hear, nor did we expect, the Council to take the political cover offered at each of these sessions and recommend pro-active reform to restore and protect the natural systems native to this region. Ron Klamasnik offered an example of the powers of strict environmental standards when he recounted having seen a bald eagle over the Merrimack River which he described as an “open sewer” when he was a child. He has been inspired by the enthusiasm shown by communities throughout the region. George Zing recognized that the potential to empower local communities to address local issues is here, we must utilize it.

#12 Morrisville, VT, April 19

Over 100 people gathered at the Charlestown Restaurant to speak to the Council urging them to take immediate action to protect the Northern Forest. Those who spoke, 30 in all, repeated the themes that the council has heard throughout the process: create wilderness reserves to protect the natural integrity of the region, stop abusive forestry practices NOW, set up a regional body to continue the work the council has started, address the pressures put on the forest’s health by increasing demand for wood worldwide, and correct inequity in the tax structure of the region. Andi Colines urged the Council to respond to the “clear cut action.” She stated that due to the public outcry, the Council can no longer merely have a mandate for bold and innovative action, it has the responsibility to act in behalf of all the communities who have come out to protest for restoring the vitality of the forests.

Alex Winehagen demanded that the Council establish tremendous credit reserves. “It is pointless”, Alex said, “to study areas for reserves while they’re being fragmented.” Zach Salander, a carpenter from Craftsbury, found recommendation #13 “wholly inadequate”. Large Reserves must be set up to protect the diversity of the Northern Forest that are “globally significant.”

Matthew Prosser suggested that the Council prioritize conservation funding. He called for the creation of a Northern Forest Land Trust as a continuing document for conservation strategies. This would provide the region with a coherent strategy for public acquisition of land as it is offered for sale to those who have stripped it. It was stumped fields like those that were bought in 1892 and are now since given back to the State.” After the passage of the 1911 Weeks Act ruined land of New England was bought for the White and Green Mountain National Forests.

Heather Reilly recommended that the Council make use of “gap analysis,” a method of mapping biologically significant areas through the use of G.I.S. maps, to prioritize acquisition. Pierre Couture suggested that timber prices be controlled so that these trees that give deersheds shelter are conserved.

The Council was also told that the current state of forestry in conjunction with increasing demand for timber, the region spells trouble. Ross Morgan a forester from Craftsbury, pointed out that the Northern Forest is a sitting duck for the wood demand. Dick Alexander agreed saying that, “the global economy has found us, and is stamping on our environment.”

Jim Shallow of Vermont Natural Resources Council said worldwide demand of wood products, along with population growth and technological advances, will give the Northern Forest value beyond what we imagine. He advised that we name the area, and create a new model of regionalism. Regional definitions was also supported by Carl Riedel who stated that for Congress to take definitive action in regard to the Northern Forest, it must be clear to them where the permanent boundaries are.

The public has once again demand bold action from the Council. Andi Colines chided the Council for lagging behind the New England Chapter of the Society of American Foresters in regard to their acceptance of ecosystem management. She told the Council to “catch up.” The Council must also catch up to the public and strengthen their Draft Recommendations for this to have been a productive process.

#13 Boston, MA, April 22

On April 24th 150 people showed up to speak to John Sargent, Beng Whitaker, Rich Carbonetti, and Jerry Bley of the NFLC. Thirty-nine people spoke on behalf of strengthening the recommendations in areas regarding the protection of the Northern Forest, while only two voiced satisfaction with the current Draft Recommendations. The overwhelming concern was for the Council to get tough on forest practices. Twenty people specifically called for the curtailment of clear-cutting, grade-cutting, and herbicide use. Frank Shea, an Appalachian Trail thru-hiker highlighted the discussion about forest practices with increasing comments “I’ve seen the worst, but it is not clear if removing the

Illustration Credits


The New forests from the forest is wrong.”

#14 Colonic, NY, April 25

The Council got a clear message from the 32 people who spoke in Colonic: it must strengthen the Draft Recommendations. Eighty people came to the Listening Session, and of those 32 chose to speak. Twenty-six of those who spoke lamented that the Council has produced a document that they found disappointing. The need for public acquisition of land was endorsed by ten of the people who spoke, eight people urged the Council to work on strengthening recommendations regarding biodiversity, six wanted to see forest practices addressed more aggressively, and three found that the Council should reinforce the notion of regionalism. Jean Boyce of Saugerties found the Draft Recommendations disappointing because, “The only stuff in here is to save taxes for large corporations.”

#15 Orleans VT, April 26

Of the 100 or so people who showed up in Orleans, 26 chose to speak to the NFLC. Once again the John Carrington (10 people) spoke in strengthening of the Draft Recommendations. Forest practices and the establishment of ecological reserves both received attention from those who spoke. There was also comment on the inequities of the current tax structure and outrage expressed by the export of raw logs from the region. Steve Wright of Craftsbury said that our community now has a choice, we can choose to be as creative as those who fought for the establishment of Yellowstone, or we can act like a bunch of “rapacious bastards.” Steve applauded the Council for simply acknowledging that healthy land means healthy people. Given that assertion he said, “We can take it from there.”

