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Appendices A-G

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# Green Mountain National Forest

## **Final Environmental Impact Statement Appendices A-G**



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## APPENDIX A PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

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### Introduction

The Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF) is located in central and southern Vermont and includes more than 400,000 acres. The Forest constitutes approximately six percent of the state's land area and hosts more than 3.5 million visitors each year. The GMNF provides various recreation activities, wilderness areas, wildlife habitat, clean water, thriving fisheries, wood products, and a scenic backdrop. Fifty-three communities, ranging in population from 18,000 people to a less than one hundred, include federal lands managed by the Green Mountain National Forest. Forest Service management affects the social and economic setting of these communities. In addition, many people from Boston, New York City, and other areas of the Northeast own second homes in the area and/or vacation near the Forest. Although there may be differences in the worldviews of these urban and rural constituencies, one consistency is that people are extremely passionate about the GMNF. They often disagree, however, on how it should be managed. Key issues for the public regarding GMNF management planning include wilderness designation, achieving a desirable mix of recreational uses, the role of timber harvest on the Forest, the impact of management on the economic viability of the surrounding communities, biodiversity and ecosystem management, wildlife, and forest health.

The Green Mountain National Forest started the process to revise their Forest Plan in 1996. One of the goals of this process was to emphasize public involvement and community partnerships. Forest Plan revision is a process that relies heavily on the collaboration of many stakeholders and the resolution of many issues. Through extensive public involvement, the Green Mountain National Forest created a collaborative relationship between the various stakeholders and themselves so that contentious issues could be discussed and addressed through the revision of the Forest Plan.

The Green Mountain National Forest believes that a Forest Plan should be responsive to people's needs, easily understood, and usable by both natural resource managers and the public. The success of the Forest Plan revision process depends on collaboration between various stakeholders and the resolution of contentious issues to create a Forest Plan that is realistic and adaptable to change.

Some of the expected outcomes of public involvement during Forest Plan revision include:

- A collective vision for the role of the Green Mountain National Forest
- Strong partnerships and collaborative relationships between the Forest Service and the public which continue into the implementation of the new Forest Plan
- Improved techniques for the stakeholders to work together and to resolve conflicts
- Improved implementation of the Forest Plan
- Improved understanding of the difference between Forest Plan revision and Forest Plan implementation

The National Forest Management Act requires public participation during Forest Plan revision. During the development of the 1987 Forest Plan, public participation consisted primarily of soliciting the public's concerns on proposed management and incorporating the Forest Service's solutions in the final Forest Plan. As a result, some people felt alienated from the process and unhappy with the decisions made by the Forest Service. Many people remained detached from the process. During the revision of the Forest Plan, the Forest Service endeavored to engage the public as partners in management from the beginning of the process rather than asking for reactions to proposals. To engage those interested in forest planning, the Forest Service created a variety of participation formats including:

- One-on-one interactions with interested people, the State of Vermont, and local governments
- Public meetings to work on issues development
- Field Trips
- Educational Forums

Interested publics, governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, and Native American Tribes have been informed of Plan revision information, and given opportunities to comment and attend meetings through an over 1300 person mailing list. Furthermore, Forest Plan revision information was made widely available on the Green Mountain National Forest web site. The web site included background information on Forest Plan revision, assessments used in revising the Forest Plan, information presented at public meetings, comments received at each public meeting, and information on how to contact the Green Mountain National Forest for more information or to provide input into the process.

## Public Involvement 1996-1998

Information contained in this section was adapted from, *Public Involvement in Forest Management Planning: A View from the Northeast*, published in *Understanding Community-Based Forest Ecosystem Management and the Journal of Sustainable Forestry* (Twarkins et al. 2001).

The Forest Plan Revision process was initiated in 1996, with the USFS Joint Core Planning Team (USFS staff representing the Green Mountain National Forest, the Finger Lakes National Forest, and the White Mountain National Forest) outlining basic principles and procedures for revising their Forest Plans. One primary tenet of the planning process was to focus on partnerships. It was decided that the best way to revise the Forest Plan was to:

- Involve the public from the beginning
- Widely share information
- Focus public involvement on dialogue, learning, and joint problem-solving

Focus on partnership versus traditional public involvement was new for forest planning in the Northeast. A five phase process to revise the Forest Plan was developed and is outlined below.

- 1 Public outreach. The Forest Service develops a list of issues based on about current plans and through discussions and public meetings with Forest Service employees, the public, and groups currently engaged in forest management.
- 2 Public Planning Groups. The Forest Service hosts public planning group meetings, disseminates information on planning regulations, past management plans, and other relevant information. The public planning groups review performance of current plans and raise further issues.
- 3 Collect information to evaluate revision needs. The Forest Service and public planning groups form technical working groups to collect and analyze information on specific issues raised by the public planning groups.
- 4 Need for change. The technical working groups work with the public planning groups to document areas of possible change to the existing Forest Plan.

- 5 Formal NEPA process to revise the Forest Plan. The Forest Service starts the formal NEPA process to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the revision of the Forest Plan. The public would be involved throughout the entire process providing comments to proposals, ideas for management, solutions to problems and concerns to be addressed.

