

VERMONT AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES

LANDS CONSERVATION PLAN
A Land Acquisition Strategy for
the Agency of Natural Resources

October, 1999



Volume I

**VERMONT AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES
1999 Lands Conservation Plan**

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This document was developed, in part, to meet the statewide outdoor recreation planning requirements of the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 (P.L. 88-578) as amended.

PREFACE

The principal purpose of this document is to guide the Agency of Natural Resources in its many land conservation transaction activities. While land acquisition by the Agency is the plan's primary focus, it also addresses the exchange and possible disposition of Agency lands. This document is also intended to serve as a source of information to the public regarding the Agency's role in land conservation in general.

The Lands Conservation Plan describes Agency land acquisition priorities, outlines a process for evaluating and acting on the many different types of land offers that come before the Agency, and sets forth a number of policy recommendations and related actions to address a host of Agency land conservation issues. While the Plan is intended to have a useful life of ten years, it is also intended to be a working document and is subject to periodic changes as priorities, philosophies or public demands and expectations change.

APPROVED:


John Kassel, Secretary

Vermont Agency of Natural Resources

Oct 26, 1999

Date

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Lands Conservation Plan: A Land Acquisition Strategy for the Agency of Natural Resources

Vermont's state parks, state forests, wildlife management areas, and other public lands provide Vermonters with myriad opportunities for recreating, enjoying nature, and simply getting away to somewhere peaceful. Just as importantly, these lands sustain important wildlife habitat, offering, for instance, protection for nesting areas, wildlife corridors, and homes for threatened and endangered species.

Privately owned property dominates the Vermont landscape, currently accounting for more than 85 percent of the state's acreage. Private property owners will continue to play a leading role in conserving Vermont's natural resources. Hundreds of thousands of anglers, hunters, cyclists, hikers, boaters, and others visit our state each year to view our landscape and enjoy the bounty of our natural resources. This is strong testament to the high quality of land stewardship provided by Vermont landowners.

State-owned properties, however, are an important part of the Vermont landscape, as they exist in perpetuity for the enjoyment of Vermonters and visitors. Found in all 14 counties, they often provide a region with its most important beach on a hot summer day or its best hillside when setting out on a crisp November morning in deer season.

As we enter the 21st Century, the State of Vermont will continue to acquire land, both to provide additions to existing state-owned parcels and to establish entirely new management units as additional state parks, wildlife management areas, and other categories of state land. Additionally, the state is increasingly looking for innovative partnerships in its land acquisition efforts, such as sharing ownership – often through easements – with land trusts and timber companies.

Societal changes are many as we begin the new millennium. Breakthroughs in communications will allow more Americans to live in rural states while actively participating in the global economy. New technologies, many unimaginable today, may fuel new pressures on our natural resources. Mounting frustration with life in urban and suburban communities may well push more Americans to seek out new homes in rural states such as Vermont.

At the same time, some aspects of our lives will not change. For many people, there will always be a need to seek out quiet places, such as mountaintops, hiking trails, and clean lakes for swimming and canoeing. Vermont's parks and forests have provided such places for decades. With good planning and good management, they will continue to do so well into the future.

This document is intended to guide the Agency of Natural Resources in its land conservation activities (principally land acquisition) over the next decade. In so doing, it sets

forth various policy recommendations and describes the Agency's land acquisition priorities. These policies and priorities are based upon the expertise of Agency staff; the knowledge of stakeholders familiar with our state's private and public property mix and the economic changes taking place in Vermont; and the conservation interests of hundreds of Vermonters who shared their thoughts with the Lands Conservation Plan Steering Committee as it drafted this plan during the past three years.

Two priorities in this plan are of special note, as they represent important shifts in the direction of the Agency's land conservation activities:

In the past, the Agency's attempts to conserve ecological resources have largely focused on the protection of individual species rather than on maintaining or enhancing Vermont's biological diversity. The Agency now believes that the protection of viable, high-quality examples of native species and natural communities can best be accomplished through the use of a limited natural reserve system. This is a system of protected areas that contain a core where ecological integrity is the highest, surrounded by areas of low-intensity land use that maintain a reasonable level of biological integrity. The scale and design of an appropriate reserve system for Vermont - one that is both biologically and sociologically acceptable - has not yet been determined. This would depend, in part, upon a more complete understanding of what ecological resources are presently conserved across the Vermont landscape. Regardless, the expectation is that Vermont's existing network of conserved public and private lands can provide many of the largest core areas needed for a reserve system.

The Agency will no longer acquire, in fee, tracts of forest land solely or primarily for the purpose of timber production. Further, the Agency will not acquire productive working forest land in fee unless absolutely necessary to protect important recreational and/or ecological values. This represents a major shift from the historical direction the state has taken in its land conservation efforts. The majority of Vermont's woodlands are in private ownership. The Agency recognizes that well-maintained, privately owned forests will continue to provide most of the state's timber resources through the stewardship of individual landowners. The Agency believes that acquiring conservation easements on certain working forest tracts, however, can protect the parcel from development, ensure public access, and provide for sustainable forest management into the future.

As set forth within this plan, the Agency of Natural Resources has established the following land acquisition priorities:

I. Recreation Values and Priorities

A. Water Recreation

1. Parcels providing access to public waters – especially (but not limited to) Lake Champlain and the Connecticut River
2. Parcels providing access to public waters for non-motorized boating

3. Parcels protecting and preserving access to important public swimming areas (beaches and swimming holes)
4. Parcels which provide protection of undeveloped/remote ponds, rivers, and undeveloped shoreline (including Lake Champlain islands and other islands)
5. Parcels which provide opportunities for primitive canoe-camping

B. Trails and Greenways

1. Parcels that help to protect established or planned long-distance trail systems, including trailhead areas and side trails (e.g., Long Trail, Catamount Trail, Cross Vermont Trail, rail-to-trails, etc.)
2. Protection of prominent mountaintops and ridgelines that have existing trails or are otherwise suitable and desirable for trails and other compatible uses
3. Parcels that provide linkages between blocks of existing public land, creating additional trail opportunities
4. Parcels that facilitate the development of loop trails
5. Parcels that facilitate the development of planned water recreation trail systems (e.g., Lake Champlain Paddler's Trail, etc.)

C. Needed Additions to Existing State Parks

1. Parcels that provide needed buffer to existing state parks
2. Inholdings and additions that "fill-out" existing parks so they can be managed as integrated units
3. Adjacent parcels needed for planned facility expansion or to enhance access

D. Unique Geologic Areas (e.g., gorges, cliffs, and waterfalls)

II. Ecological Values and Priorities

A. Unique Natural Lands

1. Exemplary or significant natural communities
2. Habitats for rare, threatened, and endangered species

B. Critical Wildlife Habitat and Corridors

C. Connections and Corridors between Blocks of Public Lands

III. Forest Resource Values and Priorities

A. Conservation Easements on Working Forests

IV. Additions to Agency Lands

1. Lands (or interests in lands) necessary for maintaining or enhancing the integrity of existing state holdings
2. Lands such as inholdings and other parcels that serve to consolidate or connect existing state holdings and contain important public values and/or facilitate more efficient Agency land management
3. Parcels that enhance or facilitate public access to Agency lands
4. Parcels that serve an identified facility, infrastructure, or program need (for example, expansion of a campground facility)

The Lands Conservation Plan contains these policy recommendations:

- The Agency will maximize the use of geographic information systems in gathering, developing, and maintaining important resource inventories.
- The Agency will identify critical, short-term land management and administrative needs and associated costs for lands proposed for Agency ownership and will develop a strategy for meeting these needs prior to acquiring new properties.
- The Agency will identify long-term land management and administrative needs for ANR lands as a part of its long-range management planning process for ANR lands.
- The Agency will strive to be a good neighbor to communities in which it owns land and will involve communities on a regular basis to discuss land conservation issues.
- The Agency will make a concerted effort to expand its relationship with the regional planning commissions and will seek their advice, input, and expertise on land conservation issues and initiatives of mutual concern.
- The Agency will develop and include within its overall conservation and education program a "land conservation component" that addresses the public education needs outlined within the Lands Conservation Plan.
- The Agency will carefully consider the economic impacts of proposed land conservation activities and will tailor projects to minimize economic burdens and maximize economic benefits in a manner that is compatible with conservation goals.
- The Agency will continue to utilize the Land Acquisition Review Committee (LARC) in evaluating land offers that come before the Agency and in implementing its land conservation program.

- The Agency, as a general policy, will pay no more for a property than its appraised fair market value.
- The Agency will ensure that appraisals that are conducted on behalf of the Agency conform to the highest applicable standards.
- The Agency will work to identify state-owned lands that could be considered surplus to its mission and potentially available for exchange or disposition.
- The Agency will utilize land exchanges in a judicious manner to enhance conservation values and to provide important public benefits.
- As a general matter of policy, the exchange of surplus Agency lands for lands with greater conservation and/or recreation value is preferable over the outright sale of Agency lands.
- The Agency will only consider accepting land donations that serve an identified Agency purpose, meet or exceed the minimum standards for state ownership, and do not impose significant management or liability concerns.
- The Agency will work through LARC and its conservation partners to evaluate the Lands Conservation Plan and monitor associated implementation activities on a regular basis.

The Agency emphasizes in the plan's fundamental assumptions that *all* conservation projects must have a willing seller. The Agency does not have the authority to conserve property by eminent domain for conservation or recreation purposes.

Readers should also be aware that this plan will serve as the guiding document for acquisitions and other conservation projects only for the Agency of Natural Resources. While the Agency often works in partnership with land trusts, non-profit organizations, and private timber companies, this plan is not a guidance document for the Green Mountain National Forest, land trusts, or other conservation organizations.

Agency of Natural Resources 1999 LANDS CONSERVATION PLAN

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I. INTRODUCTION

Society is changing at an ever-faster pace as we begin the new millenium. Breakthroughs in communications will allow more Americans to live in rural states while actively participating in the global economy. New technologies, many unimagined today, may fuel new pressures on our natural resources. Mounting frustration with life in urban and suburban communities will probably push more Americans to seek out new homes in rural states such as Vermont.

At the same time, many aspects of our lives will not change. For many, there will always be a need to seek out quiet places, such as mountaintops, hiking trails, and clean lakes for swimming and fishing. Vermont's state-owned conservation lands have provided such places for decades. With proper planning and management, they will continue to do so into the future.

The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources is responsible for conserving and managing the vast majority of these state conservation holdings, including Vermont's state parks, state forests, wildlife management areas, access areas, and other conservation properties. These holdings, totaling more than 371,000 acres, provide both Vermonters and visitors with myriad opportunities for recreating, enjoying nature, and simply getting away to somewhere peaceful. These lands also help protect Vermont's natural communities and native species (referred to as "ecological values" in this report) by providing nesting areas, homes for threatened and endangered species, and other valuable wildlife habitat.

Agency-held conservation and recreation properties comprise an important and highly visible part of Vermont's open space resources. These lands are conserved in perpetuity for the enjoyment of Vermonters and visitors and for the protection of important natural resource values. Over time, public pressure and resource needs are sure to create ever-increasing demands on all public lands in Vermont, including state lands. Agency land holdings must evolve to better meet these demands and needs. The Lands Conservation Plan is intended to guide the Agency in this important process.

As important as these state lands may be, however, private landowners have traditionally shouldered the primary responsibility for conserving Vermont's landscape and its natural resources. Privately owned land dominates the Vermont landscape, presently accounting for more than 85 percent of the state's total land base. Vermont's rural character, scenic beauty, recreation opportunities, forestry resources, and other natural resource values are largely conserved through the responsible stewardship of thousands of individual landowners. As Vermont continues to grow and its population expands, private landowners' contribution to land conservation in Vermont will become increasingly important.

Plan's Use of the Term "Land Conservation"

The Agency recognizes that in other contexts, the term "land conservation" generally refers to the protection and careful management and use of natural resources. In this broad sense, land conservation is ultimately dependent on *how* a property is managed, not *who* owns it. Land conservation can be encouraged or fostered through a number of means, including landowner incentive programs, management agreements, and other programs as well as public land acquisition.

For the purposes of this plan, however, *land conservation* has a much narrower meaning and refers only to the permanent protection of land through some form of acquisition and ownership by the state, or where so noted, by other public agencies or non-profit conservation organizations. In making this distinction, the Agency clearly recognizes that land acquisition and land conservation are not interchangeable or synonymous terms and that land acquisition represents only one component of a broader land conservation strategy for Vermont. However, this component (specifically, state acquisition of land or interests in land) is the primary focus of this plan.

Plan Purpose and Need

As we enter the 21st Century, the State of Vermont, through the Agency of Natural Resources, will continue to acquire land, both to create new public land holdings such as additional state parks, wildlife management areas, natural areas, and other holdings, and also to provide needed additions to existing state-owned parcels. The Agency will also consider the exchange and disposition of certain lands that may be considered surplus to its mission. **Toward this end, this plan identifies Agency land acquisition priorities and sets forth policy recommendations to guide the Agency in its land conservation activities as it moves forward in the next decade.**

The new Land Conservation Plan replaces the Agency's 1986 "Land Acquisition Program" report. Though it has served the Agency well and still contains useful information, the 1986 report is now out-dated in many respects. One of the major deficiencies of the 1986 plan was that it did not directly incorporate or rely on any public input or involvement. The report was also written prior to the creation of the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board - the Agency's primary source of land acquisition funding - and barely addresses the use of conservation easements as an Agency land conservation strategy. These and other shortcomings limit the degree to which the 1986 report can continue to provide meaningful guidance to the Agency.

The need for a new Lands Conservation Plan for the Agency has also been noted by several legislative study committees, in numerous Agency plans and reports, and perhaps most notably by the Northern Forest Lands Council in its final report entitled "Finding Common Ground: Conserving the Northern Forest." One of the Council's principal recommendations was that states should refine their existing state land acquisition programs to follow a goal-oriented public planning process. The Agency's Lands Conservation Plan embodies this important recommendation.

Scope of Plan

The Lands Conservation Plan articulates the Agency's philosophy regarding state land acquisition in general, establishes criteria and a process by which the Agency will consider acquiring, exchanging or disposing of land, and sets forth Agency policy and related actions to guide the Agency in these efforts.

While the plan stops short of listing individual parcels for acquisition, it clearly identifies what *types* of land are considered Agency priorities for future land acquisition. In so doing, the plan is intended to both provide a basis for Agency decision-making when reacting to land offers that come before the Agency as well as to assist the Agency in taking a more proactive approach to land

acquisition.

Agency land conservation activities covered by this plan include fee simple purchase of property (acquiring all rights on a parcel of land), purchase of interests (for example, purchasing the development rights to a property while the land remains privately owned), acceptance of donations, and the disposition of Agency-owned land through exchange or sale. For definitions of these and other terms used in this report, see Appendix A.

By design, the Lands Conservation Plan is limited in scope and focuses on Agency land transactions. By no means is it a comprehensive open space plan for the state. This plan does not include the land conservation initiatives of the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board and local conservation commissions, nor does it address private land conservation initiatives, such as those directed by the Vermont Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, regional land trusts, and others. The Agency of Natural Resources often works in cooperation with non-profit land conservation organizations, but it cannot direct the conservation priorities of those groups. The plan also does not address the conservation of agricultural lands, as that is outside the Agency's purview.

Although the Agency must consider management issues when reviewing a possible acquisition or donation, this plan does not direct land management activities on state lands. Appendix C describes other Agency planning efforts, several of which more directly relate to the management or use of state-owned conservation lands.

Planning Process

Agency of Natural Resources Secretary Barbara G. Ripley began the planning process in August 1996 by inviting people from both inside and outside the Agency to sit on a Steering Committee that would oversee the process. Members of the committee included representatives from conservation organizations, the timber industry, regional planning commissions, municipalities, and all three of the Agency's departments.

The Committee met 20 times over a span of nearly three years in developing this plan. The Steering Committee was instrumental in developing the planning process, devising a public involvement program, and identifying key issues that the plan needed to address. After assessing Vermonters' attitudes toward land conservation (see *Public Involvement*, below) Steering Committee members wrote five white papers to help frame their thinking on several key issues. In essence, these papers served as building blocks for the Lands Conservation Plan but were not intended to be comprehensive analyses of issues and concerns related to land conservation. (The complete set of white papers is included within Volume II of this plan).

Using the white papers as a basis, the Steering Committee issued a draft Lands Conservation Plan in July 1998. Public comment on the draft plan was received during the summer and into the fall of 1998. The Steering Committee carefully evaluated all comments received and suggested numerous revisions to the draft plan which have been incorporated into the final plan. The Secretary of the Agency formally approved the final plan in October 1999.

Public Involvement

To ensure that the land conservation priorities and recommendations contained within this plan represent an accurate and honest reflection of public sentiment, the Agency made a concerted effort to solicit public input and to actively involve the public throughout the entire planning process. One of the initial steps the Agency took when it embarked on this planning process was to hire an outside consultant to coordinate public involvement activities. With direction and assistance from the public involvement consultant, the Steering Committee developed and implemented a comprehensive public involvement program. Committee members designed the program to both inform Vermonters and to solicit input at various stages of the planning process. Among the committee's outreach efforts:

- Two dozen assessment interviews with representatives of stakeholder groups to identify issues and to better define which aspects of the plan would need focused public input. *(Spring 1997)*
- A public listening session on Vermont Interactive Television to take comment on the state's land conservation issues and priorities from residents across the state. *(June 1997)*
- A scientific survey, conducted by the University of Vermont Center for Rural Studies, of 790 Vermonters to gather their opinions about the state's land conservation needs. *(September 1997)*
- Five focus group meetings to help the Steering Committee develop solutions to conflicting land conservation issues. *(March 1998)*
- A series of talk-show interviews on the draft Lands Conservation Plan at radio stations across the state. *(June – September 1998)*
- A second public listening session on Vermont Interactive TV to take comment on the draft Lands Conservation Plan. *(September 1998)*
- Numerous meetings with various interest groups and regional planning commissions to take specific comment on the draft Lands Conservation Plan. *(September – October 1998)*

A brief summary of these and other public involvement activities from this planning effort are provided in Appendix B.

The Agency received nearly 400 written comments on the draft Lands Conservation Plan during the public comment period (August – October 1998). These comments, along with input received at the listening session and the various meetings held during the fall of 1998, were carefully considered by the Steering Committee and provided a solid basis for developing the final Lands Conservation Plan. (A complete accounting of the comments received along with all other public involvement activities are provided in Volume II of this plan).

Changes Made to the Draft Lands Conservation Plan

Committee members recommended several significant changes to the draft plan due to the comments received, including clarification of the plan's purpose, stronger language about the role of privately-owned conservation lands, and a general effort to make the plan easier to read. Among the specific changes recommended by the Steering Committee and incorporated into the final plan:

- Changing the plan's name to clarify that is primarily an acquisition plan. (The plan is now titled "Lands Conservation Plan – A Land Acquisition Strategy for the Agency of Natural Resources").
- Dividing the plan into two volumes, with the first volume providing the plan's purposes, priorities, and recommendations and the second volume providing important background material.
- Highlighting the importance of private property as part of Vermont's conserved lands.
- Updating and revising the inventory of conserved lands in Vermont and associated maps and tables.