#16 Presque Isle, ME, April 26

About 80 people attended the Presque Isle session. Council members Janice McAllister and Fred Meadows attended. The dominant message from the 20 or so people who testified was: to protect the forests for now and in the future, the Council needs to strengthen the recommendations concerning forest practices. The current integrity of the tax structure was also addressed. After the session, Steve Miller of Stockholm put the discussion on taxes into perspective: “In this region we pay 50% of our taxes to support Irving (the largest landowner in Stockholm) What do we get in return? A ridgeless seat for a slow motion natural disaster.

#17 Long Lake, NY, April 27

Approximately 170 people attended the Long Lake session. All four Council members from New York were present. This session produced the greatest diversity of testimony at any session thus far. Of the 50 who spoke, 33 testified on behalf of strengthening the content of the Draft Recommendations. Seven people addressed taxes; seven urged the strengthening of the recommendations on forest practices; and eleven demanded that the Council strengthen the sections regarding the protection of biodiversity through the establishment of ecological reserves.

Those who opposed strengthening the draft recommendations, said they didn’t want any further presence of the federal government. Regulations on development and other economic activities, on behalf of environmental protection, was seen by some who spoke to be an infringement of their rights. As Larry Daniel put it, “Inviting wolves back may make an ecosystem whole, but it streches the people.”

The Long Lake session highlighted the effectiveness of the Council’s public process. Throughout these sessions, what was recommended in the recommendations has been criticized, support for the Council’s public involvement process has been nearly unanimous. In the past, meetings held in the Adirondacks have often been contentious and unproductive. The Long Lake session was an important contribution to an emerging public dialogue over a wide range of issues.

SUBSCRIBE TO THE FORUM

A one-year subscription to the Forum costs $12 (US) or $20 (Canadian) for six issues.

We will send you a freebie if you can’t afford to pay on the condition that you become actively involved in the search for sustainable natural and human communities.

We urge you to afford subscribers to send us $24 or more to sponsor a freebie.

Please consider becoming a lifetime subscriber with a donation of $1,000 or more.

—Enclosed is $ , to cover subscription(s).

— I can’t afford a subscription right now, please send me a freebie. I promise to roll over my savings and get to work on behalf of the Northern Forest Communities.

— Here’s some extra cash to cover the cost of freebies.

— Enclosed is $1000 (or more). Please sign me up as a lifetime subscriber.

— Name

— Address

— Town,

— State ZIP

Contributions to the Forum are tax-deductible. Please make checks payable to Earth Island Institute and send to:

The Northern Forest Forum, POB 6, Lamoine, ME 04658
The Letter Writers' Guide to Commenting on
The Draft Recommendations of the Council

Please inform the Council that you are unhappy with the Draft Recommendations as currently written.

The Final Recommendations must effectively address:
- the need for an ongoing regional initiative such as Community and Watershed Task Forces and a Northern Forest Restoration Council (see pages 10-12, 22-23);
- the need to establish large ecological reserves that permit the restoration of native biodiversity and that effectively protect ecological processes and evolutionary options (see pages 6-9);
- the need for adequate, full-fee land acquisition to establish ecological reserves (see pages 5, 14-15);
- the need for meaningful, effective forest practices regulations (see pages 12, 16, 18);
- the need for a diversified, ecologically sustainable economy (the Council's recommendations on the economy are universally viewed as its weakest work) (see pages 10-20);
- the need to address development via tools such as existing use zoning, land gains tax on speculations, and an end to subsidies for second home mortgages (see page 21);
- the need for educational and cultural revitalization (see pages 22-23);
- the need for energy efficiency and conservation, recycling and chlorine-free paper (see page 17).

Right now, the Draft Recommendations—if submitted as the Final Recommendations without major overhaul—will fail to address any of the above issues effectively. Letter writers must explicitly tell the Council it has not yet got it right, and they must explicitly describe what must be done to get it right.

Federal Presence: It is imperative that a responsible representative of the Federal Government participate fully in the Council's deliberations over its "Final Recommendations." Insist that the Council's 17th member, Mike Rains of the US Forest Service be replaced by someone who cares enough to attend the Council's meetings. This individual must be willing and able to defend articulately the appropriate role of the Federal Government in an overall regional strategy against the absurdly parochial ideology of certain Council members (many of whom are entirely comfortable with the domination of the region by absentee transnational corporations).

Public Sessions for Final Recommendations: Insist that the Council meetings to craft its "Final Recommendations" be open to the public and press. Like Caesar's wife, the work of the Council must be above suspicion. Closed sessions invite distrust. If the Council is going to support or oppose a certain policy, the public is entitled to know who supports or opposes, and why. Secret sessions that produce a pro-timber, anti-federal document such as "Finding Common Ground," undermine the emerging democracy of the region that the Council purports to support. Openness breeds trust; secrecy breeds distrust.

Advice to Letter Writers: Read the Council's draft recommendations, "Finding Common Ground," read this and the preceding issue of The Northern Forest Forum (the special issue that critiques "Finding Ground," and then write a letter that expresses your values and concerns. It's fine to refer to articles in the Forum or elsewhere, but do not merely copy from another source. Write from the heart and in your own words.

Old Growth White Pine, near the Oswegatchie River in the Five Ponds Wilderness in the Adirondack Park. If the Council honestly meets its moral obligations, future generations of all species of Northern Forest residents will again enjoy this sight throughout the Northern Forest region. Photo by Dan Plumley

Deadline
The deadline for public comments is 5:00 PM, Monday, May 16. Mail or Fax your comments to:
Northern Forest Lands Council
54 Portsmouth St
Concord, NH 03301
FAX: 603 224-6603