The Green Mountain National Forest held four public outreach sessions followed by five public planning group meetings. Twenty-two management issues were identified and discussed at these meetings.

In 1999 Congress halted all Plan revisions in preparation for a revised national planning rule. At that point, all activities related to the public planning groups on the Green Mountain National Forest stopped.

## **Public Involvement 2002-2004**

### **Federal Partnership Program Grant**

The Green Mountain National Forest resumed Forest Plan revision in 2001. The Forest Service applied for and received a grant from the US Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (U.S. Institute) to develop and implement a public involvement process for Plan revision. The U.S. Institute contracted Adamant Accord, Inc. to work directly with the Forest Service and the public. The goal was to help both the public and Forest Service work together and collaboratively resolve contentious issues and develop Forest Plan alternatives to address these issues. Through this grant, Adamant Accord, Inc. was charged with:

1. Preparing a Situation Assessment
2. Designing and evaluating a public involvement process to revise the Forest Plan
3. Facilitating meetings
4. Training the Forest Service and stakeholders in environmental conflict resolution techniques in order to collaboratively revise the Forest Plan and to resolve contentious future issues
5. Initiating public planning meetings
6. Focusing the issues for use in the Notice of Intent to Revise the LRMP using information from the Conflict Assessment
7. Creating a collaborative atmosphere with the public in order to explore issues and start to develop alternatives to the LRMP

The Green Mountain National Forest worked with the U.S. Institute and Adamant Accord throughout the entire Plan Revision process.

### **Situation Assessment**

Adamant Accord, Inc. worked with the GMNF staff to identify a comprehensive list of stakeholders who were interested in or affected by the management of the GMNF. Close to 80 stakeholders representing a broad range of perspectives, were interviewed for the Situation Assessment (Adamant Accord, Inc. 2003).

Key findings that emerged from the interviews included:

- Stakeholders want a better understanding of the Forest Service's planning process and opportunities for public input into that process. The public wants a clear understanding of how the planning process will unfold, including clear, concise, jargon-free information about the planning process and how the Forest Service will develop alternatives and select a preferred alternative.

- Stakeholders want increased opportunities for dialogue with the Forest Service staff and with each other.
- People want the Forest Service to clarify its role in the Forest Plan revision process.

Four key issues identified during the assessment include:

- **Timber:** Many stakeholders are very frustrated that there has been almost no timber harvested from the GMNF in the past several years. While almost everyone interviewed supports a viable timber program on the forest, opinions vary regarding the role of timber harvesting on the forest.
- **Wilderness:** A proposal to increase the amount of congressionally designated wilderness on the forest has been, and is likely to continue to be, hotly debated.
- **Recreational Use:** An apparent increase in recreational use on the GMNF has led to conflict between user groups with varying needs.
- **Wildlife Habitat Management and Biodiversity:** Most stakeholders seem to be in agreement that the GMNF should be managed to enhance wildlife habitat and biodiversity. However, there are significant differences of opinion regarding wildlife habitat management goals.

Based on Adamant Accord's analysis of the interview results, a number of challenges were identified that the USFS will have to navigate to have a successful public involvement process. While the challenges the public involvement process presents are significant, the assessment outlined recommendations to meet these challenges. Six challenges and associated recommendations included:

Challenge #1: Increase Public Understanding of the Forest Plan Revision Process.

The interviews revealed a compelling need for clear, concise information regarding the Forest Plan revision process and opportunities for public input.

Recommendations:

- Create an overall process "roadmap" that graphically depicts the key decision points and opportunities for public involvement during the Forest Plan revision process.
- Create a project glossary that defines frequently-used terms in language that is readily understandable.
- Develop a clear statement of the legal, scientific and practical constraints to the process, including the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the National Forest Management Act (NFMA).
- Create and use a listserv to distribute meeting notices and periodic (monthly or bi-monthly) status reports to interested individuals and organizations. Distribute this information by U.S. Mail to those who do not use e-mail. Update mailing lists regularly, and respect the privacy of list members.
- Make materials that summarize the status of the process, including the "roadmap", glossary and meeting summaries readily available to new participants.

Challenge #2: Create Increased Opportunities for Dialogue.

Recommendations:

- Convene a number of relatively small, regionally based working groups whose composition reflects the full range of public interests. These groups should consist of people who are actively interested in listening to other's perspectives. The Forest Service should offer support to these groups, including information, process guidance, and facilitation. The regional groups would work with a strong land-based regional focus that provides many opportunities for small, diverse groups to build relationships and understanding, while concurrently rolling up their

sleeves and reviewing maps, and getting on their hiking boots and visiting areas under discussion. As noted above, the Forest Service must provide the public with clear expectations regarding how the input of these groups will be used.

- Develop a process for synthesizing the work of the regional groups. This might involve the creation of a Forest-wide working group whose purpose would be to look at “big picture” issues and coordinate and synthesize the work of the regional working groups.
- Provide opportunities for informal facilitated small-group conversations among key participants to enhance parties’ mutual understanding and to explore areas of agreement and divergence, and to mediate disputes.

#### Challenge #3 Provide a Range of Participation Opportunities.

Past and prospective participants in the revision process vary widely in the amount of time and other resources that they are able to devote to the process, as well as in their comfort in speaking at large public meetings. Some people want to be involved in the inventory and assessment phase; others are more interested in the designation of management areas.