Plan Format

For ease of reading, the Lands Conservation Plan is composed of two separate documents. Volume I (this report) describes the Agency's land conservation priorities, project evaluation criteria and policy recommendations and includes necessary supporting information. Volume I is divided into the following sections:

- **Executive Summary** – brief overview and highlights of plan
- **Introduction** – plan purpose, scope, planning process, plan format, etc.
- **Fundamental Assumptions and Guiding Principles** – basic principles and concepts that are the foundation for the plan
- **ANR Land Acquisition Priorities and Project Evaluation Process** – ANR land acquisition priorities by land type and procedure and criteria in evaluating land conservation opportunities
- **Plan Implementation Strategy – Policy Recommendations and Related Actions** – land conservation policies, recommended actions for plan implementation
- **Appendices** – plan glossary, public involvement summary, background information and related planning efforts, inventory of conservation lands, and other supporting information

Volume II of the Lands Conservation Plan serves as a technical appendix and represents a compilation of the various "products" or outputs from this planning effort, including:

- **A Review of Past Public Comment and Planning Documents Relating to Land Conservation and Acquisition** – an analysis of public comment and related land conservation planning documents from 1987 through 1997
- **Summary of Stakeholder Interviews** – summaries of 25 assessment interviews conducted in the spring of 1997 to help identify areas of concern and issues to be addressed in plan
- **Lands Conservation Plan Survey Report** – summary and analysis of the 1997 telephone survey of 790 Vermonters regarding land conservation priorities and issues
- **Stakeholder Focus Group Summary** – summary of five focus group meetings held with various interest groups in the spring of 1998 to address land conservation issues
- **Vermont Public Comment and Responsiveness Summary (on the draft Lands Conservation Plan), April 1999** – summary of public comment received on the draft Lands Conservation Plan during public comment period and Agency response to public comment
- **Work Group White Papers** – working papers on ANR Land Conservation Processes, Recreation Resource Values, Ecological Resource Values, Forest Resource Values, and Other Resource Values completed by the Lands Conservation Plan Steering Committee work groups in the spring of 1998

Champion Lands Project

Although not a part of this planning effort, the Champion Lands project deserves special mention in this plan. This landmark project represents Vermont's largest land conservation project ever and one of the largest of its kind in the country. This complex project resulted in the conservation of more than 133,000 acres of remote forestland in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom formerly owned by Champion International Corp. Of this, approximately 48,000 acres have gone into public ownership (26,000 acres centered around the Nulhegan Basin have been acquired by the federal government through the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and managed as a part of the Silvio Conte National Wildlife Refuge, and another 22,000 acres in Brunswick, Ferdinand and Maidstone have been (or will soon be) acquired by the State of Vermont through the Agency of Natural Resources). The remaining 84,000 acres have been resold to a private timber investor subject to sustainable forestry and public access easements.

The Champion Lands project represents a "once in a lifetime" land conservation opportunity for Vermont. It involves the collective efforts of many land conservation organizations and agencies, including The Conservation Fund, the Vermont Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, and the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources. Projects of this nature are unprecedented and cannot easily be anticipated or planned for. Given the huge scale of this project, it goes well beyond the scope of the Lands Conservation Plan. While the broad goals of the Champion Lands project (i.e., providing for traditional recreation uses, protecting unique ecological resources, and sustainable forest management) are consistent with the priorities set forth in this report, the Lands Conservation Plan is intended to provide guidance on land acquisition and conservation proposals that are generally of a much smaller scale and are of a more routine nature.

II. FUNDAMENTAL ASSUMPTIONS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Fundamental Assumptions

The Agency's Lands Conservation Plan rests on a number of underlying fundamental assumptions. These assumptions reflect the environment in which the plan will be used, define the plan's overall framework, and serve as a general guide for the Agency's land conservation activities. The key assumptions are as follows:

- **Given that the vast majority of Vermont's lands are in private ownership, the primary responsibility for conserving Vermont's landscape will continue to rest with the private landowner.** Vermont's long and proud tradition of private land stewardship will continue to play a leading land conservation role in the state. While outside the scope of this plan, a major focus of the Agency's overall land conservation effort will be to further responsible stewardship of privately owned lands.
- **State-owned conservation and recreation lands managed by the Agency of Natural Resources play a vital role in the provision of quality outdoor recreation opportunities to the public and in maintaining and enhancing natural systems and the diversity of plant and animal life in the state.** These lands are also an integral component of Vermont's rural working landscape and contribute significantly to the economic vitality of the state as a whole.
- **State conservation and recreation lands contain natural resource values that provide significant public benefits.** These benefits extend well beyond the specific locale or region in which the lands are located and apply to the entire state and beyond.
- **The Agency will continue to acquire lands (and interests in land) that provide important public benefits.** The amount of land acquired by the Agency will vary from year to year and is largely dependent on the amount of funding available and the opportunities that are available. Over the long term, however, the relative amount of land acquired by the Agency on an annual basis will likely decline over current rates.
- **The Agency must seek community input and strive to address local concerns prior to executing land conservation transactions.** People have an inherent right to participate in public policy decisions that affect them. Public agencies have an inherent responsibility to involve the public in such policy decisions.
- **The rights of private property owners must be honored in all state land conservation transaction activities.** The Agency acquires land only from willing sellers and does not condemn private property for public recreation or conservation purposes.

Guiding Principles

The framework for the Lands Conservation Plan is further defined by a number of guiding concepts or principles that, when taken as a whole, describe both a general philosophy on land

conservation and establish a backdrop against which specific plan recommendations can be carried out. These principles are described below:

- **Conservation lands in Vermont must be viewed as an integrated landscape that includes both public and private lands.** Conservation lands in Vermont include publicly owned lands at the federal, state, and municipal levels; land and conservation easements held by a wide variety of public and non-profit conservation organizations; and, most notably, large expanses of other privately-owned lands that are managed in a sustainable fashion and provide long-term conservation benefits. State-owned lands are just one part of this diverse assemblage of public and private conservation lands.
- **The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources has a lead role to play in land conservation activities throughout Vermont.** In contrast with other public and non-profit conservation organizations in Vermont that typically have a specific regional or programmatic focus, ANR's land conservation activities encompass the entire state and provide a broad diversity of public conservation benefits. Given the breadth and scope of ANR's land conservation activities, it is appropriate for the Agency to play an instrumental and lead role in conserving lands with outstanding public resource values.
- **The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources must recognize the legitimate role of other conservation agencies and organizations in Vermont and work cooperatively with these groups in meeting Vermont's open space needs.** While the Agency should assume a lead land conservation role in Vermont, it cannot (and should not) shoulder all the responsibility for conserving Vermont's important natural and recreational resources. There are many public, non-profit, and private organizations that also play critically important roles in this regard. The Agency must coordinate its land conservation activities with these groups.
- **State-owned conservation and recreation lands provide a great diversity of values and benefits to the public and serve many interests and constituencies.** State lands provide a multitude of public resource values and benefits that cannot always be easily accommodated or at least maintained on private lands. However, state conservation lands cannot serve every individual user without limitation or without affecting the legitimate uses of others. Resolving conflicts between recreational access and use and resource protection needs is becoming increasingly difficult for state land managers. How and for what purposes state lands are managed are fundamental policy questions – ones which cannot be divorced from decisions regarding future state land conservation activities.
- **Land management objectives and the costs of land management must be fully considered in developing future ANR land acquisition priorities.** While outside the immediate scope of the Lands Conservation Plan, deciding how and for what purposes land is to be managed is a consideration that, to a large extent, influences which lands are considered a priority for acquisition. A related consideration is the recognition that managing land costs money and that the costs of owning land do not end, but rather only begin with the actual purchase.
- **State land acquisition by ANR is but one of many tools that can accomplish land conservation objectives.** The Agency can attain conservation goals through a number of means and often state acquisition is the least desirable or feasible means of achieving these goals. In addition to fee-simple acquisition, a balanced land conservation strategy includes the use of

conservation easements, developing management agreements, establishing partnerships with municipalities, conservation organizations, and the private sector, developing landowner incentive programs, educational programs, and regulatory mechanisms.

- **State land conservation transaction activities must be conducted with due regard for both human and biological relationships to the land.** Vermont's working landscape contributes much to the state's charm and beauty. For generations, many residents have earned their living directly or indirectly off the land and have been intimately connected to this working landscape. These connections are as real and as important to maintain in the future as the interrelationship of plant and animal life with the ecosystem itself. ANR's land conservation activities should respect both of these essential relationships.
- **The Agency's approach to land conservation must provide for flexibility and should incorporate both reactive and proactive elements.** For the most part, the Agency's approach to land conservation (especially land acquisition) has been a reactive one. The Agency has traditionally responded to land conservation opportunities as they arise and come before the Agency. While the need to be responsive to such opportunities will always exist, the Agency must also complement this reactive approach with one that is more proactive and priority-driven. The Lands Conservation Plan is intended to guide Agency decision-making on land conservation on both a reactive and proactive basis.
- **Agency measures to conserve land must address the concerns of residents and involve communities and the public in a meaningful way.** While Agency land conservation activities must ultimately be carried out in the best interest of the state as a whole, Agency land acquisition proposals sometimes trigger a variety of concerns at the local and regional levels. Local officials, adjacent landowners, area residents, timber industry representatives, sporting groups, and others will want their concerns to be heard and addressed. Sometimes the concerns of one group may directly conflict with the concerns of another. ANR must understand and address these concerns through more effective coordination at the town and regional planning commission level and by actively involving the public in a meaningful way in the state's land conservation efforts.
- **The Agency must recognize and incorporate into its land conservation program the concept of social equity.** State-owned conservation lands are not for a privileged few but are intended to benefit everybody. Unfortunately, these lands do not always provide the same level of benefits across the social spectrum. For those on limited incomes or with limited mobility, the benefits of a remote state forest or a distant state park may not be readily tangible. The Agency must work to alleviate this disparity in public benefits by providing a greater diversity of conservation lands that are readily available to all segments of society.

III. ANR LAND ACQUISITION PRIORITIES PROJECT EVALUATION PROCESS

The Agency of Natural Resources has a long tradition of serving as steward of Vermont's natural environment for the benefit of present and future generations. Among its many responsibilities, the Agency acquires and manages properties with important ecological, recreational, and long-term forestry values. Decisions regarding new Agency land acquisition efforts, whether fee-simple acquisition or the purchase of an easement, hinge on a number of factors, including the property's location, price, associated management costs, the level of public support, and, most importantly, the resource values present. The Agency directs its land acquisition activities toward the protection of public values and benefits that are not readily available or permanently protected on private lands and which further the broad purposes for which the Agency owns and manages lands under its jurisdiction.

This chapter summarizes the Agency's land acquisition priorities and describes the process the Agency uses to evaluate land offers. By design, the land acquisition priorities presented here are fairly broad in scope and provide a general framework for decision-making. By themselves, however, they do not provide sufficient guidance to the Agency for making decisions regarding individual land acquisition proposals. The project evaluation process and criteria (together with available resource inventory information) allow for a more detailed assessment of properties and are the tools the Agency uses to compare land acquisition proposals, identify relative priorities, and make project-specific decisions.

Every attempt has been made to present the Agency's land acquisition priorities and project evaluation process in as clear and concise a manner as possible. (The same holds true for the following chapter on Plan Implementation Strategy – Policy Recommendations and Related Actions). There is, however, much supporting information available in the appendices of this report and in Volume II of the plan (specifically, Appendix C and Appendix D of this report and the various public involvement reports and white papers contained in Volume II of this plan). Collectively, this background information provides a meaningful context and framework for a fuller understanding of these key chapters.

Agency Land Acquisition Priorities

This chapter describes the Agency of Natural Resources land acquisition priorities according to the following broad categories: Recreation Resources, Ecological Resources, Forest Resources, and Additions to Agency Lands. The priorities described within these categories refer to *types* of land rather than specific parcels of land or areas of the state.

In the past, the Agency's approach to land acquisition has largely been reactive. That is, most of its land conservation activities, be it land acquisition or exchange, were in response to sudden opportunities or issues that have come before the Agency. While the land acquisition priorities that follow are intended, in part, to guide the Agency in making responsible land conservation decisions when reacting to these opportunities or issues, the Agency recognizes that it must also become more proactive in its approach to land conservation.

In this regard, there are a few special regions of the state in which the Agency has developed

more focused and proactive land acquisition strategies. These areas include the Long Trail Corridor, Lake Champlain Wetlands, and the Wildlife Corridor Area located between Route 4 and Route 155 along the spine of the Green Mountains between the northern and southern units of the Green Mountain National Forest. Each of these areas has been identified as having special conservation or recreation values of statewide significance. Because of this, these regions have received heightened attention from the Agency in its land conservation efforts, and much has been accomplished in these areas. There is strong public support for a continued focus on these important regions in the Agency's future land conservation efforts.

The Agency recognizes there may be other areas in Vermont of conservation significance, where a proactive approach for conserving land would be both appropriate and warranted. Some areas that have been suggested include the Connecticut River, the Worcester Range, the Chittenden County foothills area, sandplain communities, clayplain forests, the "Great Ledge Area" in west-central Vermont, and other areas. The land acquisition priorities outlined within this plan, used in conjunction with additional studies, resource inventories, and input from regional planning commissions, local communities, and the public, will be useful in identifying new areas of special conservation significance.

The land acquisition priorities which follow are based on public input received as a part of this and other recent and related planning efforts, as well as relevant studies and data. They represent the most important land types for the Agency to focus future acquisition efforts on. Nonetheless, there may be certain strategic parcels that don't fit neatly under these priorities but still serve legitimate Agency purposes and may also be worthy of Agency land conservation efforts.

Recreation Resource Values and Priorities

Providing opportunities for public outdoor recreation has been and will continue to be a driving force behind the acquisition of many Agency lands. The acquisition of quality outdoor recreation lands often serves multiple conservation purposes including the preservation of Vermont's scenic resources, the protection of important ecological resources, and the provision of opportunities for sustainable forest management. Additionally, opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreation activities, including hunting, fishing, trapping, and wildlife viewing, are provided on most Agency lands and will continue to be important uses of many new acquisitions. The same holds true for many other traditional outdoor recreation activities such as hiking, cross-country skiing, boating, camping and other activities.

The Agency's recreation-related land acquisition priorities are framed by a number of trends and issues which are thoroughly discussed in the "Recreation White Paper" developed as a part of the Agency's Land Conservation planning process and included within Volume II of the plan. The Agency's recreation-related acquisition priorities include specific land types within four broad categories (water recreation, trails and greenways, additions to state parks, and unique geologic sites).

A. Water Recreation: Water represents a principal attraction or component of many if not most outdoor recreation activities and should continue to be a focus of the Agency's land conservation efforts. Providing public access to and protecting notable water-based recreational resources in Vermont, such as Lake Champlain and the Connecticut River, have long been and will continue to be important land conservation priorities for the Agency. Many of Vermont's outstanding scenic, natural, and recreational water resources continue to be threatened by pollution, inappropriate development and land

uses, and aquatic nuisance species. In addition, providing water recreation opportunities within a short driving distance of the state's largest population centers is of particular importance. Land acquisition projects that provide the following water-related benefits have been determined to be of highest priority for the Agency:

- Parcels providing meaningful access to public waters – especially (but not limited to) Lake Champlain and the Connecticut River.
- Parcels providing meaningful access to public waters for non-motorized boating.
- Parcels protecting and preserving access to important public swimming areas (beaches, swimming holes).
- Parcels which provide protection of undeveloped/remote ponds, rivers and undeveloped shoreline (including Lake Champlain islands and other islands).
- Parcels which provide opportunities for primitive canoe camping.

B. Trails and Greenways: Existing trails, greenways, and recreation paths in Vermont are inadequate to meet the needs of Vermonters and visitors (1993 Vermont Recreation Plan and 1993 Vermont Trails and Greenways Plan). The resource base used for trails and greenways is continually threatened by development and the posting of private lands. Most trail systems are located on private lands. Competing and sometimes conflicting uses for trails have become more common. Other trail users have few opportunities on public lands for their activity. People expect more recreation paths close to home, such as on abandoned railroads. As with the water recreation priorities, the Agency is particularly interested in providing hiking opportunities within a short driving distance of the state's largest population centers. The following trail-related land acquisition projects (including both fee-simple and easement acquisition) are considered of highest priority for the Agency:

- Parcels that help to protect established or planned long-distance trail systems including trailhead areas and side trails (e.g., Long Trail, Catamount Trail, Cross Vermont Trail, rail-to-trails, etc.).
- Protection of prominent mountaintops and ridgelines that have existing trails or are otherwise suitable and desirable for trails and other compatible uses.
- Parcels that provide reasonable linkages between blocks of existing conserved land which create meaningful new trail opportunities.
- Parcels that facilitate the development of planned loop trail systems.
- Parcels that facilitate the development of planned water recreation trail systems (e.g., Lake Champlain Paddler's Trail, etc.)

C. Needed Additions to Existing State Parks: Vermont is fortunate to have an excellent and well-established state park system with more than 50 state parks. This system was established 75 years ago and is among the best state park systems in the nation. However, increased uses and pressures are causing congestion, overcrowding, and resource degradation at some of the more popular state parks.

Other parks have been established on relatively small parcels of land that are increasingly becoming islands surrounded by development. Still, other parks need additional land for facility expansion or to more fully protect and/or provide access to important natural or recreational resources. These acquisition needs are generally spelled out within the "1997 – 2007 Vermont State Parks Long-Range Plan". In most cases, specific parcels will be identified as priorities for future acquisition within individual long-range management plans. Needed additions to existing state parks are considered of highest priority for the Agency and can be categorized according to the following land types:

- Parcels that provide needed buffers to certain state parks. (While most state parks are of sufficient size and/or are located such that additional buffers are not needed, development activities on the fringe of a few parks may threaten the integrity of the area. Strategic land acquisition could help to buffer these areas and benefit these parks).
- Inholdings and additions that complete the planned expansion of existing parks so they can be managed as more of an integrated unit.
- Adjacent parcels that are needed for planned facility expansion or to enhance access.

D. Unique Geologic Areas: Vermont's unique geologic sites including caves, cliffs, waterfalls, and gorges often provide opportunities for spelunking, rock climbing, white water boating, swimming, environmental education, research, and other activities. At the same time, many of these areas serve important ecological functions and are often important scenic resources as well. However, the cumulative impacts of increased development, encroachments, and other incompatible land uses continue to pose threats and diminish the integrity of these and other unique natural resources in Vermont. Land conservation projects that protect unique geologic sites of statewide significance are a high priority for the Agency.

Ecological Resource Values and Priorities

Conserving Vermont's important ecological resources and biological diversity is a major focus of ANR land conservation activities. Conserving biodiversity means maintaining functional examples of all natural community types and viable populations of a region's native species, as well as the interrelationships they have with each other and their biological and physical systems. It includes the protection of natural ecological processes at local and regional scales, and is impacted by global environmental issues such as air pollution and climate change. It is a highly complex task - one which we are only beginning to understand and appreciate.

In Vermont, we have an opportunity to maintain and improve the state's ecological integrity because some of the more intensive land uses which have permanently fragmented landscapes in much of our nation have come only more recently to this area. Vermont's landscape still retains a relatively high degree of connectivity that is so important for maintaining an area's ecological health.

Nevertheless, large problems exist for Vermont's ecosystems and the long-term viability of its biodiversity. Invasive exotic species (e.g., zebra mussels, Eurasian milfoil) are increasingly prevalent, and can be highly detrimental to a region's ecological integrity. Extirpation or extinction of some species also may create problems without remedy. Additionally, fragmentation of the natural landscape through sprawl and other activities, though not as pervasive as in other parts of the nation, continues to eat away

at Vermont's ecological resources. A recent poll conducted by the Vermont Forum on Sprawl showed that a clear majority of Vermonters (61 percent) felt there is a need to take action to stop sprawl.

Perhaps the biggest challenge in the protection of Vermont's ecological values is to foster a public understanding of some relatively complex ideas and concepts. The field of conservation biology is a rigorous discipline which has made tremendous strides in the last decade. Yet, terms such as biodiversity, ecosystem health, ecological values, corridors, and reserves remain ambiguous to many and mean different things to different people. (The Glossary provided in Appendix A of this plan provides useful definitions for many of these terms). Understanding what conserving biodiversity means, why it is important, and how it can be accomplished is even less clearly understood by the public.

Nonetheless, there is a deep well of public support for traditional measures of ecological values such as the protection of wildlife, healthy forests, and rare species. On this count, the state has done a reasonably good job. For example, approximately one-third of the state's threatened and endangered species and identified special natural communities occur on land that is permanently conserved by federal and state agencies and non-profit conservation organizations. Roughly one-quarter of Vermont's wetlands occur on conserved lands. (These and other similar statistics are presented in the tables in Appendix D of this plan).

