

# Act 171 Forest Integrity Study Committee

## Meeting Minutes

October 18, 2016, 8:30am - 11:30am

The ANR Catamount Room, National Life Building, Montpelier

1. The meeting commenced at 8:35am with a welcome from Michael Snyder and introductions by the study committee members and interested parties.
2. The group confirmed that all methods of communication (including the study committee website <http://fpr.vermont.gov/forest/act-171-study-committee>) from and to ANR were working well. Put Blodgett moved to accept the minutes of the September 13, 2016 meeting. Joe Nelson seconded the motion and the minutes were unanimously approved.
3. Michael reviewed the “five point charge” and summarized the scope of discussions from previous meeting. He reminded the study committee that it is committed to examining and evaluating municipal bylaws and Act 250. Karen Horn stated that she would like to include other notes from other disciplines, not just municipal land use regulation and Act 250. Sam Lincoln and Put Blodgett agreed.
3. Jamey Fidel presented on *The Forest Roundtable*. He provided an overview of the Forest Roundtable Report and the Forest Fragmentation Action Plan (available on the study committee website). He also reviewed approaches to land use regulation and forest fragmentation in other states (Puerto Rico, Oregon, Maine) but commented that the Study Committee would benefit from a more thorough state-by-state comparison.
4. John Austin reviewed the Staying Connected Initiative, an inter-state and international cooperative program that places emphasis on the development of scientific study of regional ecosystem connectivity. John also reviewed the Governors and Premiers’ Resolution on Ecological Connectivity, Adaptation to Climate Change, and Biodiversity Conservation, noting that the memo charges all organizations to work with transportation agencies across jurisdictions to marry safe transportation systems with connected ecosystems.
5. Eric Sorenson presented *Forest Fragmentation case studies* using data from the “Forest Blocks” layer and “Vermont Conservation Design” layer on BioFinder. An updated BioFinder website will become available within a few weeks that will include an “Ecologically Functional Landscape” layer.
6. Each Study Committee member reviewed his/her proposed recommendations regarding changes to municipal land use regulations and Act 250. Commissioner Snyder reminded committee members that these proposed recommendations can be amended or altered over the next several weeks, particularly as discussions ensue with Study Committee members.
7. Commissioner Snyder reviewed the goals for the next meeting to be held on November 18. Discussion will continue regarding any potential changes to either chapter 117 statutes or Act 250 and Commissioner Snyder will welcome more input. Study Committee members should review the impacts -- both positive and negative -- of any potential changes. This review will be

the focus of the next meeting. The following meeting will focus on the creation of a list of recommendations for any changes to be included in the final report of the committee.

8. Jamey Fidel requested an outline of what he should bring from the Study Committee to the next Forest Roundtable meeting. The group agreed that he should provide an explanation of the broad charge, an overview of process that the Study Committee is taking, and provide an invitation for input.
9. The meeting was opened for public comment. Steve Webster, a landowner, reminded the group that the Constitutional Convention went further than its charge, and that he recommends that this group look broader than its charge to find ways to enhance forest products industry. He highlight the word “whether” in the section of Act 171 pertaining to this Study Committee. He also asked for a discussion of the function of “forest soils” and proposed that discussion of these soils be removed from this Study Committee’s work.
10. The meeting adjourned at 11:40am.

The next meetings of the study committee will be held on Friday, November 18<sup>th</sup> from 8:30am-11:30am in **The Catamount Room** at the Agency of Natural Resources Offices, 1 National Life Drive, Montpelier.

Study committee members in attendance:

Put Blodgett, *Vermont Woodlands Association*  
Jamey Fidel, *Vermont Natural Resources Council*  
Lucy Leriche, *Agency of Commerce & Community Development*  
Sam Lincoln, *Vermont Forest Products Association*  
Joe Nelson, *Vermont Working Lands Enterprise Board*  
Pete Gill for Diane Snelling, *Natural Resources Board*  
Michael Snyder, *Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation*  
Bonnie Waninger, *Vermont Association of Planning & Development Agencies*  
Karen Horn, *Vermont League of Cities and Towns*

Interested parties and State of Vermont Agency staff in attendance:

John Austin, *Vermont Fish & Wildlife*  
Dale Azaria, *Department of Housing and Community Development*  
Gina Campoli, *Agency of Transportation*  
Chris Cochran, *Department of Housing and Community Development*  
Warren Coleman, *MMR*  
Billy Coster, *Agency of Natural Resources*  
Tim Follensbee, *VELCO*  
Joanne Garton, *Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation*  
Kate McCarthy, *VNRC*  
Matt McMahan, *MMR*  
Kim Royar, *Vermont Fish & Wildlife*  
Amy Sheldon, *Legislator*

Eric Sorenson, *Vermont Fish & Wildlife*  
Steven Webster, *Landowner*