#### Recommendations:

- Explore ways that participants can participate meaningfully in the inventory and assessment process. These efforts should include the dissemination of clear information about the inventory and assessment process, including the types of information that is being gathered and the ways that this information will be made available to the public. Efforts should also be made to partner with participants in the collection and analysis of information.
- Over the near term, focus public involvement on the development of forest-wide goals and provide opportunities for dialogue among participants while the inventories and assessments are being conducted.
- Once the inventories and assessments are completed, and the Forest-wide goals have been developed, use what is known about a given area as a starting point in discussions about how the area might be managed in the future.
- Improve communication with local selectboards and planning commissions, interested organizations and related state agencies, through periodic Forest Service staff participation in these organizations’ meetings. Selectboards and planning commissions may serve as a voice for the “average citizen” who may have an interest in the forest, but who is unlikely to travel to a large public meeting to express his or her opinion.
- Continue to provide opportunities for written comment throughout the process.

#### Challenge #4: Develop a Collaborative Process for Building Agreement.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) require that the Forest Service develop and consider several alternative plans before selecting a preferred alternative. This process can focus attention on the differences between parties, rather than their points of agreement. The Forest Service can maximize public collaboration by creating a process that focuses on building agreement, where possible, and documenting this agreement in a single document. Once areas of agreement are established, the alternatives required by NEPA and NFMA can be developed that use the points of agreement as a starting point, and differ only in areas in which the public has significant points of disagreement.

#### Recommendations:

- Design an open, collaborative process that will identify and build upon areas of agreement regarding Forest Plan revision issues.
- Reframe public involvement activities after the inventories and assessments are completed. Instead of following the traditional forest planning process model that includes a lengthy

“Alternatives Development” phase that highlights differences among parties, use this time for dialogue between the Forest Service and interested parties, with the goal of finding common ground.

- Consider designing a process in which the public and the Forest Service work to develop a single proposed Forest Plan that has wide-spread support. The Forest Service staff would then be responsible for designing alternative plan proposals for consideration under NEPA, or to provide alternatives in areas where there is not considerable agreement.

Challenge # 5: Clarify the Forest Service’s Role in the Forest Plan Revision Process.

Interviewees asked that the Forest Service clearly articulate its role in the Forest Plan revision process, and to be leaders of the process.

Recommendations:

- Conduct a workshop for Forest Service employees to develop a common understanding of their multiple roles in the Forest Plan revision process, including their role as leaders and decision-makers, and skills-building training to support these roles.
- Provide clear, concise information to participants regarding the Forest Service’s multiple roles in the Forest Plan revision process – in particular it’s role as decision-maker. This could be accomplished by developing a fact sheet and making it readily available to participants.

Challenge # 6: Clarify how the Forest Service will address the wilderness proposal and timber program issues in the Forest Plan revision process.

While the Forest Service is required to make recommendations regarding wilderness areas within the GMNF as part of the Forest Plan revision process, only the Congress has the authority to designate land as wilderness. The proposal to increase the amount of wilderness in the GMNF that the Vermont Wilderness Association presented to the Vermont congressional delegation in November 2001 has the potential to dominate the Forest Plan revision process. Clarity regarding how the Forest Service and the Vermont congressional delegation will treat the wilderness proposal in relation to the Forest Plan revision process is needed before meaningful dialogue on this and other significant Forest Plan issues can proceed.

Recommendations:

- Provide the Vermont congressional delegation and the public with information about inventories and assessments that are currently being conducted that have bearing on the wilderness proposal.
- Ask the Vermont congressional delegation for a statement regarding how and when the delegation will address the wilderness proposal, and how the delegation envisions dialogue regarding the proposal to proceed if this dialogue does not occur within the Forest Service’s Forest Plan revision process.
- Hold open, public meetings to explore the interrelationship between the forest’s timber harvesting program and the creation of new wilderness areas.
- Provide opportunities for informal, facilitated small-group conversations among key participants regarding the wilderness proposal and GMNF’s timber program to identify areas of substantial agreement, and to clarify differences. These facilitated discussions should be designed to enhance parties’ mutual understanding, but should not replace opportunities for full public involvement in discussing these issues.

All of the public involvement detailed below was conducted in conjunction with Adamant Accord and consistent with the Situation Assessment.

## Notice of Intent to Revise the GMNF Plan

Public planning meetings were resumed with five meetings between September 26, 2001 and October 17, 2001 in Londonderry, Middlebury, Rutland, Bennington, and Granville. The meetings were designed to:

- Provide an opportunity for community discussion on the planning process
- Provide an overview of the 1996 planning process and what has happened since then
- Outline Forest Service planning requirements and other laws that affect Plan revision
- Validate issues identified in the 1996 planning process and identify any issues that have emerged since then
- Discuss the GMNF proposed public planning process and timeline