We now know, however, that conserving biodiversity is not possible by simply focusing on isolated parcels of land or individual species. Large habitat patches generally have more species than small patches. Also, populations of species and their genetic resources are typically more viable and diverse as the size of their habitat increases. Likewise, small patches of habitat located near one another usually support more species and contain more viable populations and genetic resources than small isolated habitat patches. These are sound ecological principles which have been tested in the field and are well-understood. We also know that the diversity of natural community types increases as landscape diversity increases. All of this suggests that the conservation of a region's biological resources must be viewed from a landscape perspective and that a broad proactive approach is necessary in order to protect the long-term viability of all native species and natural communities. A working rural landscape with its many economic, cultural, and ecological assets can provide a solid basis for maintaining Vermont's native biodiversity.

There are many good sources of information available to help biodiversity protection efforts in Vermont. These include the extensive databases of the Nongame and Natural Heritage Program, where information on locations and conditions of rare species and natural communities is housed. The Agency's Biodiversity Committee has developed a report on the *Elements of Biodiversity* which provides a good framework for future biodiversity conservation efforts. The *Vermont Biodiversity Project*, initiated by the Vermont Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, uses scientific ecological expertise, existing databases, and GIS analyses to identify areas that contain the greatest percentage of the state's biological diversity. (While neither the *Elements of Biodiversity* report or the *Vermont Biodiversity Project* were specifically reviewed or endorsed by the Lands Conservation Plan Steering Committee, the Agency believes these and other studies and information sources may be useful tools as it attempts to more fully incorporate the goal of protecting ecological values within its land acquisition program).

The ecological goal of Agency land acquisition is to protect viable, high-quality examples of all native species and natural communities and to capture the variation of these across their respective biophysical region, particularly in instances where they are not adequately protected on other lands.

To accomplish this goal, the Agency generally advocates following a limited reserve system for protecting ecological values. This is a system of protected areas that contain a core where ecological integrity is highest, surrounded by areas of low-intensity land use that maintains a reasonable level of biological integrity designed to support the core and connect one reserve to another. This approach has gained broad acceptance within the scientific community. Several states are adopting variations of a limited reserve approach to conserving biodiversity, including Florida, Minnesota and Maine. The use of ecological reserves as a component of a state's public land acquisition and management program has also been recommended by the Northern Forest Lands Council within their final report, "Finding Common Ground: Conserving the Northern Forest." (However, the Council qualified this recommendation by stating that new ecological reserves should not be established until the extent of ecological values already protected on conserved lands is assessed).

While the scale and design of an ecological reserve system still needs to be determined, it is clear that the existing network of public lands and privately owned conserved lands forms much of the framework needed for such a system in Vermont. Future public land ownership for ecological protection should be targeted toward the smaller core reserve areas where the focus would be to maintain natural communities that have high levels of biological integrity. These core units would also provide the space and solitude necessary for accommodating many wilderness or backcountry recreation uses. The surrounding areas and connections between these core units could be protected by easements or other arrangements and would help maintain sustainable working forests, as well as Vermont's traditional working rural landscape.

Within this general approach, Agency land conservation efforts for ecological protection purposes combine a broad focus on ecosystems and natural communities with a narrower focus on individual species (i.e., rare, threatened, and endangered species, indicator species, game species), while paying particular attention to the need for low-elevation lands. (Additional information on this subject is provided in the inventory information contained within Appendix D of this report and within the "Ecological White Paper" contained in Volume II of this plan).

Specific ecological land conservation priorities for the Agency for which there is broad-based public support include:

A. Unique or Special Natural Areas: This category includes lands or interests in lands with unique or special biological features that are integral components of Vermont's natural heritage and warrant highest protection. Unique or special natural areas typically are small, clearly defined sites that contain important or noteworthy ecological resources. Specific land conservation priorities include:

- Exemplary or significant natural communities. Examples would include sandplain forests, clayplain forests, alpine areas, bogs, etc.
- Habitats for rare, threatened, and endangered species.

B. Critical Wildlife Habitat and Corridors: This category includes lands or interests in lands that serve essential wildlife functions such as critical habitats, established wildlife corridors, and riparian corridors. Critical habitats would include important deer wintering areas, waterfowl production areas, bobcat denning sites, etc. Often, such habitats are located within or are a part of identified wildlife corridors that provide connections between large expanses of undeveloped land. These corridors facilitate the genetic exchange of flora and fauna between large blocks of undeveloped habitat or core

areas needed to maintain viable and healthy populations. The high-elevation "Wildlife Corridor Area" in south-central Vermont located between the two units of the Green Mountain National Forest is a good example.

C. Connections and Corridors Between Blocks of Public Land: This category (along with the wildlife and riparian corridors in item B above) form the needed connections between existing blocks of public land, thereby greatly enhancing the ecological integrity and biodiversity potential of the system. Usually, these connections can be made across Vermont's rural working landscape and are compatible with sustainable forest management objectives.

Forest Resource Values and Priorities

In addition to providing recreation and wildlife habitat, forests are the very underpinning of Vermont's rural working landscape, with logging and milling serving as the economic base for many communities. At a minimum, the Agency must carefully consider the impact of its land conservation activities on the ability of our state's rural culture to survive. Additionally, such activities should complement and strengthen Vermont's rural economy. To the greatest extent possible, the Agency's land conservation efforts should seek to sustain Vermont's rural culture by keeping the state's forest industry viable on a sustainable basis and in an ecologically sound manner.

It has become increasingly clear that many properties owned in fee by the Agency are expected to provide values such as outdoor recreation opportunities and wildlife habitat while still providing timber resources, which can sometimes lead to conflicts. At the same time, with the majority of Vermont's woodlands in private ownership, well-maintained, privately owned forest land will continue to provide most of the state's timber resources through the stewardship of individual landowners.

Therefore, the Agency will not acquire in fee, tracts of forestland solely or primarily for the good of assuring a base for Vermont's forest-based economy. This marks a dramatic shift from the historical direction the State has taken in its land conservation efforts. Further, the Agency will not acquire productive, working forestland in fee unless absolutely necessary to protect recreational and/or ecological values otherwise classified as priorities within this plan. If fee acquisition of a working forest is ultimately required, the Agency will strive to acquire the minimum land area necessary for protection of such recreational and/or ecological values while managing the property in a manner that will preserve the working forest without undermining the other public values.

The Agency has come under criticism in the past for purchasing heavily cut-over lands. While there may be ample justification to acquire certain outstanding or strategic parcels that have been heavily cut, the Agency should be careful to avoid the perception of rewarding unsound forest management practices through such purchases. *Therefore, unless there are compelling resource values present that are classified as priorities within this plan or there are other extenuating circumstances, the Agency will avoid purchasing forestland that has been heavily cut-over.*

There are a few examples where the timber rights on Agency lands are held by a private interest. In certain instances, it may be desirable for the Agency to acquire these timber rights so that it can more effectively manage wildlife or other resource values on the property. A less expensive alternative to outright purchase of these timber rights that could work in many situations might be for the Agency to

simply acquire the right to more actively influence how (and when) these timber rights can be exercised.

The above notwithstanding, the Agency has a keen interest in keeping large blocks of forest in timber production as a means of maintaining rural economies, assuring continued low-impact recreational uses, protecting ecological values, and continuing traditional land uses. (See the "Forest Resource Values White Paper" in Volume II of this plan for more information). The use of working forest conservation easements offer a special opportunity for the Agency to work with landowners to maintain the viability of privately owned working forests.

A. Conservation Easements on Working Forests: Conservation easements offer the most appropriate and least expensive means of conserving working forests and they provide a means for the state to stretch its conservation dollars further. Such easements can ensure the continued, sustainable harvesting of timber resources from large blocks of working forest lands while ensuring that the following values inherent to large acreages of forest land are protected in a balanced manner in perpetuity:

- Timber Production
- Wildlife
- Fisheries
- Aesthetics
- Recreation
- Watershed Protection
- Prevention of Fragmentation

By purchasing specific easements on private land, the Agency can ensure the long-term productivity of the land and the continuation of traditional or compatible recreation access. Such agreements can provide lasting benefits for the wood products industry as well as the general public. This goal parallels the findings of the Northern Forest Lands Council, which stated, "For rural communities in the Northern Forest to be healthy and sound, they must have healthy and sustainably managed forests. Indeed, the two are interconnected."

In spite of their promise, the widespread use of conservation easements is a concern to some in the timber industry in Vermont. Some feel that these easements are overly restrictive and unduly limit a landowner's ability to manage the forest resource and harvest timber. On the other hand, it should be recognized that these easements are not imposed on a landowner but rather are negotiated agreements between a willing seller and buyer. *Nevertheless, in purchasing conservation easements on working forestland, the Agency will strive to use the minimal amount of restrictions necessary to protect the public's interest.* Also, because conservation easements represent a relatively new tool for conserving forestland values in Vermont, their use and effectiveness will continue to be monitored and assessed.

Additions to Agency Lands

A considerable public investment has been made in acquiring the 371,000 acres of land or conservation easements managed by the Agency of Natural Resources. Acquiring additional parcels that are adjacent or within existing Agency holdings and contain important public values or serve a specific purpose beyond just adding acreage is prudent policy and remains a high priority for the Agency. These

types of additions serve to protect the public investment made in adjacent state lands. By providing public access, facilitating more effective land management, or expanding the protection of natural resource values, these additions can greatly enhance the overall integrity and value of the State's existing conservation and recreation holdings. Specifically, additions to existing Agency lands that serve the following purposes are of highest priority to the Agency:

- Lands (or interests in lands) necessary for maintaining or enhancing the integrity of existing state holdings. (An example might be where a state wildlife management area includes only a portion of an important wetland complex or a state park includes only a portion of an important sand beach shoreline. The acquisition of the adjacent, privately owned wetland or beach areas would then be a priority).
- Lands such as inholdings, and other parcels that serve to consolidate or connect existing state holdings and contain important public values and/or facilitate more efficient Agency land management. (An inholding within a state forest that is served by a legal right-of-way across state land would be a good example).
- Parcels that enhance or facilitate public access to Agency lands. (An example might be a parcel of land served by legal access that is adjacent to a large block of state land that is not directly or immediately accessible to the public).
- Parcels that serve an identified facility, infrastructure, or program need of the Agency. (An example here might be a parcel needed for expansion of a state campground facility).

Project Evaluation Process

Within the context of the Lands Conservation Plan, the term "evaluation" refers to the process of comparing lands in order to determine their relative value and importance when making land acquisition and other related land transaction decisions. At its most fundamental level, any land evaluation system is essentially a two-step process. The first step is some type of assessment of a site's features and characteristics. The second step compares this assessment to other sites that have been considered and develop general land conservation priorities.

The Agency's "Project Evaluation Process" for assessing and making comparisons between different parcels of land provides a general indication of which parcels are the strongest contenders for Agency ownership. However, it is not meant to provide an absolute answer in this regard. Policy decisions (which by their very nature change over time and cannot easily be incorporated within the evaluation criteria) also affect the Agency's land conservation activities.

Although the evaluation process should provide some meaningful guidance to the Agency in comparing properties within a common acquisition category, it can be difficult or even misleading to make comparisons between different land types. Given the somewhat subjective nature of the evaluation process, comparing properties with vastly different conservation and recreation values (e.g., wetlands vs. trail corridor parcel) is much like comparing apples to oranges.

The following requirements were considered to be essential in developing a workable land evaluation process for the Agency:

- **Simple and Efficient** – The process should be simple and straightforward to use.
- **Flexibility** – The process should provide the Agency with flexibility to act in an appropriate and responsible manner.
- **Relationship to Purposes of and Minimum Standards for ANR Land Ownership** – The evaluation process must reflect the various purposes for which the Agency owns land and the minimum standards for Agency land ownership.
- **Relationship to Agency Land Acquisition Priorities** – The evaluation criteria must be strongly tied to the Agency's identified land acquisition priorities.
- **Considerations and Constraints** – The process must incorporate an evaluation of numerous considerations and restraints relating to a property's specific features, attributes, management requirements, and other factors.

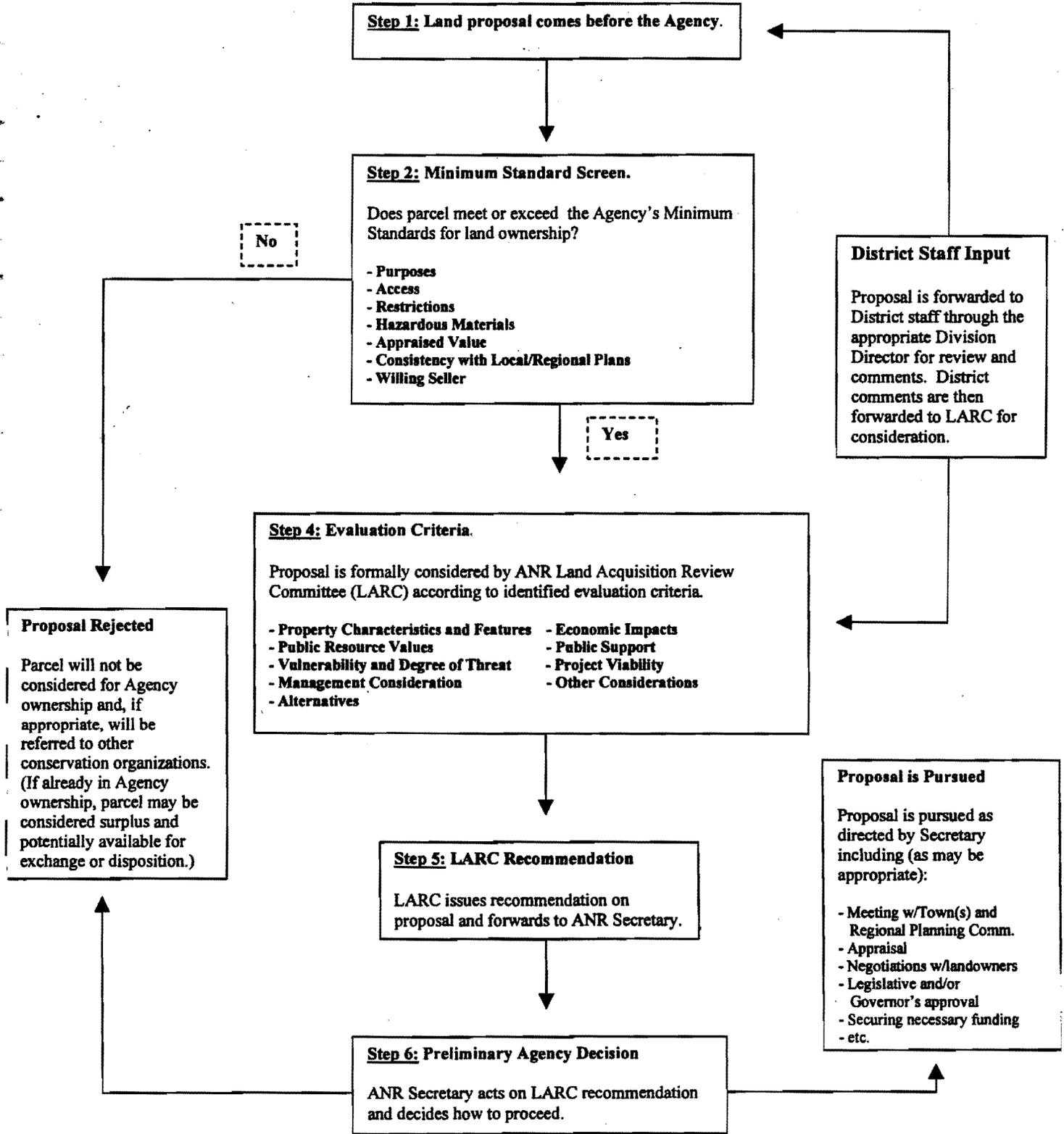
In light of these requirements, the Agency's proposed Project Evaluation Process includes five distinct steps which are graphically depicted in the schematic on the following page and further described below:

Step 1 - Proposal is brought before the Agency for consideration: Land proposals are brought to the attention of the Agency through a variety of means. Most typically, a landowner (or representative of the landowner) will contact the Agency with some land-related proposal. Usually, these are proposed sales or donations of land to the state, but can also be proposed land swaps or even the private purchase or lease of state land. Other land conservation proposals are pursued on a more proactive basis by the Agency or on behalf of the Agency by other conservation organizations.

Step 2 - Minimum Standards Screen: In order for a parcel of land to be considered for Agency acquisition, regardless of whether it is a proposed purchase, donation, or being offered in exchange, it must be demonstrated that the parcel meets or exceeds the Minimum Standards for State Ownership. (Note: For Agency lands proposed as surplus and potentially available for exchange or disposition, it must be demonstrated that they do *not* meet the minimum standards and serve *none* of the purposes for Agency land ownership).

The following "minimum standards" for Agency land ownership serve as an initial screen in evaluating land proposals that come before the Agency. It should be stressed that these standards are not absolute. There may be circumstances where there are compelling political or policy issues that warrant Agency consideration of parcels that do not measure up to these standards. Rather, the standards serve as general guidelines to use in determining whether a parcel of land should even be formally evaluated for Agency ownership. Conversely, these standards can also be used to determine whether existing parcels of Agency land can be considered "surplus" and available for exchange or disposition. In either case, however, these minimum standards only serve as an initial screen for identifying parcels that do not meet the basic criteria for Agency ownership. Further evaluation and review will be necessary to determine whether: 1) new parcels that meet or exceed these standards are a priority for Agency acquisition or; 2) existing Agency lands that do not meet these standards are suitable for exchange or disposition.

**Agency of Natural Resources
Internal Project Evaluation Process**



Minimum Standards for Agency Land Ownership:

- **Purposes:** The parcel must meaningfully serve at least one of the Agency's purposes for ownership:
 - Protect, maintain, and enhance ecological values and biological diversity.
 - Protect public waters and shore lands with important public values.
 - Protect important scenic and aesthetic values.
 - Provide outdoor recreation opportunities for the public.
 - Provide access to public lands and waters.
 - Provide areas for resource-related research, education, and demonstration projects.
 - Provide forest products.
 - Provide flood control.

(Note: See Appendix C – “A Context for State Land Conservation” for more detail on Purposes of Agency Land Ownership).

- **Access:** Usually, a parcel is of limited value if the Agency cannot obtain adequate legal (and in certain cases, physical) access. Unless the parcel offers some compelling state benefits worthy of state protection even without access, the Agency will not consider acquiring lands without legal access.
- **Restrictions:** Certain deed restrictions can dramatically affect a property's usefulness in achieving various conservation or recreation objectives. The Agency will not consider acquiring a property with deed restrictions that would unduly conflict with state objectives. The Agency will also be very careful to avoid acquiring land with the timber rights reserved unless there are adequate provisions in place for ensuring responsible forest management. (Additionally, the Agency will not consider the purchase of hunting rights on lands in private ownership as experience has shown this to be a poor substitute for fee ownership).
- **Hazardous Materials:** The Agency will not consider acquiring properties that contain identified hazardous waste sites or are known to contain hazardous materials due to the high clean-up costs and liability associated with owning such sites. Exceptions will only be made if there are compelling benefits to public ownership and adequate provisions for cleaning up the site can be secured.
- **Appraised Value:** As a general policy, the Agency will not pay more for a property than its appraised market value.
- **Compliance with Local/Regional Plans:** The Agency will not pursue land acquisition projects that are in direct contradiction to approved town and regional plans. Exceptions to this standard will only be considered if it can be demonstrated that the parcel contains public resource values that are clearly significant from a statewide perspective and that there is an overwhelming state interest at stake.
- **Willing Seller:** The Agency does not have the legal authority to condemn land for conservation and recreation purposes and as a matter of policy, will only acquire property for such purposes from willing sellers.