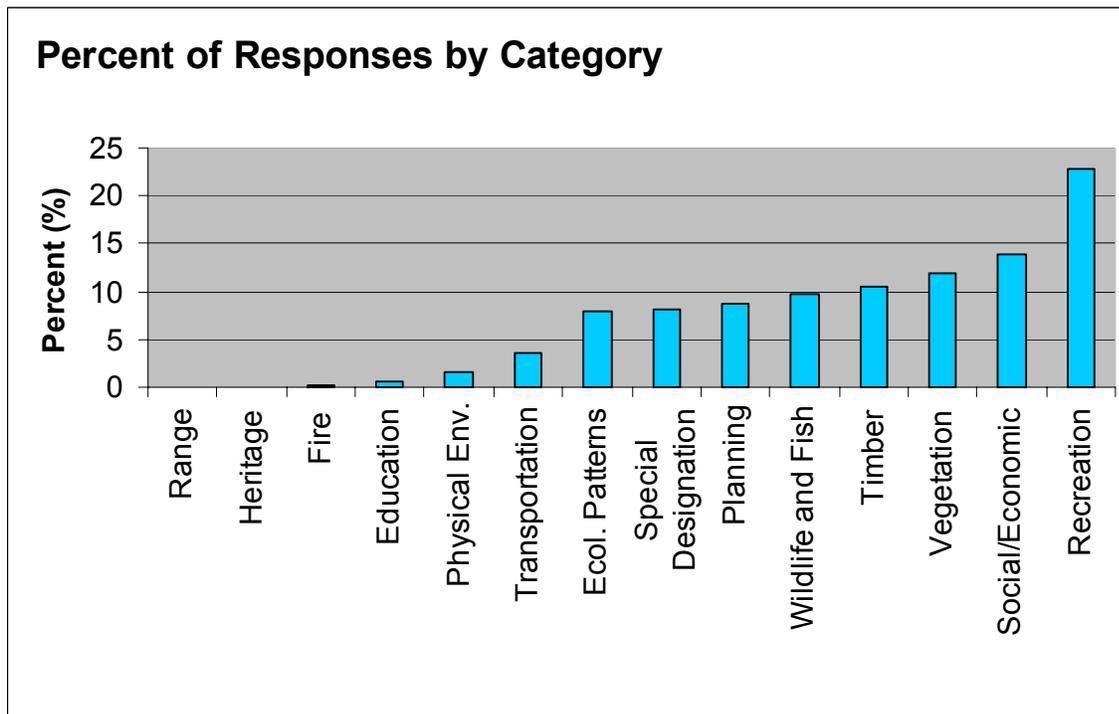
Information from these first meetings was used in the Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (NOI) for the revision of the Green Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). The NOI was published in the Federal Register May 2, 2002. Five major issues expected to vary in how each is addressed by alternative were identified. Issues that would be addressed through the revised Forest Plan goals, objectives, standards, and/or guidelines were also identified in the NOI. The major issues were Special Designations (includes wilderness), Biodiversity and Ecosystem Management, Social and Economic Concerns, Recreation Management, and Timber Management. Specific information on these issues can be found in Chapter 1 of this Environmental Impact Statement.

The NOI was followed by a formal comment period. Three public meetings were held between May 20, 2002 and May 28, 2002 in Middlebury, Wilmington, and Rutland to review the NOI, answer questions, and to explain how to provide comments. The FS received seven hundred and fifty five responses on the NOI of which 93 (12%) were unique letters and 662 (88%) were form letters. Responses were received from people in a wide geographic area and from a large number of organizations (Table A-1). Each public comment received on the NOI was organized, analyzed and reviewed by at least two members of the Forest Planning Team. NOI comments were then analyzed to determine issues of public concern. Review of the public comments confirmed that the plan revision process will be covering the concerns of the public. The majority of the public comments received concerned recreation (22.9%), social/economic issues (13.9%), and vegetation (11.8%) (Figure A-1).

<b>Table A-1: Organizations and State of Respondents to GMNF Notice of Intent</b>			
<b>Organizations, Industries, Governments, and Groups that Responded*</b>	<b>Number of Responses by State</b>		
	<b>State</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Percent of Total Responses</b>
Appalachian Trail Conference	Vermont	643	85
Associated Industries of Vermont	New York	23	3
Catamount Trail Association	New Hampshire	23	3
Desmeules, Olmstead & Ostler	Massachusetts	17	2
Ecosystem Science and Conservation	California	7	<1
Farm & Wilderness	New Jersey	5	<1
Forest Watch	Pennsylvania	5	<1
George B. Crafts and Son	Michigan	4	<1
Green Mountain Club	Oregon	4	<1
MuseArts	Washington	4	<1
National Wild Turkey Federation	Illinois	3	<1
National Wildlife Federation	Maine	3	<1
Pacific Rivers Council	West Virginia	3	<1
Randolph Union High School	Connecticut	2	<1
Ruffed Grouse Society	Colorado	1	<1
Steven R. Wood Systems	Indiana	1	<1
The Wilderness Society	Minnesota	1	<1
University of Vermont	Ohio	1	<1
USDA Forest Service	Rhode Island	1	<1
Vermont ATV Sportsman's Association			
Vermont Fish and Wildlife			
Vermont Mountain Bike Advocates			
Vermont Natural Resources Council			
Vermont Woodlands Association			

**\*Note:** Numerous comments were received from individuals with no designated affiliation.

Figure A-1.