Step 3 – Evaluation Criteria: If a parcel meets or exceeds the minimum standards test, then it can be formally reviewed and evaluated by the Agency's Land Acquisition Review Committee (LARC). This inter-agency advisory committee is charged with reviewing all land-related offers that come before the Agency (i.e., proposed sales, donations, land swaps, etc.). LARC issues a recommendation that is then acted upon by the Secretary of the Agency. (More information on LARC can be found in the "Process Work Group White Paper" found in volume II of this plan). The following considerations or constraints shall be a part of LARC's review process for all land proposals that come before the Committee:

Property Characteristics and Features

A. Locational Criteria:

The location of a parcel must be considered in terms of its geographical distribution and proximity to existing recreation and conservation lands, proximity to population centers, and adjacent land ownership and use. Questions to consider include:

- What is the geographic distribution of similar land types?
- What is the parcel's proximity to existing recreation and conservation lands?
- What is the parcel's proximity to users and population centers?
- What is the parcel's proximity to important natural resource features?

B. Parcel Size and Configuration:

The parcel should be of a sufficient size and configuration to offer needed protection of important recreation or conservation resource values. Questions to consider in the evaluation process include:

- Is the parcel's size appropriate for intended purposes?
- Does the parcel's shape adequately serve Agency objectives – does it pose any management or access issues?

C. Structures:

Human-made structures (such as buildings, dams, and bridges) often carry high operational, maintenance, and liability costs. Unless such structures are either incidental improvements to a larger property or where the interest of the public would clearly be served, the Agency should generally avoid acquiring properties with these types of improvements. Specific questions to consider include:

- Does the parcel contains any buildings, bridges, or dams?
- If structures are present, are they in good repair, do they serve an important Agency purpose, and can provisions for on-going maintenance and operations be provided for?

(Note: In light of public safety and liability issues associated with many privately owned dams, the Agency is currently reassessing its historical position which generally cautioned against

Agency acquisition of additional dam properties. The Agency is now considering a new approach to this issue in which it would play a stronger role in acquiring, maintaining, and where warranted, removing certain dam structures. If and when such a policy is adopted by the Agency, the Lands Conservation Plan would be revised accordingly).

D. Past History and Encumbrances:

A basic understanding of a parcel's history and prior use are important factors to consider when evaluating a property for state ownership and can reveal the potential for the presence of both undesirable elements (e.g., hazardous wastes, solid waste, heavily cut-over timberland, etc.) and desirable elements (e.g., historic resources, etc.). Another important consideration relates to the effect any easements or other known property encumbrances might have on important resource values. Consideration should be given to the following questions:

- Is the parcel's past history consistent with Agency's purposes - does it pose any known management or liability concerns?
- Is the parcel encumbered by any easements, restrictions, etc., that unduly affect or detract from the property's primary recreation and/or natural resource values?

Public Resource Values

A. Purposes for Agency Land Ownership:

Parcels must meaningfully serve at least one Agency purpose (see Appendix C) in order to be evaluated. Specific considerations include:

- Does the parcel serve more than one purpose of ANR land ownership?

B. Relationship to ANR Land Conservation Priorities:

Strongest consideration in the evaluation process will be given to those properties that meet identified ANR land conservation needs or priorities. Questions to consider include:

- Does the parcel directly relate to identified land conservation priorities as described within the ANR Lands Conservation Plan?
- Is the parcel within an area identified as being of statewide or regional conservation significance?

C. Other Considerations:

While not formally identified as an Agency land acquisition priority, certain parcels may nonetheless contain important recreation and/or conservation values worthy of Agency consideration. The evaluation process recognizes this and includes the following considerations:

- Does the property contain important scenic, ecological, geologic, wildlife or other values worthy of state protection?

- Does the property provide important outdoor recreation opportunities to the public?
- Does the property contain important cultural and/or historic features?
- Is the property physically suited for intended development purposes (if future recreational development is anticipated)?
- Does the property contain important economic potential or resource features consistent with the goals and purposes of Agency land ownership?

Vulnerability and Degree of Threat

A. Threats to Parcel:

There are a number of activities that could pose potential threats to a property's recreation or conservation values. For example, when a property's use changes from undeveloped forest to residential subdivision, the land's recreational and ecological values may decline or disappear altogether. Or certain land management practices may threaten the integrity of important conservation values. Understanding a property's susceptibility to such changes and the potential for such threats is a key part of LARC's evaluation process. **However, the Agency does not acquire property simply because it is threatened.** The property must contain resource features that warrant state protection in the first place. Specific questions to consider in the evaluation include:

- What types of activities constitute threats to the property's resource values?
- What resource values are at stake?

B. Vulnerability of Parcel:

Understanding how vulnerable a parcel may be to certain threats is as important as understanding the nature of specific threats. Questions to consider include:

- How likely and imminent are any of these threats?
- What is the overall degree of threat?

Management and Administrative Considerations

A. Land Management Capacity and Costs:

The Agency **must** carefully consider the land management responsibilities associated with each property it is considering for acquisition. While no property comes without ownership costs, certain properties - due to their location, history of use (or abuse), dangerous features, or other special characteristics - can be expensive or troublesome to manage effectively. In evaluating a land proposal, the Agency should consider whether the corresponding management responsibilities can be handled within existing administrative and budgetary constraints. Questions to consider include:

- Does the Agency have the capacity (staff and finances) to manage the property for the desired objectives?

- Are there unusual management concerns or excessive management or stewardship costs associated with the parcel that the Agency should consider?
- Can these management costs realistically be included within the cost of acquisition or otherwise be provided for?

B. Property Administration:

Property administration costs include survey, boundary maintenance, resolution of legal disputes, administration of property agreements, and other costs. In evaluating a property for state ownership, associated potential administration costs should be carefully considered. The Agency should avoid acquiring a property with excessively high administrative costs unless it provides some compelling public benefits and adequate provisions can be made for handling these anticipated costs. Some questions to consider include:

- Is the property surveyed? If not, will the Agency need to survey the property? If so, can provisions be made to include the cost of the property survey within the cost of acquisition?
- Are there any known title issues (i.e., boundary disputes, encroachments, restrictions, etc.) that would add to the Agency's costs of administering this property and/or affect the Agency's intended use of the property?

Alternatives

A. Alternatives to Agency Ownership:

In evaluating a property for potential state acquisition, the Agency must carefully consider whether there are other public or private organizations better positioned to take the lead in conserving the parcel. For example, the Agency often refers land offers within the Green Mountain National Forest Proclamation Boundary to the U.S. Forest Service, but will only pursue the purchase of a property within the Forest Service boundary if it fits an identified need as identified in this plan, and if state ownership is the only realistic conservation alternative. Other properties, by virtue of their location or resource characteristics, may more directly serve the objectives of other conservation organizations and should be referred accordingly. Additionally, there may be other alternatives for conserving parcel that are more appropriate (i.e., voluntary programs, regulatory measures, landowner agreements, etc.).

Economic Impacts

A. Economic Burdens and Benefits:

State land acquisitions can sometimes impact local and regional economies. This impact can be positive or negative, depending on the circumstances. Understanding the financial implications of potential Agency land transactions, both on the community and the Agency, is an important part of the evaluation process. Questions to consider include:

- Would state acquisition affect any sector of the local or regional economy? If so, which ones and how?

- How would state acquisition affect surrounding land values?
- Would state acquisition negatively impact farmland and/or agriculture in the community?
- What are the short and long-term economic implications of state acquisition?

B. PILOT

Agency land acquisitions impose an on-going financial burden in that the Agency is required to make "payments in lieu of taxes" (PILOT) to communities in which it owns land.

Understandably, these PILOT payments are of great concern to towns because they depend on property tax revenues to fund local budgets. Questions to consider include:

- What will the state's tax payment to the community be if it were to acquire this property? How will this affect the community's tax base?
- Can the Agency absorb the additional PILOT costs associated with owning this property?

Public Support

A. Local and Regional Reaction:

In evaluating a proposal, the Agency must carefully consider the reaction of local and regional officials and area residents and gauge the anticipated level of support for the proposal. (It should be stressed that formal notification and public involvement with affected communities is initiated by the Agency *after* the proposal has been evaluated by the Agency and a preliminary decision to further pursue the proposal has been made. The results of this public process can dramatically affect the direction the proposal takes at this point or whether it is pursued at all by the Agency.) Questions to consider as a part of the initial evaluation process include:

- What concerns or issues are likely to be raised by the public if the proposal is formally pursued by the Agency?
- Is the town/region likely to support the proposal? If not, what are their concerns likely to be?

Project Viability

A. Potential for Successful Completion:

It makes little sense for the Agency to spend time pursuing a proposal that, because of various factors, is not likely to move successfully forward to completion. In assessing the viability of a proposal, some questions to consider include:

- What is the likelihood of this project being successfully negotiated and receiving full funding support from project funders?
- What are the landowner's expectations regarding price, terms, and timeline for acquisition? Are these terms consistent with Agency objectives and in line with Agency experience with similar properties?

- Are there other difficult or seemingly insurmountable problems associated with the proposal?

Other Considerations

A. Extenuating Circumstances:

Sometimes there are other special issues (i.e., legislative directives, policy considerations, unique circumstances, etc.) that should be considered in evaluating the proposal. Questions to consider include:

- Are there any special legislative or political issues or directives that relate to this proposal?
- Does the proposal pose any special policy considerations?
- Are there any other unique or extenuating circumstances associated with this proposal?

Step 4 – LARC Recommendation: Based on this evaluation process, along with input from ANR district staff, the Agency's Land Acquisition Review Committee develops a formal recommendation on a land proposal. This recommendation can be either to reject the proposal or to pursue it in some fashion. Based on the proposal's evaluation, LARC usually assigns a relative priority to the proposal and identifies a "lead" department as a part of the recommendation. This recommendation is then forwarded to the Agency Secretary for a preliminary Agency decision.

Step 5 – Preliminary Agency Decision: The Agency Secretary considers LARC's recommendation and decides how to proceed. (It should be stressed that the Secretary's decision to pursue a proposal represents only a preliminary Agency action at this time. Negotiations, funding issues, public input, and other considerations can all affect the final outcome of the land conservation proposal).

IV. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND RELATED ACTIONS

A successful strategy for implementing the Lands Conservation Plan must focus on specific actions that the Agency can take to better serve the public interest in the provision of recreation lands and public open space. These include the need for better data and inventory information; improved coordination between the Agency and local and regional authorities and its many conservation partners; and other issues related to the Agency's process for evaluating land conservation proposals and carrying out specific land transaction activities. This chapter sets forth policy recommendations and related actions that are intended to address these issues and guide the Agency as it seeks to fulfill its land conservation responsibilities.

Policy Recommendations

The policy recommendations summarized below describe broad initiatives the Agency will implement and incorporate into its land conservation program. These recommendations are supported by the results of various public outreach activities of the Lands Conservation Plan, including interviews with individual stakeholders, the 1997 Lands Conservation Plan Survey, focus group discussions, and input from the public comment period on the draft plan. Related actions corresponding to each of the individual policy recommendations are provided in the tables at the end of this chapter. Background information on the policy recommendations and related actions are provided in the "Process White Paper" developed as a part of the Lands Conservation Plan and provided in Volume II of the plan.

1. GIS Inventory and Information – The Agency's ability to intelligently evaluate land proposals, decide on future state land conservation priorities, and make informed management decisions for lands under its jurisdiction depends in large part on accurate and up-to-date resource inventory information. Increasingly, these databases are already in GIS format or easily lend themselves to this system. The Agency must take maximum advantage of this technology and work to fully incorporate its use within its land conservation program.

- **The Agency, as a part of its land conservation program, will make a concerted, coordinated, and sustained effort to maximize the use of GIS in gathering, developing, and maintaining important resource inventories.**

2. Cost of Land Management – The costs of land ownership just begins with the purchase. Agency lands have on-going and often substantial management and administrative costs associated with them. Understanding these costs *prior* to acquiring additional properties and exploring means of reducing or recovering these costs is an essential part of the Agency's land conservation program.

- **The Agency will identify critical, short-term land management and administrative needs and associated costs for lands proposed for Agency ownership and will develop a strategy for meeting these needs prior to acquiring new properties.**

- **The Agency will identify long-term land management and administrative needs for ANR lands within its long-range management planning process for ANR lands and will actively seek funding from a variety of sources to carry out necessary land management and administrative activities.**

3. Relationship With Communities – The Agency's land conservation activities affect and are of great interest to the communities in which they are located. Communities can quickly grasp the potential benefits of a proposed state land transaction within their community and represent potential land conservation partners in this regard. Conversely, they also may have some legitimate concerns and questions that the Agency must work to address prior to proceeding with a land proposal. In either case, the Agency has an important responsibility to improve its relationship and rapport with local communities by actively involving them in its land conservation efforts and providing relevant information in a timely manner.

- **The Agency will strive to be a good neighbor to communities in which it owns land and will involve communities on a regular and proactive basis to discuss land conservation issues of mutual interest and concern.**

4. Relationship with Regional Planning Commissions – Regional planning commissions are uniquely situated to provide a link between the Agency and municipalities. This is especially true for land conservation issues – a topic in which both communities and the RPCs share a keen interest with the state. The Agency has a responsibility to forge a closer working relationship with RPCs to further land conservation planning and to coordinate land conservation activities.

- **The Agency will make a concerted effort to expand and improve its relationship with the regional planning commissions and will actively seek their advice, input, and expertise on land conservation issues and initiatives of mutual concern.**

5. Public Education – Continued support for land conservation depends, in part, on a public that understands the increasingly complex topics and issues that surround this subject. These topics include, among other things, the use of conservation easements, biodiversity issues, the concept of a working forest, economic impact of land conservation activities, the effects of conservation lands on property tax revenues, land management costs, and many other issues. The Agency should play a major role in fostering an informed citizenry in this regard.

- **The Agency will develop and include within its overall conservation and education program a comprehensive "land conservation component" that addresses the public education needs outlined within the Lands Conservation Plan. (Related public education activities pertaining to forestland issues are specifically addressed within the 1999 Vermont Forest Resources Plan).**

6. ANR Land Conservation and the Economy – Agency land transactions can result in both positive and negative economic impacts to a region. Understanding the nature of these potential impacts is an important factor when considering new state land acquisitions or other proposed land transactions. The Agency must become more aware of and sensitive to the economic consequences of its land conservation activities.

- **The Agency will carefully consider the economic impacts of proposed land conservation activities and will tailor projects to minimize economic burdens and maximize economic benefits in a manner that is compatible with conservation goals.**

7. **Land Acquisition Review Committee** – The evaluation of land conservation proposals that come before the Agency rests with the Agency's Land Acquisition Review Committee (LARC). LARC is an advisory committee that reviews and evaluates all land offers that come before the Agency. LARC's recommendations are then forwarded to the Agency Secretary who, in turn, decides how to proceed.

- **The Agency will continue to utilize the Land Acquisition Review Committee in evaluating land offers that come before the Agency and in implementing its land conservation program.**

8. **Appraisals** – Appraisals form the basis for the Agency's purchase price for new acquisitions. Appraisals are also an instrumental part of negotiating Agency land exchanges. It follows that the Agency's land conservation activities should be supported by uniform, high-quality appraisals that are consistently applied to specific situations. While appraisals prepared for the Agency are generally of high quality, there is no standardized appraisal procedure within the Agency to guide their development.

- **The Agency, as a general policy, will not pay more for a property than its appraised fair market value.**
- **The Agency will ensure that appraisals that are conducted on behalf of the Agency conform to the highest applicable standards and are not misused or misrepresented by others.**

9. **Identification, Exchange, and Disposition of Surplus Agency Lands** – Surplus lands can be defined as Agency lands that fail to meet the minimum standards for Agency land ownership (see Appendix C) and do not otherwise serve the Agency's mission or purposes for owning land. Ideally, surplus Agency lands should be identified and made available for other purposes through exchange or disposition. The Agency's conservation holdings have been acquired over the course of nearly a century. It is likely that some of these holdings would at least not qualify as high-priority acquisitions if they were being offered to the Agency today. The Agency should remain open to the idea of disposing of surplus lands through exchange and other means as a means of furthering the public interest and enhancing the conservation values of its holdings.

- **The Agency will work to systematically identify lands under its jurisdiction that could be considered surplus to its overall mission and potentially available for exchange or disposition.**
- **The Agency will utilize land exchanges in a judicious manner to enhance conservation values and to provide important public benefits. Ideally, only those properties that are identified by the Agency as surplus will be considered for exchange. (However, the Agency may elect to consider other lands for exchange on a case-by-case basis through LARC).**

- **In general, the exchange of surplus Agency lands for lands with greater conservation and/or recreation value is preferable over the outright sale of Agency lands.**

10. Donations – Over the years, Vermont has benefited greatly from the generosity of numerous landowners who have unselfishly donated thousands of acres to the state for conservation and recreation purposes. As Vermont's population continues to age, an increasing number of landowners are expressing an interest in donating their land to the state.

- **The Agency will only consider accepting land donations that serve an identified Agency purpose, meet or exceed the minimum standards for state ownership, and do not impose significant management or liability concerns.**

11. Evaluating and Implementing the Lands Conservation Plan – The Lands Conservation Plan is intended to be a dynamic, flexible document that can be readily adjusted to respond to changing conditions. In developing the plan, it is important to establish a process whereby the plan can be formally evaluated and updated on a regular basis.

- **The Agency will work through its Land Acquisition Review Committee and its conservation partners to evaluate the Lands Conservation Plan and monitor associated implementation activities on a regular and routine basis.**

Summary of Related Actions

The tables that follow summarize specific actions the Agency will take to further its land conservation program. These actions are directly related to the eleven Policy Recommendations discussed above and are numbered accordingly. In addition to describing various actions to be taken, the tables identify lead and other cooperating organizations; describe certain barriers to implementation; outline the status of the recommended actions and identify proposed startup dates; and define a strategy for carrying out the actions. Collectively, these actions serve as a useful workplan for the Agency's land conservation program.

Summary of Related Actions

Related Actions	Lead Organization	Cooperating Organization	Barriers to Implementation	Status and Startup Date	Strategy for Success
I. GIS INVENTORY and INFORMATION					
1a. Participate in the development and maintenance of the Conserved Lands GIS database for Vermont. Include perimeter boundaries and attributes for all state land holdings within GIS database.	ANR GIS Office, Lands Administration Division	UVM Spatial Analysis Lab, VCGI, public agencies and private conservation organizations	Lack of ANR GIS staff, deficient computer hardware and software, lack of training, coordination difficulties between organizations.	Preliminary database developed by UVM but needs to be continually updated. Ongoing project.	Work to secure the necessary staff, training, equipment and software to ensure the state lands portion of the Conserved Lands GIS database is maintained and updated on a regular basis.
1b. Develop new GIS data layers for important conservation and recreation resources and maintain/update existing GIS data layers.	ANR GIS Office, FPR, FW, DEC	UVM Spatial Analysis Lab, VCGI, public agencies and private conservation organizations	Current staffing and funding levels limit development of new data layers. Lack of systematic process for updating and maintaining many existing data layers.	Many data layers already fully or partially developed and in use. Maintenance of existing data layers is ongoing. Development of new data layers will be dependent on staffing and funding levels.	Work with VCGI, academic institutions, regional planning commissions and conservation groups to explore creative means of developing and maintaining needed data layers.
1c. Develop more detailed and accurate resource inventories of existing Agency lands for long-range management planning purposes.	ANR GIS Office, FPR, FW, DEC	VCGI, other public agencies and private conservation organizations.	Current staffing and funding levels limit capacity to develop detailed resource inventories.	This is an on-going process that is a part of the long-range management planning process for ANR lands.	Continue to seek funding for developing enhanced resource inventories for ANR lands.
COST of LAND MANAGEMENT					
2a. ANR should seek to fully recover its costs of administering its leases, licenses and special use permits through the terms of these agreements.	ANR Lands Administration Division	Legislature, leasees, licensees, and permittees	None.	1998 Legislature requires ANR to develop realistic pricing schedule for all fees imposed for use of state lands by 2000.	Develop and implement a realistic pricing schedule as required by the Legislature.

Related Actions (cont'd)	Lead Organization	Cooperating Organization	Barriers to Implementation	Status and Startup Date	Strategy for Success
2b. Develop an effective "stewardship program" for monitoring and enforcing ANR conservation easements. The stewardship program should comply with Standard 14 of the Land Trust Alliance Standards and Practices.	ANR Lands Administration Division	VLT, TNC, VHCB	No current funding source for ANR Stewardship program.	Development of interim procedures for existing ANR conservation easements should occur in 2000. Formal stewardship program should be developed in 2001.	ANR conservation easements are routinely and effectively monitored for compliance on consistent basis. Corrective action is taken to resolve non-compliance issues.
2c. Identify the physical and operational factors at existing state parks that trigger high management costs and use these factors in evaluating new state park acquisition proposals.	FPR		Difficult to devote significant staff time to this recommendation in near future.	Should be done as a follow-up to state park infrastructure study authorized by 1998 legislature. Begin in 2000.	Work with Parks staff in developing a report which outlines these factors and incorporate their use within the LARC process.
2d. Develop "minimum standards" for state land management.	FPR, FW		None.	Current minimum management standards vary from District to District and have not been developed in formal fashion. Ongoing.	Should be done as part of the Agency's current effort to redefine its long-range management planning process for state lands.
2e. Identify all significant land management costs associated with proposed state land acquisition projects and incorporate these estimates within a "preliminary land management budget." Seek to recover these costs up front at the time of acquisition.	FPR, FW	VHCB, Legislature, private funding sources	Limitations on use of funding from traditional funding sources.	Costs of survey are routinely included as a part of overall state acquisition budget. To a more limited extent, the same is true for costs of planning and road and trail stabilization. Ongoing and expanding effort.	Incorporate preliminary land management budget within the overall project budget for new state land acquisitions. Seek both traditional and non-traditional funding sources to cover short-term land management costs.

Related Actions (cont'd)	Lead Organization	Cooperating Organization	Barriers to Implementation	Status and Startup Date	Strategy for Success
3. RELATIONSHIP WITH COMMUNITIES					
3a. Inform all municipalities of changes made in state's Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) program as a result of Act 60.	ANR Lands Administration Division	VLCT, PVR	PILOT provisions of Act 60 have been revised by 1998 legislature and are still evolving.	ACT 60 PILOT provisions are being phased in over a period of years and may be subject to further changes by the Legislature.	Work with VLCT to develop and distribute a summary of Act 60 PILOT provisions to towns.
3b. Provide accurate estimates to municipalities regarding the financial impact proposed state land acquisitions would have on local revenues.	ANR Lands Administration Division	PVR	Difficult to provide definitive estimates because key variables used in calculating state tax payments may be unavailable or may change at time of acquisition.	The Agency presently attempts to provide these estimates to towns. After PILOT provisions are fully implemented, ANR can develop better estimates.	Closely monitor changes made to PILOT provisions and review past trends in payments to communities in making estimates.
3c. Monitor the financial effect Act 60 PILOT provisions have on communities and work with the legislature to insure any proposed changes are in the best interest of communities and do not serve as a disincentive to land conservation.	ANR	VLCT	None.	Monitoring can begin in 1999 and should continue for at least several years in order to discern trends and identify problem areas.	Track ANR PILOT payment to communities and use this information to identify problem areas that need to be resolved.
3d. Appoint a municipal official to serve on the ANR Land Acquisition Review Committee (LARC).	ANR	-	None.	LARC is presently composed of representatives from ANR (7) and AOT(2). Appoint municipal representative in 2000.	Approach VLCT and ask them to appoint a local official to serve on LARC.

Related Actions (cont'd)	Lead Organization	Cooperating Organization	Barriers to Implementation	Status and Startup Date	Strategy for Success
3e. ANR should inform, and if so requested, meet with affected communities <i>as soon as possible</i> to solicit input on proposed land conservation transactions. At the same time, ANR must respect the landowner's need for confidentiality and not divulge certain details until the appropriate time.	ANR		Early notification to towns of potential acquisition projects can be difficult due to the need to maintain a level of confidentiality and trust with the involved parties.	Implement immediately. Ongoing.	Inform landowner(s) of need to meet with Town as early as possible and invite them to attend meeting with Town. Utilize Town's ability to meet in executive session to discuss real estate matters.
3f. ANR should not pursue land conservation proposals over the opposition of local selectboards. Exceptions to this rule should only be made in rare circumstances for projects that are clearly of statewide importance.	ANR		Political, administrative and/or management issues can sometimes overshadow local concerns.	Implement immediately. Ongoing.	Involve communities early on in the process, attempt to address their concerns up front. Utilize local input in crafting the proposal and in making the decision to proceed.
4. RELATIONSHIP WITH REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSIONS					
4a. Develop a formal operating agreement and relationship with regional planning commissions in regard to state land conservation activities to provide increased compatibility with regional and town plans and rural economic development plans.	ANR	RPC's, Vermont Association of Planning and Development Commissions	Staffing limitations and other more pressing priorities at both the Agency and RPC levels can sometimes limit coordination. Also, RPC's have varying levels of interest in state land conservation activities.	ANR is currently attempting to develop a cooperative agreement with the RPC's on a broad array of natural resource issues. Ongoing project.	Incorporate land conservation issues within the broader cooperative agreement currently being discussed between ANR and the regional planning commissions.
4b. Coordinate development and sharing of GIS information with RPC's.	ANR GIS Office	RPC's, UVM Spatial Analysis Lab, state colleges	None.	Ongoing.	Spell out this relationship within cooperative agreement discussed in 4a above.

Related Actions (cont'd)	Lead Organization	Cooperating Organization	Barriers to Implementation	Status and Startup Date	Strategy for Success
5. PUBLIC EDUCATION					
5a. Coordinate information and outreach activities on state land conservation issues and priorities with other groups and organizations.	ANR	Public and non-profit conservation organizations, conservation and education organizations	Differing needs and objectives of the various environmental education organizations could limit the degree to which outreach activities can be coordinated.	Very little coordination of this type has occurred. While some activities are on-going, ANR should develop proposal for coordinated public outreach effort in 2001.	Identify ANR public information needs for land conservation and share this information with related groups to explore opportunities for cooperative educational programs.
5b. Develop "information sheets" for public dissemination on ANR land conservation activities and priorities.	ANR Lands Administration Division	-	None.	Very little information of this type has been developed to date. Begin in 2000.	Begin developing fact sheets, which address commonly asked questions.
5c. Further develop and expand the state lands website on the Agency's home page and provide links to related sites.	ANR	-	None.	Some information already exists, but needs to be updated and expanded. Ongoing effort.	Work with ANR Information Systems staff to expand and regularly update state lands website.
6. ANR LAND CONSERVATION and the ECONOMY					
6a. Consider hiring ANR staff economist or retaining a consulting economist to analyze the economic impacts of state land conservation activities.	ANR	-	Funding limitations and hiring restrictions.	Ongoing, long-term effort.	Develop a proposal and associated budget for providing the necessary economic analysis. Present to the Agency and potential funding sources.
6b. Develop partnerships with business community, academic institutions, regional planning commissions and other groups to foster economic benefits on specific ANR land conservation projects.	ANR	Agency of Commerce and Development, universities, RPCs, business groups	None.	While not done in a systematic manner, the Agency has developed effective partnerships on specific land projects. Ongoing.	Look for opportunities to develop partnerships on a case-by-case basis as may be appropriate.

Related Actions (cont'd)	Lead Organization	Cooperating Organization	Barriers to Implementation	Status and Startup Date	Strategy for Success
7. LAND ACQUISITION REVIEW COMMITTEE					
7a. Develop annual land conservation objectives and workplan for ANR.	LARC	Other land conservation agencies and groups in VT	None.	Currently done on informal basis with little coordination with other conservation groups. Begin in 2000.	Develop plan and coordinate activities with other land conservation groups.
7b. Develop annual report on ANR land conservation activities.	ANR Lands Administration Division	-	Other demands on staff time.	ANR currently maintains lists of properties acquired on an irregular and as-needed basis but has not incorporated this information into an annual report on ANR land conservation activities. Begin in 1999.	Develop annual report as a "companion document" to annual workplan (see action 7a above).
7c. Develop computer database of LARC cases.	ANR Lands Administration Division	-	Lack of staff time to enter cases into database.	LARC cases (over 1300) are maintained in traditional paper files but have not been computerized. Develop database in 2000. Data entry ongoing.	Identify needs and create framework for developing a database. Devote necessary staff time for development of database.
8. APPRAISALS					
8a. Establish a formal, standardized appraisal procedure for all ANR land conservation transaction activities.	ANR Lands Administration Division	Other public and non-profit land conservation organizations, private, independent fee appraisers	None.	ANR appraisal process currently lacks consistency between projects and across departments. Begin in 2001.	Begin development of interim ANR appraisal policies and convene a task group of appraisal experts to discuss issues and develop draft appraisal procedure.

Related Actions (cont'd)	Lead Organization	Cooperating Organization	Barriers to Implementation	Status and Startup Date	Strategy for Success
8b. Address the problem of local listers utilizing ANR-commissioned appraisals and land purchases as a basis for unfairly adjusting the assessed value of adjacent properties in the Town.	ANR	Independent appraisers, listers, PVR, forestland owners	Potential legal obstacles that would need to be overcome.	Sometimes, listers have used a recent state land purchase as a "comp" to upwardly adjust the assessed value of adjacent forestland, creating an additional tax burden for forestland owners. There may be instances where this practice unfairly penalizes landowners. Begin in 1999.	Convene a special task group to identify the issues and potential solutions to this problem as a part of developing ANR appraisal procedure identified in 8a above.
9. IDENTIFICATION, EXCHANGE and DISPOSITION of SURPLUS LANDS					
9a. ANR should develop a formal policy and procedures for the disposition of surplus lands under its jurisdiction.	ANR	-	Public sentiment is largely against the outright disposal of ANR lands.	Sale of ANR lands has occurred infrequently and is inherently controversial. In general, land exchanges are preferable to outright sale. Begin in 2001.	Review disposition policies of other conservation agencies and organizations in drafting ANR policy and procedures.
9b. ANR should identify lands within each management unit that could be considered surplus to its mission and potentially available for exchange or disposition.	ANR	-	Adverse public sentiment.	This should be a component of the Agencies long-range management planning process. Ongoing.	Establish criteria for ANR lands to be considered surplus and incorporate the identification of these lands as an element of future long-range management planning for ANR lands.

Related Actions (cont'd)	Lead Organization	Cooperating Organization	Barriers to Implementation	Status and Startup Date	Strategy for Success
9c. ANR should develop a formal policy on land exchanges as a guide to evaluating future land exchange proposals.	ANR		None.	ANR's informal policy on land exchanges is that they must be heavily weighted in favor of the state. This philosophy should be expanded on in developing formal Agency policy. Begin in 2000.	Develop as a specific component of action 9a above.
9d. Many ANR lands located within the Green Mountain National Forest Proclamation boundary should continue to be considered for possible exchange or sale to the U.S. Forest Service.	ANR	U.S. Forest Service	Legal restrictions associated with certain state parcels can make it difficult to convey the parcel to the Forest Service. Adverse public sentiment due to different management philosophies.	ANR has completed several exchanges w/ the Forest Service in the past to consolidate respective boundaries. Parcels should be considered on case-by-case basis with plenty of public involvement. Ongoing.	Continue to explore opportunities with Forest Service and address the specific issues as a part of the policies and procedures developed in 9a and 9c above.
9e. Develop formal agreements with other state agencies on disposition of state land.	ANR	AOT, State Buildings	Other demands on staff time.	The development of an agreement with State buildings on this issue has been identified as a need by the Agency. Begin in 2000.	Review land disposition policies of other state agencies; and develop consistent policies that ensure that state lands proposed for disposition are offered to ANR early on in process.

Related Actions (cont'd)	Lead Organization	Cooperating Organization	Barriers to Implementation	Status and Startup Date	Strategy for Success
10. DONATIONS					
10a. ANR should develop policies and procedures on donating land to the state and will actively encourage and solicit appropriate land donations from willing landowners.	ANR	Non-profit conservation organizations	None.	The Agency has no clear guidelines or policies to assist landowners in this regard and has not been proactive in encouraging land donations from property owners in the past. Long-term, ongoing project.	Develop and distribute information sheet on topic for landowners as a part of its public educational program (see action 5b above).
11. EVALUATING and UPDATING the LANDS CONSERVATION PLAN					
11a. ANR should initiate and convene a "Lands Conservation Forum" on a regular basis with its working partners in land conservation to coordinate land conservation activities, evaluate progress, and share information and ideas.	ANR	VLT, TNC, VHCB, and other conservation organizations	Other demands on staff time.	Begin in 2000.	Convene periodic forum with other conservation organizations to discuss and share items of mutual interest and concern.
11b. ANR Annual Report on Lands Conservation Activities (see 7b above) should include evaluation of progress on implementing recommendations contained within Lands Conservation Plan.	FPR Lands Administrative Division	-	None.	Begin in 2000.	Use annual report to help ensure actions are followed through and acted on in a timely and appropriate manner.

Key for Lead and Cooperating Organizations:

ANR - VT Agency of Natural Resources
AOT - VT Agency of Transportation
DEC - VT Department of Environmental Conservation
FPR - VT Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation
FW - VT Department of Fish and Wildlife
LARC - ANR Land Acquisition Review Committee
PVR - Vermont Division of Property Valuation and Review

RPC - Regional Planning Commissions
TNC - The Nature Conservancy
UVM - University of Vermont
VCGI - Vermont Center for Geographic Information
VLCT - Vermont League of Cities and Towns
VLT - Vermont Land Trust
VHCB - Vermont Housing and Conservation Bd.

APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

A number of terms have been used throughout the Lands Conservation Plan. For the purposes of this plan, these terms are defined as follows.

- Bargain Sale** Sale of a property below its appraised value.
- Biodiversity** The variety of plants and animals, their interrelationships, and the biological and physical systems, communities, and landscapes in which they exist.
- Biophysical Region** A region with shared characteristics of climate, geology, soils, and natural vegetation. There are currently eight biophysical regions in Vermont.
- Conservation** The careful protection, planned management, and use of natural resources to prevent their depletion, destruction, or waste.
- Conservation Easement** A legal interest in some rights on a parcel of land that can be conveyed to another party and is designed and intended to keep the property undeveloped in perpetuity.
- Ecological Reserve** An area of land managed primarily for the long-term conservation of biodiversity.
- Ecosystem** A complex array of organisms, their natural environment, the interactions between them, the home of all living things, including humans, and the ecological processes that sustain the system.
- Endangered Species** A species listed on the state or federal endangered species list (VSA Title 10, Chapter 123). Endangered species are those which are in danger of becoming of becoming extinct within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of their range.
- Fee Simple Purchase** Direct purchase of all rights and interests in a property at an agreed-upon price. (Acquisitions of partial interest in a property are considered "less-than-fee" acquisitions).
- Fragmentation** Division of a large forested area into smaller patches separated by areas converted to a different land use.
- GIS** (Geographic Information Systems) A computer-based means of mapping lands and communicating values on those lands.
- Habitat** A place that provides seasonal or year round food, water, shelter, or other environmental conditions for an organism, community or population of plants or animals.

Healthy Ecosystem	An ecosystem in which structure and functions allow the maintenance of the desired condition of biological diversity, biotic integrity, and ecological processes over time.
Inholding	A parcel of land completely surrounded by lands owned by another individual or entity.
Interests in Land	Every piece of property contains a bundle of rights and interests, including the rights to develop a property, hunt on it, extract minerals from it, and recreate on it. These rights can be sold or leased individually or collectively.
Land Conservation	Acquisition or protection through easements of land for wildlife habitat, developed state parks, and working forests.
Landscape	In addition to the traditional meaning of the term, in ecology landscape has a specialized meaning: An area comprised of interacting and inter-connected ecosystems that are variously repeated because of geology, landform, soils, climate, biota, and human influences throughout the area.
LARC	The Agency of Natural Resources' Land Acquisition Review Committee, which reviews all proposed land transactions and makes recommendations on these proposals to the Agency Secretary.
Natural Community	An assemblage of plants and animals that is found recurring across the landscape under similar environmental conditions, where natural processes, rather than human disturbances, prevail.
Old Growth Forest	A forest stand in which natural processes and succession have occurred over a long period of time relatively undisturbed by human intervention.
Outdoor Recreation	Leisure time activities that occur outdoors or utilize an outdoor area or facility.
PILOT	(Payment in lieu of taxes) The state's payment to municipalities as compensation for having purchased property and taking it out of private ownership.
Public Lands	Properties owned by the federal, state, and municipal governments.
Recreation Lands	Lands used primarily for recreation purposes.
Resource Values	The natural values found on a property, such as timber and access to water.
Stewardship	Caring for land and associated resources with consideration to future generations.
Surplus Land	State-owned properties which the Agency has determined do not provide substantial public benefit and do not serve any of the purposes for which the Agency owns land.

Sustainability	The production and use of resources to meet the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.
Threatened Species	A species listed on the state of federal threatened species list. Threatened species are those likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of their range.
Traditional Uses	Those uses of the forest that have characterized the general area in the recent past and present, including: an integrated mix of timber and forest products harvesting; outdoor recreation; and recreation camps or residences.
Wilderness	Areas having pristine and natural characteristics, typically roadless and often with some limits on use. (This is not the federal definition of wilderness).
Wildlife Corridor	Land used by species when traveling from one habitat area to another.
Working Forest	Land used primarily for the production of timber, but also available for recreation, usually where both managed land and land not presently being managed is present.
Working Landscape	A landscape dominated by land used for agricultural and/or forestry purposes.

APPENDIX B

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SUMMARY

An important component of the Lands Conservation Plan was public involvement. From the onset of the planning process, the Agency recognized that in order for the plan to accurately reflect public sentiment and priorities, it must somehow include the active participation and involvement of the public. Towards this end, the Steering Committee planned a number of public participation activities to hear concerns and issues from Vermonters, and to engage them in finding solutions to some of these issues. With the help of a public involvement consultant, the Steering Committee developed a comprehensive public involvement program to complement the planning process. The public involvement program considered a complete range of input and activities to shape the plan and did not rely on just one source of information. A diverse public participation process was developed which provided ample opportunities for public input throughout the planning process. Public participation activities included:

- **Review of Past Public Comment and Planning Documents Relating to Land Conservation and Acquisition** - The public involvement consultant reviewed conservation planning documents from the past ten years in order to extract public comment, policies, actions and useful data for the Steering Committee to utilize and to better understand the context of conservation policy in Vermont. These included plans and documents from The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources and other State Agencies, Regional Planning Commissions, US Forest Service and US Fish and Wildlife Service, other non-profit and conservation groups, some town plans and area specific planning documents. The report, *Past Public Comment on Land Conservation 1986-1997*, can be found in Volume II of this plan.
- **Stakeholder Assessment Interviews** - Twenty five assessment interviews were conducted in the spring of 1997 with representatives of identified stakeholders groups. They were designed to affirm and revise the issues identified by the Steering Committee, to identify other issues of concern that may exist, and better define which aspects of the plan need focused public input. The *Summary of Stakeholder Interviews* can also be found in Volume II of this plan.
- **Vermont Interactive Television Public Listening Session** - In June of 1997, an interactive public listening session was held at all twelve of the VIT's sites across the state. Comments were taken from the public about concerns and priorities for land conservation in Vermont. The Steering Committee either attended this meeting and/or viewed the tape. A copy of the videotape is maintained in the Waterbury Office of the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation.
- **Public Comment Form** - A two page public comment form was handed out at the initial Public Listening Session and sent to various groups via their newsletters. The form included questions which were based on those asked to the twenty-five stakeholders and space was given for individual comments and concerns. Approximately 300 of these forms were returned which provided useful insight into the public's priorities and issues for land conservation in the state.
- **Phone Survey** - The Center for Rural Studies at the University of Vermont conducted a phone survey of 790 Vermont residents chosen at random. Respondents were asked about awareness and use of State owned land; public priorities for land conservation; community involvement in State land acquisitions; and viewpoints on funding, acquisition and disposition of State land. The complete Survey Report can be found in Volume II of this plan.
- **Stakeholder Focus Group Meetings** - Five focus groups meetings were held in the spring of 1998: Town Officials/Regional Planning Commissions; Recreation; Conservation/Environmental Groups; Timber/Forest Industry, and Business. These groups were convened to the common questions of: "What are the public

education needs in regard to state land conservation activities?"; and "What are some possible solutions to land conservation issues identified by the public and Steering Committee?"