### Local Planning Meetings

Following the recommendations from the Situation Assessment, a series of public meetings were designed by the Forest Service and Adamant Accord. From January 2001 through June 2004, the FS has held “Local Planning Groups,” (LPGs) on a regular basis in five communities near the GMNF. Aside from the regular public meetings, we have made some presentations to various towns, regional planning commissions and other interested groups, and have held additional meetings in communities where there has been a desire to discuss particular topics.

The FS has also participated in a planning group (the Blueberry Hill Group) comprised of various stakeholders that has been convened by Vermont’s congressional delegation. The role of the Blueberry Hill Group was to discuss and make suggestions regarding a viable, sustainable and environmentally sound timber program and additional wilderness on the GMNF; to develop understanding and a more congenial dialogue between the different groups; and to broaden areas of agreement and narrow areas of disagreement. The group began meeting in November of 2002 and continued to meet on a regular basis through May 2004. Most of the Blueberry Hill Group’s participants also attended LPGs on a regular basis.

Between January 21, 2003 and February 12, 2003, five meetings were held in communities throughout the National Forest and served as the kick-off to the (LPGs). The meetings consisted of an update on the Forest Plan revision process by the Forest Service, a review of public comments on the Notice of Intent to revise the Forest Plan, and small group discussions on “desired future conditions” of the Green Mountain National Forest. The small group discussions were designed to get people to begin to understand each other’s viewpoints and to provide the Forest Service with feedback on future management direction. A schedule for public meeting dates for the next six months was announced.

The public meetings have generally included a short presentation from the Forest Service followed by small group work designed to solicit input and comments about issues for the revised Forest Plan. The March 2003 LPG meeting focused on draft goals for the revised Forest Plan. The Forest Service used information gathered throughout the Plan revision process to draft a series of goals that could be included in the revised Forest Plan. The meeting consisted of several stations with posters listing the draft goals and a Forest Service employee recording suggested changes, comments, and additions. The public was encouraged to visit each station and discuss the draft Forest Plan goals with other stakeholders and with the Forest Service.

The April 2003 LPG meeting focused on land acquisition, land adjustment, developed recreation and undeveloped recreation. Trails were not discussed at this meeting because it is a large topic and would be discussed at a separate meeting. This meeting was run similar to the March meeting where poster boards were set up and people were encouraged to provide comments, suggestions, changes, or additions.

The May 2003 LPG meetings focused on getting public input on the management of land acquired since the 1987 Forest Plan was written. Additional meetings were held in communities where there was a high level of interest in the management of the “newly acquired land.” Everyone was placed into small groups after the Forest Service gave a short presentation. Each small group was then given a map showing the “newly acquired land” and asked to write comments and suggestions for future management directly on the map. A Forest Service employee facilitated the discussion and sometimes wrote comments for people who were not comfortable writing on the map.

The June 2003 LPG meeting focused on roads and the Forest Service requirement to carry out an assessment called the Roads Analysis Process – Phase II. This meeting mainly focused discussions on low standard (roads requiring high clearance four wheel drive vehicles) and gated roads. The meeting consisted of a short presentation by the Forest Service explaining the Roads Analysis Process and instructions for working on the maps. After the presentation, the public was asked to work at one of two tables with maps showing Forest Service roads. The public was encouraged to discuss issues with other stakeholders and with the Forest Service. They were asked to write comments directly on the maps. A series of conversation-stimulating questions were displayed on the screen. Additional meetings were held in communities and at various select board meetings, where there was significant interest in road management.

The July 2003 LPG meetings focused on trails. These meetings were the first of our most contentious issues. The Forest Service started with a brief presentation of trails on the Green Mountain National Forest and issues pertaining to those trails. After the presentation, the public was not placed into small groups, but stayed in one large group. The public has expressed a desire to be able to listen to all the questions, comments, and answers in a large group setting. Questions were printed out on large posters at the front of the room and a series of maps were posted on the walls. Comments were recorded on flip charts at the front of the room while Cindy Cook, Adamant Accord, and Forest Service staff facilitated the meeting.

The August 2003 LPG meetings focused on ecosystem management and the conservation of biodiversity. These meetings were a little different from previous meetings due to the large amount of information that the Forest Service needed to present. The presentation lasted about one and a half hours. Great effort was made to make the presentation as interactive as possible. There were numerous questions for the public built into the presentation and candy was given for correct answers and good attempts. There were also several breaks in the presentation where the public was able to ask questions. Interesting graphics were used to illustrate the concepts of conservation biology. After the presentation, the group stayed together to ask more questions and to answer several questions posed to the group by the Forest Service. The following questions were discussed:

1. What does conservation or protection mean to you? What sorts of management activities or uses are consistent or inconsistent with these terms?
2. What plant or animal species, or groups of species, would you like to see protected or enhanced?
3. What natural communities, ecological conditions, or landscape features would you like to see conserved, maintained or enhanced?