- **Potentially Affected Interests (PAI) Meetings** - Meetings to take detailed comment on the draft plan were held with eight Regional Planning Commissions (RPC) and four stakeholder groups during the fall of 1998. Regional Planning Commissions choose the type of group they felt could respond to the draft plan. These groups ranged from RPC Commissioners, to natural resource work groups of the Commission, to groups composed of citizens from the region with town officials and RPC Commissioners and staff. Stakeholder PAIs were held with Associated Industries of Vermont, Green Mountain Club, Northern Forest Alliance, and Vermont Forest Products Association. Summary of input from PAI meetings is found in the *Public Comment and Responsiveness Summary* found in Volume II of this plan.
- **Vermont Interactive Television Public Comment Session** - A Public Comment Session was held in September, 1998 at the twelve sites of the Vermont Interactive Television network to take input on the draft Lands Conservation Plan. Approximately 38 people among the sites attended the session. Attendees voiced strong disagreement with the plan over concern for property rights, forest product production and harvest, and general philosophical disagreement over government ownership of land. The Steering Committee either attended this meeting or viewed the tape. Comment was incorporated into *Public Comment and Responsiveness Summary* found in Volume II of this plan. The videotape is maintained in the Waterbury office of the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation.
- **Public Comment on the Draft Lands Conservation Plan** - The full draft Lands Conservation Plan was sent to Regional Planning Commissions, District ANR Offices, key legislators, the Governor's office, twenty-five stakeholders interviewed at the start of the process, those who attended focus groups, and made available at the VIT Public Comment Session. An Executive Summary of the Draft Lands Conservation Plan was sent to over 700 people on the Lands Conservation mailing list, distributed at the 1998 Governor's Conference on Recreation (i.e., Greenspace Conference), and made available for attendees of the VIT Public Comment Session to use and disperse. Throughout the summer and into the fall of 1998, project staff discussed the draft plan on radio talk shows broadcast throughout the state and numerous news articles appeared in newspaper throughout the state. To facilitate public input, the Executive Summary had a response form in it that could be returned by mail or facsimile. Project staff also received many comments on the draft plan by e-mail and phone. All told, nearly 400 comments and responses were received and compiled for the Steering Committee. Public and PAI comment was summarized by type of comment for each chapter of the plan. These were presented to the Steering Committee to consider for final plan revisions. These comments are contained within the Public Comment and Responsiveness Summary contained in Volume II of this plan.
- **Media Information Program** - Regular media outreach in print and radio took place throughout the course of the planning process in order to keep people informed of progress and opportunities for public input. All information developed for the plan was posted on the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources website.

APPENDIX C

A CONTEXT FOR STATE LAND CONSERVATION

The development and implementation of this Lands Conservation Plan must occur within a larger context of land conservation activities in Vermont. This section provides background information on those activities, discusses the role of the Agency and other organizations in conserving Vermont's landscape, and describes related land conservation planning efforts.

As of September 1999, nearly 19 percent (or nearly 1,100,000 acres) of Vermont's landbase has been permanently conserved in some fashion by public agencies or non-profit conservation organizations. (An additional 1,000,000 acres of private woodland are enrolled in the State's Current Use Program which, though voluntary and non-permanent, affords important conservation benefits).

Of the roughly 1,000,000 acres of land permanently conserved by public agencies or private groups in 1999, the Agency of Natural Resources has conserved approximately 370,000 acres (or roughly six percent of Vermont's land base). These lands have been permanently conserved through ownership in fee-simple or easement in more than 200 towns across the state. (The Agency also holds public access rights to an additional 84,000 acres of former Champion lands that are owned by a private timber investor and subject to a separate conservation easement held by the Vermont Land Trust). Agency lands include state parks, state forests, wildlife management areas, fishing and boating access areas, stream bank properties, and other holdings.

Role of the Agency of Natural Resources

Historical Perspective

The State of Vermont has a long history of acquiring properties for conservation and recreation purposes. The State made its initial conservation acquisition in 1909, the L.R. Jones State Forest in Plainfield, and began its State Parks system 15 years later with the donation of 160 acres on Mt. Philo in Charlotte. By 1930, with the acquisition of additional state forest land, there were six state campgrounds operating on state land. State land holdings grew moderately during the next twenty years so that by 1950, the amount of state forest and parkland totaled slightly less than 70,000 acres.

The 1960s and '70s saw a surge in state land conservation activity in Vermont and across the nation. Not surprisingly, this period also coincided with the creation of several federal funding sources that were available to states for land acquisition, including the Land and Water Conservation Fund Program and the federal aid to wildlife programs (i.e., Pittman/Robertson and Dingall/Johnson programs). During this twenty-year period, the acreage of state-owned conservation and recreation lands in Vermont grew to approximately 250,000 acres.

The reduction of federal and state funding for land acquisition during the 1980s resulted in a slowdown in state land acquisition activities in Vermont. However, with the establishment of the Vermont Housing and Conservation Trust Fund in 1987 and the availability of

supplemental acquisition funding from other federal, state, and private sources since the mid-1990s, state land acquisition activity has again picked up.

ANR Land Conservation Accomplishments, 1987-1999

The past twelve years has seen many important state land conservation accomplishments and milestones. Since 1987, the Agency has acquired close to 100,000 acres of land and conservation easements (not including the public access rights on the 84,000 acres of privately owned working forestland formerly owned by Champion). Much of this acreage is in the form of conservation easements on large tracts of privately owned working forests.

A major new land conservation initiative of the Agency has been the federal Forest Legacy program, which has enabled the state to acquire conservation easements on several large tracts of working forests. Through this program, the Agency has acquired easements on more than 36,000 acres of privately owned and managed forestland during the past several years.

Another focal point for Agency land conservation activities has been the protection of the Long Trail. Through the efforts of The Green Mountain Club, more than 50 miles of the Long Trail and 14 miles of side trails (totaling close to 18,000 acres) have been protected during the past 12 years. Much of this land has been transferred to the Agency and is managed by the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation. Unlike most of the Agency's land conservation activities, the Long Trail Protection program is a long-term, proactive land conservation effort that has been specifically recognized and funded by the Vermont Legislature during the past decade.

Lake Champlain has also continued to be a focus for many Agency land acquisition efforts. In addition to acquiring several islands and shoreline tracts, the Agency has acquired several hundred acres of Lake Champlain wetlands through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act program during the past 10 years.

The Agency has also completed two landmark conservation projects during this period which deserve special mention. In early 1999, after many years of negotiation, the Agency acquired the 5100-acre Green River Reservoir property. This site encompasses Green River Reservoir which, at nearly 800 acres, is Vermont's largest body of water dedicated to non-motorized boats and contains the state's largest expanse of undeveloped shoreline.

Later in 1999, the State completed an even larger project involving many partners on 133,000 acres of remote forestland in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom formerly owned by Champion International Corp. As a part of this complex project, the Agency has acquired 16,500 acres and will receive an additional 5600 acres in the fall of 1999 once final funding has been secured. The Agency also holds public access rights to an additional 84,000 acres of private working forestland on the former Champion land.

Purposes

There are two general purposes of Agency ownership of land: protection and use. Protection is the prevention of activities or developments that could harm or destroy certain resource values of public interest. Use implies that a property is broadly available for public activities. In reality, virtually all Agency land holdings represent some mix of these two broad purposes. More specifically, the Agency owns land and continues to acquire land or interests in land for the following purposes:

1. Protect, maintain and enhance the state's ecological resources and biological diversity, including:
 - a. viable, high-quality examples of native species and natural communities
 - b. rare, threatened, and endangered species
 - c. critical wildlife habitat and corridors
 - d. wetlands
 - e. unique natural areas
2. Protect public waters and shore land with significant public values (rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, islands)
3. Protect important scenic and aesthetic values
4. Provide outdoor recreation opportunities for the public, including but not limited to:
 - a. traditional state park activities (swimming, camping, picnicking, etc.)
 - b. trail-related recreation activities (hiking, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, bicycling, etc.)
 - c. public hunting, fishing, trapping areas
 - d. areas for other dispersed recreation activities (remote/backcountry areas, etc.)
5. Provide access to public lands and waters
6. Provide areas for resource-related research, education and demonstration projects
7. Provide forest products
8. Provide flood control

Statutory Authority

The departments of the Agency of Natural Resources are directed by statute to conduct their activities according to a number of legislatively prescribed policies and purposes. In regard to the Lands Conservation Plan, relevant references can be found in Title 10, Ch. 83, § 2601 (Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation) and Title 10, Ch. 103, § 4081 (Department of Fish and Wildlife). These sections declare that the conservation and protection of forests, recreational resources, and wildlife is in the public interest of the state and that safeguarding these resources requires a constant vigilance. Legislative policy contained within these statutes also directs the departments to among other things, protect wildlife, encourage economic management of its forests and the development of recreational interests, preserve natural beauty, and alleviate floods.

The Vermont General Assembly has further provided the Agency of Natural Resources and its departments with statutory authority to acquire land and conduct other land transaction activities. This authority is vested in several statutes which collectively empower the Agency,

and its departments with statutory authority to acquire land and conduct other land transaction activities. This authority is vested in several statutes which collectively empower the Agency, upon approval of the Governor or General Assembly, to acquire lands or interests in land, accept donations of lands or interests in land, and exchange or sell lands and interests in land for public benefit. The specific statutes are cited below:

- Title 10, Chapter 83, § 2602 – Provides authority to the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation to acquire land by gift or purchase as state forests or state parks and to exchange or lease such lands.
- Title 10, Chapter 103, § 4144 – Provides authority to the Fish and Wildlife Department to acquire by gift, purchase or lease, lands and waters for hunting and fishing purposes.
- Title 10, Chapter 103, § 4147 – Provides authority to the Department of Fish and Wildlife to exchange, sell or lease lands under its jurisdiction.
- Title 10, Chapter 37, § 905(b) – Provides authorization to the Department of Environmental Conservation to acquire land and rights by purchase, gift, or donation for the purposes of protecting and managing water resources of the state. (Only the Department of Environmental Conservation has the power to condemn property, and this is specifically for the purpose of flood control).
- Title 10, Chapter 155, § 6301-5 – These sections of the statute authorize the departments within the Agency to acquire rights less-than-fee of real property.
- Title 29, Chapter 3, § 104 - Authorizes the Commissioner of State Buildings to sell real estate owned by the State.

ANR Land Conservation Transaction Activities

The Agency of Natural Resources conducts various land transactions to further conservation, recreation, and land management goals. A brief description of these activities, along with a summary of the broad purposes for which these activities are carried out, is provided below:

- **Land Acquisition** – Land acquisition is the predominant land conservation transaction used by the Agency. Land acquisition is a broad term and includes a number of variations:

Fee Simple Purchase: This involves the direct purchase of all the rights and interests in a property at an agreed-upon price.

Purchase of Interests in Land: This involves the purchase of some of the property rights while title to the land rests with the private landowner. Examples include purchasing a conservation easement.

Donation of Lands or Interests in Land: Occasionally, a landowner may offer to

donate land (or interests in land) to the Agency. A partial donation or "bargain sale" is when a landowner sells property below its appraised value, thereby donating a portion of the property's value.

- **Land Exchanges** – In comparison with its land acquisition activities, the Agency makes somewhat limited use of land exchanges. Exchange proposals are only considered if they provide substantial public benefits or if they are required to resolve encroachments or boundary issues.
- **Disposition of State Land** – The Agency has occasionally disposed of surplus lands by transferring them to another public entity or, on rare occasions, selling them on the open market. This process was last initiated in 1981 when 36 parcels were identified by the Agency as surplus and considered for disposition. Six of these parcels eventually were sold.

The body within the Agency responsible for reviewing proposed land conservation projects is the Land Acquisition Review Committee. This nine-member committee evaluates all land offers that come before the Agency and develops recommendations on land transactions for the Secretary, who makes the official Agency response.

Recent ANR Land Conservation Projects

Some of the Agency's most notable land acquisitions and other conservation transactions of the past twelve years are highlighted below:

Land Acquisition (Fee)

- **Victory Basin Lands (Town of Victory)**: In 1988, The Nature Conservancy helped the Agency acquire 7,700 acres of former paper company land in the Northeast Kingdom, which have been added to the state's holdings in Victory Basin.
- **Knight Island (Town of North Hero)**: This 180-acre Lake Champlain Island was acquired in 1990 with the assistance of The Nature Conservancy. The property is managed as a state park.
- **Laraway Mountain (Towns of Belvidere, Johnson, and Waterville)**: A total of 1,329 acres were acquired in 1991 with the assistance of The Green Mountain Club and The Nature Conservancy. This project protected four miles of the Long Trail.
- **Big Jay (Towns of Montgomery, Westfield and Richford)**: A total of 1,573 acres were acquired by The Green Mountain Club in 1993 and transferred to the state. This acquisition included the summits of Big Jay and Little Jay along with 1.3 miles of the Long Trail, side trails, and shelters.
- **Phenn Basin (Town of Fayston)**: With the assistance of the Vermont Land Trust, the Trust for Public Lands, and other organizations, the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation acquired the 2,695-acre Phenn Basin property adjacent to Camel's Hump State Park in 1995.

- **Phillips Acquisition (Town of Alburg):** The Agency acquired this 608-acre property in 1996 with the assistance of The Nature Conservancy. It includes a ¼-mile long sand beach and a large, diverse wetland complex. The site is now managed as Alburg Dunes State Park.
- **Green River Reservoir (Towns of Eden and Hyde Park):** In 1999, the Vermont Chapter of The Nature Conservancy assisted the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation with the acquisition of the 5100 acre Green River Reservoir property. The property encompasses Green River Reservoir – an 800 acre undeveloped body of water noted for its pristine and remote character.
- **Champion Lands (Towns of Ferdinand, Maidstone and Brunswick):** As a part of the landmark Champion Lands project, the Agency has (or will) acquire more than 22,000 acres of remote forestland in extreme northeastern Vermont in 1999. These lands include ten pristine ponds, large wetland complexes, remote mountain tops, and important ecological, wildlife and recreation resources.

Land Acquisition (Conservation Easements)

- **Hancock Lands (Northeast Kingdom):** In a landmark conservation project, the state acquired a conservation easement on 31,000 acres of forest in northeastern Vermont in 1996 through the Federal Forest Legacy Program. The easement ensures the continuation of sustainable forest management and allows for public recreational access.
- **Wilderness Corporation Lands (Town of Plymouth):** Also in 1996, the state acquired a conservation easement on more than 2,000 acres of forestland around Lake Ninevah from the Wilderness Corporation through the Forest Legacy Program.
- **Champion Lands Public Access Easement:** As a part of the Champion Lands project, the Agency acquired the public access rights on 84,000 acres of privately-owned working forestland. These lands provide important traditional recreation opportunities such as hunting, fishing and snowmobiling and have great potential for many trail-related activities.

Donations

- **Gale Meadows Pond (Town of Winhall):** On two separate occasions, Henry and Alice Green donated property to the state around Gale Meadows Pond totaling 359 acres. These donations, along with adjacent lands conserved by the Vermont Land Trust, have resulted in the protection of virtually the entire shoreline of this scenic pond.
- **Sentinel Rock State Park (Town of Westmore):** This scenic 330-acre property overlooking Lake Willoughby was donated to the state in 1997 by Windsor Wright and is one of Vermont's newest state parks (currently undeveloped).

Land Exchanges

- **Smuggler's Notch/Atlas Timber Co. Land Exchange:** In 1988, the Agency, with the assistance of The Nature Conservancy and The Green Mountain Club, exchanged a 71-acre parcel in Mt. Mansfield State Forest to Smuggler's Notch Resort for more than 2,900 acres of land, including eight miles of the Long Trail, in the towns of Lowell, Eden, Westfield, Montgomery and Belvidere.
- **Killington Exchange (Towns of Sherburne, Plymouth and Mendon):** In 1997, the state completed a complicated exchange with Killington which resulted in the addition of 2,948 acres of prime wildlife habitat, including the so-called Parker's Gore, to Coolidge State Forest in exchange for the Agency conveying 1,050 acres of state forestland to the ski area. A condition of this exchange also required Killington to pay the state an additional \$375,000 which will be used to acquire a nearby parcel.

Roles of Other Land Conservation Agencies and Organizations

As of 1999, about nineteen percent of Vermont's land base (roughly 1,100,000 acres) was conserved in some fashion by public agencies or non-profit organizations. The Agency of Natural Resources works in partnership with many of these entities to further its land conservation goals. A brief description of these organizations is provided below:

Federal Agencies

All told, federally owned lands account for about seven percent of Vermont's land base. The vast majority of this land is managed by the U.S. Forest Service and is contained within the Green Mountain National Forest. Other federal land managing agencies with a presence in Vermont include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

- **U.S. Forest Service** – The U.S. Forest Service manages the 369,000-acre Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF) which is located entirely within Vermont. The GMNF follows the spine of the Green Mountains and stretches nearly two-thirds the length of the state. The GMNF Proclamation Boundary divides the Forest into three distinct areas (north unit, south unit, and Taconics). Within each of these units is a mix of both public and private lands. As with all national forests, the Forest Service manages the GMNF for multiple uses.
- **National Park Service** – The National Park Service (NPS) administers more than 8800 acres of federally-owned land and conservation easements in Vermont. NPS's holdings include the recently established Marsh-Billings National Historic Park in Woodstock. However, most NPS lands in Vermont are found along the Appalachian National Scenic Trail corridor.
- **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service** – The Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) recently acquired 26,000 acres of former Champion land in the Nulhegan Basin of northeastern Vermont as a special unit of the Conte National Fish and Wildlife

Refuge. The FWS is also responsible for managing the 6,300-acre Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge located in the northwest corner of Vermont. The refuge is located along the Missisquoi River Delta where it enters Lake Champlain and is a mix of marsh, open water and wooded swamp.

- U.S. Department of Defense – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has built eight large flood protection dams in Vermont and operates various recreation facilities in conjunction with five of these dams along the Connecticut River drainage basin. The Corps is responsible for managing nearly 6,900 acres of land and flood rights associated with these dam facilities. The Corps leases federally-owned land to the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation at Quechee Gorge State Park. The Defense Department also owns the Underhill Firing Range near Mt. Mansfield, which though not usually open to the public, is an expansive holding that provides some important conservation values.

Other State Land Conservation Agencies

While the Agency of Natural Resources is the primary land conservation agency at the state level, several other state agencies either own or manage lands or interests in land or are otherwise involved in state land conservation activities:

- Vermont Housing and Conservation Board – VHCB is a quasi-governmental board charged with overseeing the Vermont Housing and Conservation Trust Fund. This fund was established in 1987 for the dual goals of providing affordable housing and conserving lands with important resource values in Vermont including both agricultural lands and lands with natural or outdoor recreation values. Since its inception, VHCB has been a primary source of the Agency's land acquisition funds.
- Vermont Department of Agriculture – The Vermont Department of Agriculture, in partnership with the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) and non-profit land trusts, actively works to conserve productive farmlands in Vermont. The Department held conservation easements on approximately 70,000 acres of agricultural land as of 1998. Most of these easements are co-held by VHCB and/or the Vermont Land Trust. Occasionally, the Agency of Natural Resources will work with the Department on agricultural properties that also include other conservation or recreation values.
- Vermont Division for Historic Preservation – The Division for Historic Preservation is responsible for preserving Vermont's cultural heritage and historic resources. In carrying out this responsibility, the Division manages 19 State Historic Sites which collectively encompass close to 1,200 acres.
- Vermont Agency of Transportation – The Agency of Transportation (AOT) maintains the state transportation system and administers federal transportation funding programs. The Agency owns a considerable amount of property associated with the state's transportation system. AOT works closely with the Agency of Natural Resources on land projects of mutual concern. Also, federal transportation funding (e.g., TEA-21 "Enhancement" funding) can be used to support certain land conservation projects.

Municipalities

Municipalities own approximately 36,000 acres of conservation or recreation lands (or less than one percent of the land base in Vermont). The bulk of this acreage is contained within numerous town forests scattered across the state. These areas are managed for timber production, watershed management, and dispersed recreation purposes. The Agency has worked closely with many towns on land conservation projects of mutual interest.

Private Non-Profit Organizations

More than 30 non-profit land trust organizations operate in Vermont, many of which own and manage lands or interests in land for conservation purposes. Land trusts are playing an increasingly important and perhaps even dominant role in conserving land in Vermont. About 290,000 acres of land (or nearly five percent of Vermont) has been conserved by non-profit conservation organizations. Most of these lands have been conserved through the use of conservation easements as opposed to fee-simple acquisition.

The Agency of Natural Resources has developed close partnerships and works cooperatively with many non-profit conservation organizations. Typically, these organizations assist the Agency in acquiring a conservation property that is of mutual interest. On occasion, these organizations may also "bridge" an important state acquisition by acquiring the property and taking it off the market, thus providing the Agency with more time to secure necessary acquisition funding. This relationship has furthered the Agency's capacity to do high-priority state land conservation projects (especially large and/or complicated projects). Some of the major non-profit land conservation organizations operating in Vermont are listed below:

- **Vermont Land Trust** – The Vermont Land Trust (VLT) works to protect productive recreational and scenic lands which help define Vermont's rural working landscape and character. The organization has been most active in protecting productive farmland but is also working to protect productive forests as well. VLT often works with the Agency on large or complex land acquisition projects (e.g., Champion Lands project). To date, VLT has conserved approximately 214,000 acres of land in Vermont, primarily through the use of conservation easements.

(Of special note is the recently completed Atlas Timberlands Partnership project which was a cooperative project between VLT and the Vermont Chapter of The Nature Conservancy. These two organizations established the Atlas Timberland Partnership and together acquired nearly 27,000 acres of Vermont timberland from the Atlas Timber Company in 1997. This unique arrangement ensures the property will remain part of Vermont's working forest while protecting important ecological resources and providing access for recreation.)

- **The Nature Conservancy** – The Vermont Chapter of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) owns about 15,000 acres of land in the state (not including the Atlas Timberland Partnership lands described above). TNC's land protection program primarily focuses on the protection of natural communities and species which are significant or rare within an ecoregion. Like the Vermont Land Trust, TNC also routinely assists

the Agency on land conservation projects of mutual interest.

- **Green Mountain Club** – The Green Mountain Club (GMC) serves as the principal steward of the Long Trail. GMC has an active land protection program and works closely with the Agency on acquisition projects involving Long Trail lands. GMC essentially works as an agent for the state in negotiating for and in the initial acquisition of Long Trail lands. Once these lands are acquired by GMC, the properties are typically turned over to the Agency with GMC retaining a conservation easement. The club owns about 3,700 acres of land along the Long Trail.
- **Other Non-Profit Conservation Organizations** – Perhaps another 30,000 acres of land in Vermont has been conserved by other organizations. These include regional and local organizations such as the Lake Champlain Land Trust, the Upper Valley Land Trust, the Addison County Community Trust, the Passumpsic Valley Land Trust, and several town land trusts, as well as large, national organizations such as The Conservation Fund and The Trust for Public Lands. To varying extent, the Agency has developed partnerships with these non-profit and community land conservation organizations.

Related Planning Efforts

The Lands Conservation Plan is one of many, interrelated planning efforts at the Agency of Natural Resources. The scope of these plans can overlap to a small degree, and Agency staff understand that the variety of planning efforts can sometimes appear confusing. This section attempts to clarify the Agency's many planning efforts that affect its land conservation and management activities, as well as conservation-planning efforts of other entities in Vermont.

ANR Planning Efforts

Strategic Planning: The overriding planning document at the Agency of Natural Resources is the Agency's strategic plan. Developed through a comprehensive management planning process, which included a survey of 500 Vermonters, the plan describes what the Agency should do to improve its performance in key areas as Vermont's chief environmental steward.

Several of the Agency's 25 goals relate directly to the need for an updated Lands Conservation Plan and many of the specific issues addressed in the plan. They include:

- Sustainable Use of Vermont's Natural Resources
- Good Land Stewardship
- Undeveloped Outdoor Recreation Opportunities
- Developed Public Recreation Sites and Opportunities

- **Good Fish and Wildlife Recreational Opportunities**

Each of the Agency's three departments have developed their own strategic plans. The department plans reflect the Agency's overall priorities, plus additional, more specific priorities. Again, many of the strategic goals in these plans relate directly to need for a new Lands Conservation Plan and provide guidance for some elements of the plan. Copies of these strategic plans are available by contacting the Agency's Planning Division at 241-3620.

Act 200: The section of Vermont law known as Act 200 requires that "state agencies that have programs or take actions affecting land use shall engage in a continuing planning process to assure that those programs and actions are...compatible with regional and approved municipal plans...". The Agency of Natural Resources has developed an Act 200 Plan which serves as the principal compliance document under the planning law.

The Agency's Act 200 Plan also serves as an umbrella document for all Agency planning efforts, including the Lands Conservation Plan. The current Act 200 Plan outlines the Agency's land conservation program and specifically refers to the on-going process for developing the Lands Conservation Plan.

The Agency revises its Act 200 Plan biannually and sends copies to every municipality and regional planning commission in the state. In developing the plan, the Agency attempts to review all municipal and regional plans for potential incompatibilities. To date, no incompatibilities between the Agency's plan and local and regional plans have been found that could not be resolved.

For state land acquisition proposals that use Vermont Housing and Conservation Board funding, the Agency is required to demonstrate the degree to which the proposal is supported by local and regional plans. Nevertheless, it is conceivable that a proposed state acquisition (or exchange or sale of state property) might not be supported by local and regional plans. In such a situation, the Agency would need to reconsider the proposal and determine if it is truly in the public interest. Act 200 encourages land use decisions to be made at the most local level possible commensurate with their impacts.

For more information about the Agency's Act 200 Plan, please contact the Agency's Planning Division at 241-3620.

Vermont Recreation Plan: Federal law requires the state to complete a statewide outdoor recreation plan every five years in order for Vermont to maintain its eligibility to receive federal matching grant monies under the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program.

Vermont has been committed to statewide recreation planning since the inception of the LWCF. Since 1967, Vermont has received more than \$27 million from the LWCF program for outdoor recreation projects. Federal monies have been matched with state and local funds in more than 500 projects. Federal dollars, however, have declined since the late 1970s, and Congress has not appropriated LWCF money since 1995. This has prompted recreation providers across the nation to examine the existing LWCF program and its effectiveness, and to provide new directions for the program.

The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources is authorized as the state agency responsible

for the development and implementation of the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan and for the administration of the LWCF program in Vermont. Within the Agency, the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation has been given authority to direct the grants and planning elements of the program.

In order to minimize duplication of planning efforts, the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation is utilizing the 1999 Lands Conservation Plan, the 1999 Vermont Forest Resources Plan (see below), and the Agency's strategic plans to serve as the 1998 Vermont Recreation Plan and to meet the state comprehensive outdoor recreation planning requirements of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act.

For more information about the Vermont Recreation Plan, please contact the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation at 241-3670.

The 1999 Vermont Forest Resource Plan: In the fall of 1996, the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation began work on revising the Vermont Forest Resource Plan. This effort continues a 50-year tradition of periodically evaluating the condition and needs of Vermont's forest resources and then developing a plan of action to address problems and opportunities for all forest land owners.

The 1999 Vermont Forest Resource Plan, *"Creating a Forest Vision for the Twenty-First Century,"* builds on the previous planning effort through an extensive public participation process involving a greater diversity of stakeholders and interested citizens. The purpose of the plan is to articulate a vision for Vermont's forest land, gather information to assess the current condition of the state's forest resources, and present a variety of goals and identify actions to achieve them.

The 30-member Forest Resource Plan Steering Committee began the process of writing a new plan by drafting a common vision for the future of Vermont's forests. Other tasks have included a review of findings from previous forestry planning efforts, an evaluation of assessment data on the current condition of Vermont's forest resources, and receiving public input from a series of regional meetings to develop a list of recommended actions.

For more information about the Forest Resource Plan, please contact the Forestry Division of the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, 241-3678.

Long-Range Management Planning: Building upon the results and outcomes of the public planning processes for the Lands Conservation Plan and the Forest Resource Plan, a cross-Agency team has been established to cooperatively develop a State Lands Policy and Planning Process. This policy and process will provide guidance to Agency land managers, detail Agency values relative to land management, and inform the public to what outcomes to expect from state lands.

The team will also develop an Agency-wide process for preparing long-range management plans for all Agency lands to ensure consistency in how the Agency carries out its planning efforts for individual state-owned properties, how the Agency incorporates public involvement, and how Agency staff gathers and analyzes all available resource data.

For more information about this land management planning effort, please contact the

Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation at 241-3670.

Other Planning Efforts

Regional and Local Plans: Most regional planning commissions and many towns have plans which identify natural resource and recreation areas deserving conservation. These plans sometimes identify individual parcels that should have some form of public protection, but they're more likely to note general needs, such as more access to lakes and rivers. The Agency of Natural Resources receives and reviews copies of all regional and town plans.

Forest Plan for the Green Mountain National Forest: The U.S. Forest Service intends to revise the forest plan for the Green Mountain National Forest during the next several years. The revision process will include public participation and the active involvement of Agency staff. For more information about this effort, please contact the Forest Service at 747-6700.

Regional Conservation Initiatives: Vermonters have been involved in three important interstate conservation initiatives in recent years:

The Northern Forest Lands Council was established by an act of Congress in 1990 and charged with identifying strategies for maintaining the traditional patterns of land use and land ownership throughout the 26 million acre northern forest area of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York. Representatives from these four states developed recommendations to enhance the quality of life for residents of the Northern Forest by promoting economic stability, to encourage the sustainable yield of forest products, and to protect the Northern Forest's recreational, wildlife, scenic, and wildland resources. The Council's final recommendations are contained in the 1994 report, "Finding Common Ground: Conserving the Northern Forest."

The Lake Champlain Basin Program was established by the Lake Champlain Special Designation Act, passed by Congress in 1990, to study and make recommendations for the improvement of the basin's ecological, cultural, and recreational resources. The basin program's ultimate goal is to ensure that the lake and its drainage basin will be protected, restored, and maintained for the enjoyment of future generations.

The Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge was established by Congress to conserve, protect, and enhance the Connecticut River watershed, with an emphasis on the watershed's fish, wildlife, ecosystems and the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of wetlands and other waters within the watershed. In 1999, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service acquired 26,000 acres of land in Vermont's northeast corner from Champion International Corp. which will be managed as the Nulhegan Basin unit of the Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge.

APPENDIX D

INVENTORY OF CONSERVATION LANDS

An accurate inventory of conservation and recreation lands in Vermont is an essential element of the Lands Conservation Plan. ANR has developed or has access to numerous resource inventories that can assist in the identification of land conservation priorities. Many of these inventories have been developed in Geographic Information System (GIS) format. GIS is a computer-based system which combines spatial data with database information creating a powerful tool to display and analyze geographically referenced material. GIS can generate maps and perform complex spatial analyses enabling resource professionals to visualize multiple scenarios or resource features at the same time.

Conserved Lands in Vermont

A fundamental GIS inventory for open space planning purposes is the statewide Conserved Lands Database. This GIS data layer has been developed and is being maintained by the University of Vermont's Spatial Analysis Lab as a cooperative project involving ANR, other public land managing agencies, and private land conservation organizations. While all federal, state, local, and non-profit conservation organizations maintain extensive files on individual projects, and many maintain computerized data bases for selected information on lands under their jurisdiction, the Conserved Lands Database is the first statewide attempt at creating a centralized, single database for all of Vermont's conserved lands. (Conserved lands include all publicly owned lands and interests in land and all private lands encumbered with perpetual conservation restrictions). The intent of this database is to provide accurate and current information on all parcels of lands that are conserved in Vermont by public agencies or non-profit groups. The challenge in maintaining this database is the timely collection of new parcel data from all of the various cooperating organizations for incorporation into the database.

A combination of efforts by federal, state, municipal and private organizations contribute to land conservation in Vermont. As of August 1999, the Conserved Lands Database shows that more than 1,100,000 acres, or nearly 19 percent of Vermont's land base, was permanently conserved, either through fee ownership or the use of conservation easements (see Table 1 on the following page). (Note that the acreage figures provided in the table are approximate only since they are based on GIS acreage calculations from the Conserved Lands database rather than actual deed acreage. Additionally, the database may contain other small errors or omissions).

As can be seen from Table 1, the largest owner of conserved lands is the federal government, accounting for more than seven percent of Vermont's land base. The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources has conserved more than six percent of the state's land base. The remainder of conservation land is owned or controlled by municipal governments or conserved by private conservation organizations.

The general pattern and distribution of conserved lands in Vermont is depicted on the Conserved Lands map which follows Table 1. The map was produced by the University of

Vermont's Spatial Analysis Lab and represents an interim product of the ongoing development of the Statewide Conserved Lands Database. Although every attempt has been made to update this database through August of 1999, there may well be certain properties which have not yet been digitized and entered into the GIS database and consequently do not appear on the map.

Updating this database is a continual and monumental effort involving close coordination among all public and non-profit land conservation groups in Vermont.

TABLE 1 – Statewide Inventory of Conserved Lands in Vermont (August, 1999)

Federal Land	Fee Acres	Non-Fee Acres	All Acres	% State
U.S. Forest Service	368,689.34	229.35	368,918.69	6.17
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	33,043.85	55.32	33,099.17	0.55
U.S. National Park Service	8,069.68	737.67	8,807.35	0.15
Other Federally Protected Land	16,208.23	160.03	16,368.26	0.27
	<u>426,011.10</u>	<u>1,182.37</u>	<u>427,193.47</u>	<u>7.14</u>
State Land				
Agency of Natural Resources	335,604.86	37,370.42	372,975.28	6.23
Other State Protected Land	4,069.44	766.66	4,836.10	0.08
	<u>339,674.30</u>	<u>38,137.08</u>	<u>377,811.38</u>	<u>6.32</u>
Municipal Land				
Town Forests, Watersheds, and Conservation Land	35,863.09	81.96	35,945.05	0.60
Private Conserved Land				
Atlas Timber Partnership	26,846.47	0.00	26,846.47	0.45
Green Mountain Club	3,544.42	132.80	3,677.22	0.06
The Nature Conservancy	10,756.67	3,979.11	14,735.78	0.25
Upper Valley Land Trust	0.00	7,150.35	7,150.35	0.12
Vermont Land Trust	1,898.46	211,773.20	213,671.66	3.57
Other Private Land	18,013.69	5,185.87	23,199.56	0.39
	<u>61,059.71</u>	<u>228,221.33</u>	<u>289,281.04</u>	<u>4.84</u>
STATEWIDE TOTAL	<u>862,608.20</u>	<u>267,622.74</u>	<u>1,130,230.94</u>	<u>18.89</u>

Note: The acreage figures in this table are approximate only and were derived from GIS acreage calculations. As such, they may vary from actual deed acreage figures maintained by conservation agencies and organizations.

State Owned Lands and Resources Under ANR Jurisdiction

Management of conservation and recreation lands by the State of Vermont rests with the three Departments of the Agency of Natural Resources: Forests, Parks and Recreation, Fish and Wildlife, and Environmental Conservation. A combination of conservation easements and fee ownership provide for the conservation of almost 370,000 acres of land or more than 6% of Vermont's land base (see Table 2). (Note that the state acreage figures presented in Table 2 are based on actual deeded acreage under ANR management as of September 1999 and differ from the GIS-based acreage calculations provided in Table 1).

TABLE 2 - Agency of Natural Resources: Summary of Managed Lands (Sep. 1999)

<u>Department</u>	<u>Fee Acres</u>	<u>Non-fee Acres</u>	<u>All Acres</u>
<u>Forests, Parks and Recreation</u>			
38 State Forests	162,550	34,849	198,399
56 State Parks	46,454	612	47,066
Total	209,034	35,461	244,495
<u>Fish and Wildlife</u>			
151 Boating Access Areas	454	19	472
5 Fish Hatcheries	512		512
25 Miscellaneous Properties	439	545	572
31 Pond Sites	1,743	10	1,753
12 Stream banks	1,709	12	1,721
84 Wildlife Management Areas	95,461	7,366	102,871
Total	100,318	7,952	108,271
<u>Environmental Conservation</u>			
13 Dam Properties	1369	518	1,887
<u>Other Agency Lands or Interests</u>	16,770		16,770
<u>Agency Total</u>	327,491	43,931	371,423

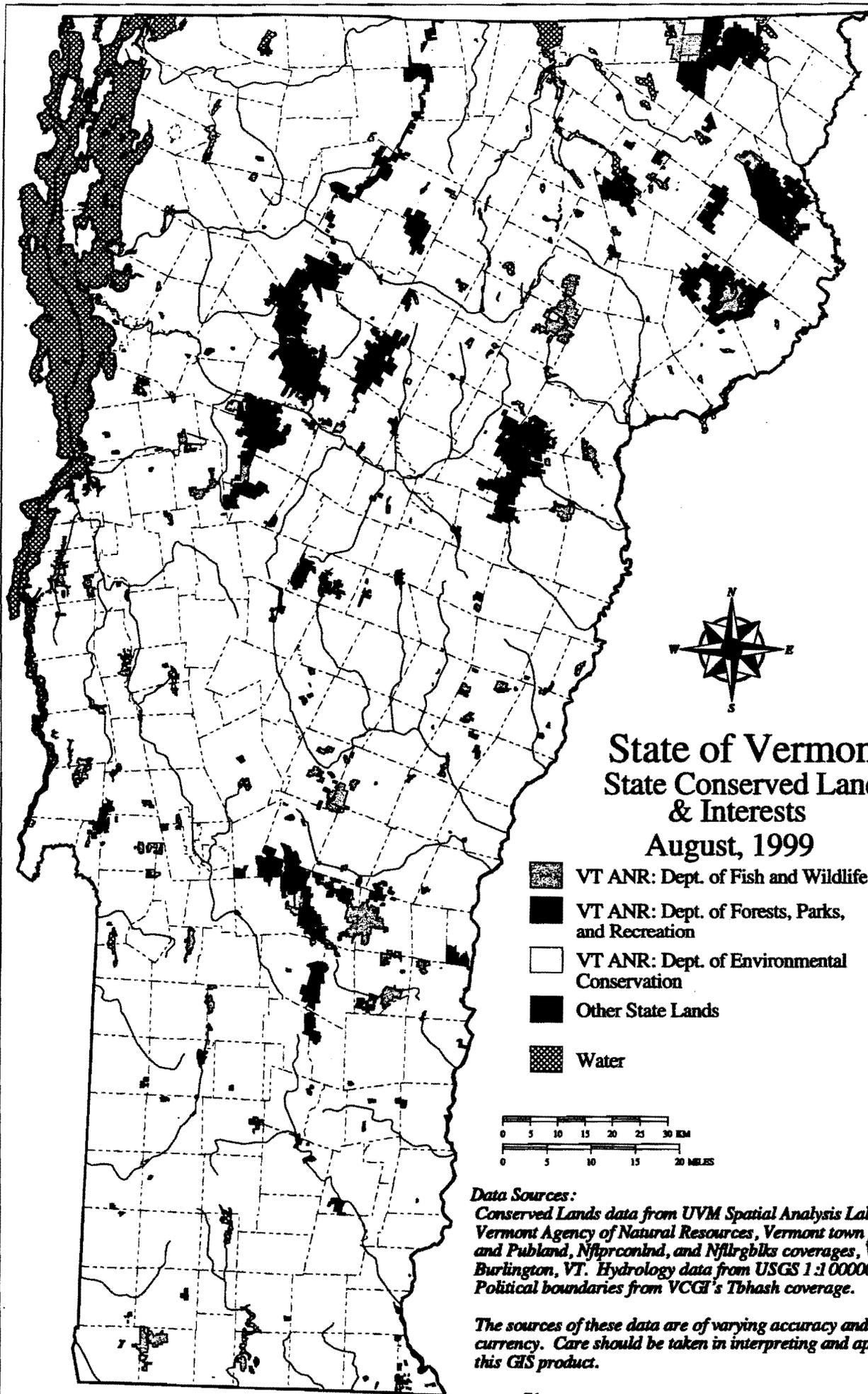
Notes: The "Other Agency Lands or Interests" category include 16,500 acres of land formerly owned by Champion International Corp., and conveyed to the State in August, 1999 and 270 acres of land formerly owned by Dupont Logging, Inc., and conveyed to the State in June, 1999. It does not include an additional 5600 acres of former Champion land scheduled to be conveyed to the State in the fall of 1999. This category also does not include the public access rights the Agency holds on 84,000 acres formerly owned by Champion International Corp. Since this land is conserved through a working forest easement held by the Vermont Land Trust, these 84,000 acres are included under the Vermont Land Trust acreage depicted in Table 1.