The September 2003 LPG meetings focused on one of the most contentious issues, wilderness. The meeting started out with a short Forest Service presentation focused on Forest Plan revision, history of wilderness, wilderness on the GMNF, wilderness issues, Roadless Inventory and criteria to evaluate potential wilderness. After the presentation people were directed to six stations to answer and discuss six questions. Each station had a Forest Service employee recording comments on flip charts. Wilderness and Roadless Area Inventory maps were also displayed around the room. The following six questions were discussed:

1. What kinds of features are important to have in potential wilderness?
2. What kinds of features are a concern if included in potential wilderness?
3. Which evaluation criteria do you consider most important?
4. Which specific areas should be included or excluded from potential wilderness?
5. Are there current wilderness management issues that the Plan revision should address?
6. Are there other special areas that are important to protect?

Finally, the group got back together and people were given the opportunity to make any final or additional comments.

The October 2003 meetings focused on another contentious issue, vegetation and timber management. Due to the success of the open house style meeting on wilderness, this meeting was set up in a similar manner. There was a short Forest Service presentation on Forest Plan revision, GMNF timber management and timber management methods. After the presentation, people were directed to different stations to answer and discuss four questions. Each station had a Forest Service employee recording comments on flip charts. Maps were also displayed around the room. The following four questions were discussed:

1. What is your view or “desired future condition” for the vegetation on the GMNF?
  - a. Forest communities: oak, maple, aspen, hemlock, etc.
  - b. Mixes? Tree size, age?
  - c. Forest attributes: dark, quiet, open, park-like?
2. How would you like to see timber management change from the current Forest Plan?
3. What types of methods would you like to see used in vegetation management?
  - a. Even-aged, uneven-aged management
  - b. Others?
4. For what purposes would you like to see timber management used?
  - a. Provide wildlife habitat
  - b. Timber production
  - c. Demonstration Forestry
  - d. Others?

Finally, the group got back together and people were given the opportunity to make any final or additional comments.

The January 2004 LPG meetings were the first in a series of meetings devoted to management areas (MAs) and the development of draft alternatives for the revised Forest Plan. The January meetings provided the public with an understanding of management areas and the proposed revision to MA descriptions and options. The meetings provided background understanding of the MAs and the impacts MA allocations have on Plan revision alternatives. Plan revision alternatives include various on

the ground configurations of the different management areas to address issues identified in the Notice of Intent. There were three goals for the meeting:

1. Provide the public with information on the current GMNF management areas and proposed new management areas for the revised Plan.
2. Discuss problems with the current management areas and suggested solutions for the revised Forest Plan.
3. Answer questions about management areas and gather public comments on the proposed management area revisions.

The meeting started out with a short Forest Service presentation. The presentation included information on: management areas, how management areas are used in Plan revision, a critique of the current management areas, possible new management areas, and options for newly acquired National Forest land. After the presentation, people were split into small groups to answer and discuss the following questions:

1. What is working, or not working, with the existing management areas in the current Forest Plan?
2. What changes would you like to see in management area descriptions?
3. What uses are compatible, or incompatible, with the current management areas and the possible new management areas?
4. Do you have any suggestions to improve any of the management areas?

The meeting finished with time for people to walk around and see how other groups answered the questions and to view a series of resource maps that would be used in the February meeting. People were encouraged to look at the resource maps, handouts, and meeting notes on the web site in order to be prepared for the February meeting.

In February 2004, the LPGs used the management areas presented in January 2004 to map the Green Mountain National Forest. The meeting started with a short Forest Service presentation on Forest Plan revision, a review of the January meetings and management area descriptions, and highlights of changes made to MA descriptions based on public and internal comments and feedback. A short discussion and question-answer period followed to discuss changes made to the MAs. After the presentation and discussion, people were directed to different tables for the mapping exercise. Each table had a Forest Service employee recording comments on note pads and on the maps. People were asked to draw lines on a clear plastic map of the GMNF. Maps showing different resources were placed under the clear plastic to help people draw lines and answer questions. People were given the following directions:

1. The following areas that will stay the same as in the current Plan or that will not decrease in size from the current Plan:
  - a. Existing Wilderness
  - b. White Rocks National Recreation Area
  - c. The Cape Research Natural Area
  - d. Appalachian Trail/Long Trail
  - e. Existing Special areas
  - f. Alpine ski areas
2. The group should consider adding the following to the maps:
  - a. Areas for commercial timber harvesting
  - b. Areas of additional Wilderness
  - c. A mosaic of habitats
  - d. A range of uses

At the end of the mapping exercise, people were asked to highlight points of agreement and areas where group members differed. Each group was also asked to explain how their map:

1. Was balanced and provided for multiple use
2. Addressed the Forest Plan issues

3. Provided for a viable, sustainable timber harvesting program
4. Provided for additional wilderness, should the Congressional Delegation decide to introduce legislation regarding wilderness on the GMNF

Finally, people were given the opportunity to walk around and look at how other groups mapped the Forest.

The March 2004 meetings were designed to get people to come to “considerable agreement” on management area mapping for the GMNF. Because of this, the GMNF decided to hold one meeting in the North Half of the Forest and one in the South Half of the Forest. The idea was that people from the different local planning groups and others would get together to synthesize all of the Plan Revision information during another mapping exercise. The goals of the meeting were to:

1. Develop a balanced allocation of management areas
2. Identify areas of substantial agreement
3. Explore underlying reasons for areas with differences
4. Explore options to resolve differences

The meeting started out with a review of the January 2004 and February 2004 meetings, management areas, and how public and internal comments were again used to make changes to the management areas. After the presentation and a short discussion, the public was divided into small groups with a Forest Service facilitator and note taker. The public maps from the last series of meetings were displayed and resource maps were available at each table. Mapping was done in a similar manner as the previous meetings using clear plastic and markers. In order to facilitate the mapping exercise, the groups were asked to develop a pie chart that showed the portion of the Forest that the group would like to see in each Management Area. This was done by placing 100 pennies on a large pie chart showing management areas. One penny equaled one percent of the National Forest.

The groups were then asked to map management areas according to the proportions agreed upon in the pie chart exercise. The groups were given the following directions:

1. The following areas will stay pretty much the same:
  - a. Existing Wilderness
  - b. White Rocks National Recreation Area
  - c. The Cape Research Natural Area
  - d. Appalachian Trail/Long Trail
  - e. Existing Special Areas
  - f. Ski Areas
2. Most, if not all, of the alternatives will use areas of considerable agreement as a baseline, provided that areas of agreement are consistent with sound management practices.
3. Begin by each group member briefly describing his/her vision for future Forest management and how this relates to the GMNF’s goals of balance and multiple use.
4. Next, mark areas of agreement on the map. Begin w/ the “easy” areas.
5. For areas where group members have different visions, explore the underlying reasons for these differences.
6. Ask others why they are suggesting a particular management area, and explain why you are suggesting a different management area designation.
7. Remember that there are a variety of management area designations to choose from. Are there other management area designations that can address the group’s interests?
8. Step back and look at the “big picture”: Are there “trades” that you can make to address the group’s interests? A high priority area for one person may be a lower priority to another, making trades possible.
9. Be creative!
10. Fill out a work sheet explaining how your group’s map:
  - a. Is balanced and provides for multiple use
  - b. Addresses Forest Plan Issues

- c. Provides for a viable, sustainable timber harvesting program, and
  - d. Demonstrates active consideration for additional wilderness designation, should the Congress decide to introduce legislation regarding wilderness on the GMNF
11. Highlight points of agreement and areas where group members differ.  
The groups were then given the opportunity to walk around and view other group's maps.

The June 2004 meetings focused on the range of the five Draft Alternatives. Forest Service staff presented the five draft alternatives and described how the alternatives were developed. This included information on how the public's work and comments had been incorporated as well as input from Forest Service staff and scientific information. The public then had an opportunity to ask questions about the different alternatives. The open house format was used to obtain public input on the alternatives. Each alternative had a station where people could give comments on what they like about each alternative and how it could be improved. There was also a station for comments on the Options for summer ORV use on the GMNF that had been presented earlier in the meeting. The public then came back together to make final comments on the alternatives and to ask questions.

### Other Public Involvement

The Green Mountain National Forest has maintained other avenues for Public Involvement besides Public Meetings. This is done in an effort to involve as many people as possible in the revision of the Forest Plan. One key aspect of our public involvement included a Plan revision web site ([http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/gmfl/nepa\\_planning/plan\\_revision.htm](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/gmfl/nepa_planning/plan_revision.htm)). The web site contains such information as:

1. Frequently Asked Questions about Forest Plan revision
2. Biographical information on the Planning Team
3. The Green Mountain National Forest 1987 Forest Plan
4. Links to other useful information
5. Plan revision documents and assessments
6. Information presented at each public meeting
7. Information presented and public comments recorded at each public meeting

The Forest Service also used a mailing list with more than 1,300 names to send out meeting notices and updates on the Plan revision process. The mailing list included interested individuals, State, and federal governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, and Native American Tribes. The Forest Service encouraged people through their public notices, newsletters, mailings, public meetings, and web site to provide comments in many different ways. People provided input on the Plan revision process through phone calls, email, written letters, or personal contacts at the Forest Service offices.

Educational Forums were held on timber harvesting, recreation, wilderness, and the history of the GMNF from November 2001 to May of 2002. The forums were designed to provide information from different perspectives on a plan revision topic with high public interest. A number of panelists were asked to provide short presentations on the topic including Forest Service staff who provided background information. After the presentations, there was an opportunity for people to ask the panelists questions and then an opportunity for the public to make comments on the topic.

### Consultation with Indian Tribes and Other Government Agencies

The Forest Service also invited tribal, federal, State, and local level government agencies to participate in the preparation of the Draft revised Forest Plan and/or the Draft EIS when they had jurisdiction by law or special expertise in matters of common concern per 40 CFR 1501.6 and 1508.5.

## **Tribal Involvement**

The Forest Service contacted Ms. Sherry White, Mohican Cultural Preservation Officer of the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of the Mohican Nation, and delivered an information packet specific to Heritage Resources and Tribal Relations to her during her visit to the GMNF during 10/13/2004. A discussion was held at the Forest Service offices on the same day between Ms. White, Dave Lacy, Forest Archaeologist, and Steve Kimball, North Half District Ranger. The Forest Service delivered an information packet specific to Heritage Resources and Tribal Relations to Ms. Debra Bergeron, Abenaki Repatriation Coordinator and Liaison with GMNF of the Missisquoi Band of the Abenaki Nation during 08/05/2004. A discussion was held between Ms. Bergeron and Dave Lacy, Forest Archaeologist on the same day in the Tribal Office.

## **Other Government Agencies**

In July and August of 2004, the Forest Service held two meetings to receive input on the GMNF Draft Plan from State, federal, and regional agencies. The goals for the meetings were to: provide an opportunity for agencies to become familiar with the GMNF Plan revision process, share information on GMNF Draft Plan goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines, and management area descriptions; and receive input on consistency of the GMNF Draft Plan with laws, agency plans and regional plans.

The following federal, State, and local level government agencies were consulted in the preparation of the GMNF Draft Plan, Draft EIS, and/or documents used in the environmental analysis process:

VT Division for Historic Preservation, State Historic Preservation Office (Giovanna Peebles) – input for development of heritage resources and tribal relations standards & guidelines.

Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife – input for conservation planning.

Vermont Nongame and Natural Heritage Program – input for special areas/RNAs.

USDA Forest Service, Northeast Research Station – input for special forest products.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (Michael Amaral, Michael Bartlett and Dave Tilton), Agency of Commerce and Community Development (John Hall), VT Agency of Natural Resources (Wibs McLain), Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (Steve Kerr), Department of Fish & Wildlife (Wayne Laroche), Department of Environmental Conservation (Jeffrey Wennberg), Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation (Jonathan Wood), Addison County Regional Planning Commission (Nell Fraser), Bennington County Regional Commission (Jim Henderson), Rutland Regional Planning Commission (India Burnett-Holliday), Two Rivers – Ottauquechee Regional Commission (Peter G. Gregory), Windham Regional Commission (John Bennett), Vermont Dept. of Fish & Wildlife (Doug Blodgett), Dept. of Forests, Parks and Recreation (Jay Maciejowski), State Historic Preservation Officer (Jane Lendway), VTrans (Patricia McDonald), Abenaki Nation (Chief April St. Francis Rushlow), U.S. EPA (Robert Varney), CVT-US EPA (Gerald Potamis), US Bureau of Land Management (John Romito), BLM Eastern State Office, US Army Corps of Engineers (Marty Lefebvre), NRCS (Francis M. Keeler), National Park Service (Marie Rust), US Geological Survey (Brian R. Mrazik), Federal Highway Administration (Charles E. Basner) – participation in agency coordination meeting.

Otter Creek Natural Resource Conservation District (Claire Ayer and Barry King), Starksboro Conservation Commission (Pete Diminico, Robert Turner and Louis DuPont), Department of Environmental Conservation – Water Quality Division (Ethan Swift), Weybridge Conservation Commission (Kathy Morse and Natalie Reigle) Ferrisburgh Conservation Commission (Bill Scott), Otter

Creek Natural Resources Conservation District (Pamela Stefanek), Ripton Conservation Commission (Warren King) – participation in watershed meeting.

USDA Forest Service, Northeast Research Station – Durham, NH (John C. Bissette, William B. Leak, Paul E. Sendak, and Mariko Yamasaki), USDA Forest Service, Northeast Research Station – Newtown Square, PA (David Alerich, Thomas Frieswyk, Michael Kazimer, Brett Butler, Eric Wharton, and Richard Widmann), USDA Forest Service, State & Private Forestry (George Saufly and Dennis Soutto) – consulted for Timber and Forest Health evaluation.

## **2005 to 2006: Post Notice of Availability of the Proposed Revised Forest Plan and Draft EIS**

### **Open Houses**

In **April, 2005**, after the release of the Draft Revised Forest Plan and Draft EIS, a series of four open houses were held to present the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, and answer questions about the analysis and the preferred alternative. These meetings were held in the evenings at the following locations:

- Middlebury, Vermont 4/18/2005
- Dover, Vermont 4/20/2005
- Rutland, Vermont 4/26/2005
- Montpelier, Vermont 4/27/2005

These open houses were important for providing the information to the public and providing an opportunity for the public to ask questions about the Proposed Revised Plan so that they could provide informed comments.

### **Special Meetings with Groups**

After the release of the Proposed Revised Forest Plan and Draft EIS, the Forest Service met with federal, state, regional and local agencies and governments, and with various regional and state-wide interest groups. The purpose of these meetings was to present the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, and answer questions about the analysis and the preferred alternative. Meetings with interest groups were arranged and held at the request of the group.

- State of Vermont, Agency of Natural Resources
- US Fish and Wildlife Service/Environmental Protection Agency
- Vermont Traditions Coalition
- Vermont Audubon Chapter Assembly
- Vermont Forest Products Directors
- Bennington County Regional Planning Commission
- Vermont Association of Snow Travelers
- Blueberry Hill Group
- University of Vermont Rubenstein School for the Environment
- Town of Lincoln
- Windham Regional Planning Commission, Natural Resources Committee
- Two Rivers-Outtaouchee Regional Planning Commission
- Green Mountain Club
- Addison County Regional Planning Commission
- Rutland Regional Planning Commission
- Town of Lincoln
- Antioch New England Graduate School
- Environmental Protection Agency

## Literature Cited

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