Features of State-owned Conservation and Recreation Lands

Beyond the acreage figures provided in Table 2, state-owned conservation and recreation lands in Vermont are extremely diverse and provide a multitude of public resource values. Some of the specific features of these lands include:

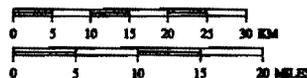
- Vermont's State Parks provide 36 developed campgrounds with more than 2,200 campsites (of which 900 are lean-to's), 25 picnic shelters, and 20 swimming beaches.
- In addition to portions of the Appalachian and Long Trails, there are more than 190 miles of hiking trails, 237 miles of cross-country ski trails, and more than 250 miles of other trails (horse, mountain bike, rail) on state land.
- Forests, Parks and Recreation maintains leases on 9,900 acres to 7 private downhill ski areas.
- Vermont has 285 lakes larger than 20 acres. According to the Vermont Lake Protection Classification System (Water Quality Division, Department of Environmental Conservation, 1994), nine of these lakes were classified as wilderness (remote lakes with little sign of human impact); more than 50 percent had state or partial state ownership of their shorelines. Of the 39 wilderness-like lakes (a lake with wilderness character but accessible by 2wd road within 1/3 mile) identified in the same classification, 15 percent had state or partial state ownership of their shorelines.
- The Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation has designated 33 State Natural Areas, comprising more than 18,000 acres within State Parks and State Forests. Natural Areas are defined as areas of land which have retained their wilderness character and may have rare or endangered plant and animal life or similar features of interest which are worthy of preservation for the use of present and future generations. These areas may include unique ecological, geological, scenic, and contemplative recreation areas on state lands (10 V.S.A., Section 2607).
- The Forestry Division of the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation has currently set aside almost 70,000 acres, or about 36 percent of state-owned forestland, that by statute or management decision, are not managed for timber production purposes. In addition, much of the 22,000 acres of former Champion Land that has (or will soon) come into state ownership will be managed primarily for ecological protection.
- A total of 88 dams are owned and maintained by the State of Vermont through the Agency of Natural Resources. In addition to the dams operated by the Department of Environmental Conservation for flood control purposes, the Department of Fish and Wildlife maintains 63 dams, many of which are located on its pond sites. Forests, Parks and Recreation maintains 11 dams on its properties.

The State Conserved Lands map on the following page highlights the distribution of ANR holdings (including land and easements on land). As with the previous map, this map is a "works in progress" which will need to be periodically updated as new properties are acquired.



State of Vermont State Conserved Lands & Interests August, 1999

- VT ANR: Dept. of Fish and Wildlife
- VT ANR: Dept. of Forests, Parks, and Recreation
- VT ANR: Dept. of Environmental Conservation
- Other State Lands
- Water



Data Sources:
Conserved Lands data from UVM Spatial Analysis Lab, Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, Vermont town parcels, and Publand, Nflprcontnd, and Nflrgrblks coverages, VCGI, Burlington, VT. Hydrology data from USGS 1:100000 DLG's. Political boundaries from VCGI's Tbhash coverage.

The sources of these data are of varying accuracy and currency. Care should be taken in interpreting and applying this GIS product.

Natural Resource Inventory – GIS Analysis

An analysis of the distribution of significant natural resource features on state, federal, and private lands is possible using GIS technology. The Spatial Analysis Lab at the University of Vermont has used GIS analysis in “overlying” Vermont’s conservation lands from the Conserved Lands Database with other natural resource databases. While by no means definitive, the results of such an analysis begin to reveal the extent to which certain resource features are permanently protected in the state. An analysis of the distribution of some key natural resource features on conserved lands is presented in Table 3. (Note: Due to inherent inaccuracies in statewide GIS coverages, the acreage totals provided in Table 3 are only approximate).

TABLE 3 – Distribution of Natural Resource Features on Conserved Lands

Resource Feature	State Lands	Federal Lands	Other Conserved Lands	Total Conserved Lands
Land Above 2500' (acres/% of total) Total=189,892 ac	42,661 ac 22.5%	94,142 ac 49.6%	17,661 ac 9.3%	154,464 ac 81.4%
Deer Wintering Areas (acres/% of total) Total=549,151 ac	39,323 ac 7.2%	31,183 ac 5.7%	22,870 ac 4.2%	93,376 ac 17.1%
NWI Wetlands (acres/% of total) Total=233,472 ac	28,242 ac 12.1%	18,951 ac 8.1%	14,011 ac 6.0%	61,204 ac 26.2%
State Threatened & Endangered Species (# of sites/% of total) Total sites*=3,204	473 sites 14.8%	184 sites 5.8%	272 sites 8.4%	929 sites 29.0%
Special Communities (# of sites/% of total) Total sites*=824	133 sites 16.1%	90 sites 10.9%	74 sites 9.0%	297 sites 36.0%

Note: A “site” may contain multiple species or special communities.

As can be seen from Table 3, much of the land in Vermont above 2,500 feet in elevation is already conserved under some form of public ownership. However, most of the deeryard and wetlands acreage in the state, along with the majority of sites identified as having at least one rare, threatened, or endangered species, occur on private lands that are not permanently conserved under public ownership or conservation easement held by non-profit conservation groups. While these resource features are to a certain degree, protected through existing regulatory means, certain sites may warrant fuller and more permanent protection. For the purposes of statewide land conservation planning, this analysis begins to shed light on the type of natural resource features that should be considered in developing Agency land conservation priorities.

In developing land conservation priorities, it is also useful to determine the amount of conserved land within a short drive of Vermont’s major population centers. Such an analysis provides insight into the relative accessibility of these lands to the public. Table 4 below

describes the amount of conservation land by category or ownership within a 20-mile radius of selected Vermont cities. Due to their proximity to the Green Mountain National Forest, the communities of Rutland and Bennington have the greatest amount of conservation land within a short drive of its residents. Conversely, the communities of Brattleboro, St. Albans, and White River Junction have the least amount of conserved land within a 20-mile radius. This analysis suggests the Agency may want to provide increased attention to providing public open space within close proximity to these and other similar communities.

TABLE 4 – Conserved Lands Within 20 Miles of Selected Vermont Cities

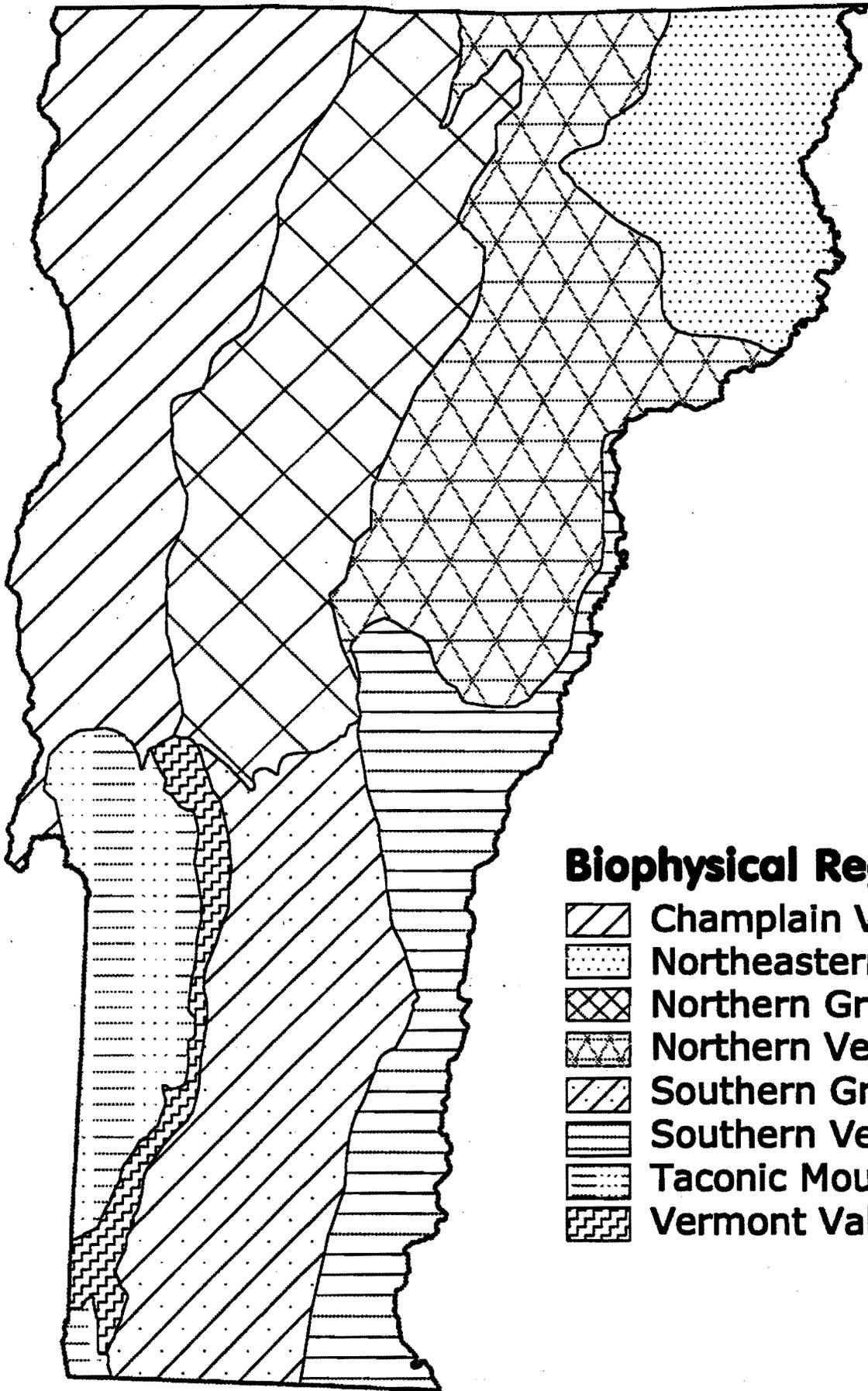
City	State Land		Federal Land		Other Cons. Land		Total Cons. Land	
	Acres	% 20 mi.	Acres	% 20 mi.	Acres	% 20 mi.	Acres	% 20 mi.
Barre	89,174	9.8	8,611	0.9	27,179	3.0	124,964	13.7
Bennington	5,925	1.4	141,618	32.8	8,197	1.9	155,740	36.0
Brattleboro	3,998	1.0	15,561	4.0	13,376	3.4	32,935	8.4
Burlington	52,794	9.4	11,843	2.1	19,303	3.4	83,941	14.9
Montpelier	117,648	11.8	22,590	2.3	31,424	3.2	171,662	17.3
Newport	53,825	8.7	4,316	0.7	50,606	8.2	108,747	17.6
Rutland	61,339	6.9	117,546	13.3	33,222	3.8	212,107	24.0
St. Albans	12,204	2.2	6,538	1.2	30,346	5.4	49,088	8.8
St. Johnsbury	75,628	10.8	1,634	0.2	33,769	4.8	111,031	15.8
Springfield	34,739	6.8	23,271	4.5	15,373	3.0	73,383	14.3
White River Jct.	26,502	5.4	4,855	1.0	19,875	4.0	51,232	10.4

Notes: The "Other Cons. Lands" category includes both municipal lands and lands and conservation easements held by private, non-profit conservation organizations. Only those acres of land within a 20 mile radius of these cities that are within Vermont are included in the above estimates.

Vermont Ecomapping Project

"Ecomapping" is basically a system of dividing the landscape into fairly homogeneous biological units based on similar vegetation types. The Vermont Ecomapping Project has been a cooperative effort involving ANR, the U.S. Forest Service, the University of Vermont, and independent ecologists. A key part of this process has been the development of a map depicting the biophysical regions of Vermont (see map on following page). These biophysical regions can be further broken down into different Land Type Associations according to specific elevation zones (0' – 600', 601' – 2000', 2001' – 3000', and >3001'). The concept here is that elevation translates directly to climate which, in turn, directly influences vegetation.

Utilizing GIS technology, it is possible to overlay the Conserved Lands Database onto Vermont's Biophysical Regions and the associated Land Type Associations. Such an analysis is useful for land conservation planning purposes in that it can begin to portray how much land within each biophysical region or association is presently being conserved in some permanent fashion. At least in a general sense, such an analysis may be useful in developing future ecological land conservation priorities.



Biophysical Regions

-  Champlain Valley
-  Northeastern Highlands
-  Northern Green Mountains
-  Northern Vermont Piedmont
-  Southern Green Mountains
-  Southern Vermont Piedmont
-  Taconic Mountains
-  Vermont Valley

The following tables, prepared by the University of Vermont's Spatial Analysis Lab, summarize the first step of this analysis by biophysical region and land type associations based on elevation zones. These data were developed as part of a larger project prepared for a related planning effort (the 1999 Vermont Forest Resource Plan) by Phil Girton, a graduate student working under the direction of David Capen at the Spatial Analysis Lab. **It should be stressed that the numbers presented in these tables should be considered as approximate estimates in as much as they reflect any inaccuracies in the GIS databases used in the analyses.**

Table 5 summarizes the acres of conservation lands by land ownership category for each of Vermont's eight biophysical regions. As can be seen, with the recent completion of the Champion Lands project, the Northeastern Highlands Biophysical Region now contains the greatest percentage of conserved lands (nearly 43%) with the Southern Vermont Piedmont Region containing the least amount of conserved land (less than 7%). The biophysical regions with the greatest amount of state-owned land are the Northern Green Mountains and the Northeastern Highlands regions. From a biological diversity standpoint, this is important because biological diversity generally decreases as elevation increases.

TABLE 5 – Conserved Lands by Biophysical Regions

Biophysical Region	State Lands Acres	Federal Lands Acres	Other Conserved Acres	Total Conserved Acres	% of Biophysical Region
Champlain Valley	23,296	19,062	66,081	108,438	10.5
Northeastern Highlands	99,428	28,170	101,519	229,117	42.6
Northern Green Mountains	116,137	134,278	48,130	337,555	29.2
Northern Vermont Piedmont	54,213	0	35,448	89,661	8.0
Southern Green Mountains	62,609	227,100	16,335	306,045	33.2
Southern Vermont Piedmont	8,817	4,972	30,111	43,899	6.8
Taconic Mountains	10,763	5,934	25,428	42,125	10.0
Vermont Valley	2,893	7,672	2,994	13,560	9.2

Perhaps more telling is Table 6 which summarizes the total acres of conserved lands in Vermont by the four elevation zones. This table shows that a relatively small percentage of the land within the two lower elevation zones is permanently conserved by public agencies or non-profit conservation organizations. Conversely, a high percentage of the land within the two higher elevation zones is conserved in some formal fashion by public agencies and non-profit organizations. At the same time, private conservation mechanisms play a more prominent role in lower elevation lands while public conservation dominates in the higher elevation zones.

TABLE 6 – Conserved Lands by Elevation Zone

Elevation Zone	State Lands Acres	Federal Lands Acres	Other Conserved Acres	Total Conserved Acres	% of Elevation Zone
0 to 600 feet	25,295	9,975	64,940	100,210	10.1
600 to 2,000 feet	230,668	165,056	183,311	579,034	13.6
2,000 to 3,000 feet	110,253	232,762	74,902	417,917	61.8
> 3,000 feet	11,557	19,048	2,408	33,013	88.8

From a broad ecological perspective, this information suggests that the Agency may wish to focus future state land conservation efforts in biophysical regions (and elevation zones within these regions) that do not already have a high concentration of land in public ownership or conserved by non-profit conservation groups.

Tables 7 and 8 provide a more detailed glimpse into the distribution of conserved lands within these elevation zones across each biophysical region. This distribution shows that from a statewide perspective, the bulk of conserved land acreage lies within the two middle elevation zones. To an even greater extent, this holds true for state land acreage. Although the acreage of state land above 3,000 feet is relatively small, given the small amount of high-elevation land in Vermont to begin with, this would likely translate into a large overall percentage of the total land within this elevation zone. At the same time, it is clear that the State owns a relatively small amount of land below 600 feet – a zone with the richest biological diversity and under the most pressure from agriculture and development.

TABLE 7 – Conserved Land by Biophysical Region and Elevation Zone

Biophysical Region	0 to 600		600 to 2000		2000 to 3000		> 3000 feet	
	acres	% Total	acres	% Total	acres	% Total	acres	% Total
Champlain Valley	83,622	11.2	23,780	8.6	130	100.0	n/a	
Northeastern Highlands	n/a		159,985	36.4	68,088	70.2	997	83.6
Northern Green Mountains	2,476	9.1	159,278	17.3	121,473	64.3	15,031	88.6
Northern Vermont Piedmont	27	0.6	71,677	6.7	17,658	39.5	297	85.3
Southern Green Mountains	863	22.4	89,601	15.2	200,745	64.4	14,842	93.4
Southern Vermont Piedmont	8,529	7.9	34,273	6.4	1,071	83.2	28	100.0
Taconic Mountains	4,523	5.4	27,279	9.0	8,507	26.5	1,818	66.0
Vermont Valley	169	0.8	13,149	10.6	243	97.6	n/a	

TABLE 8 – State Conserved Lands by Biophysical Region and Elevation Zone

Biophysical Region	0 to 600		600 to 2000		2000 to 3000		> 3000 feet	
	acres	% Total	acres	% Total	acres	% Total	acres	% Total
Champlain Valley	19,051	2.6	4,191	1.5	0	0.0	n/a	
Northeastern Highlands	n/a		81,173	18.5	18,034	18.6	997	83.6
Northern Green Mountains	2,071	7.6	60,216	6.6	46,462	24.6	7,100	41.8
Northern Vermont Piedmont	23.1	0.5	38,806	3.6	15,101	33.8	279.3	80.3
Southern Green Mountains	104.6	2.7	28,826	4.9	29,690	9.5	3,991	25.1
Southern Vermont Piedmont	1,184	1.1	7,006	1.3	615	47.8	12.9	46.1
Taconic Mountains	2,861	3.4	7,589	2.5	313	1.0	0	0.0
Vermont Valley	0	0.0	2,857	2.3	38.4	15.4	n/a	

VERMONT AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES

LANDS CONSERVATION PLAN
A Land Acquisition Strategy for
the Agency of Natural Resources

October, 1999

Technical Appendix:

(A Compilation of Public Involvement Activities and Work Group Reports)



Volume II



VERMONT AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES
1999 Lands Conservation Plan

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This document was developed, in part, to meet the statewide outdoor recreation planning requirements of the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 (P.L. 88-578) as amended.



FOREWORD

This document is Volume II of the 1999 Land Conservation Plan – A Land Acquisition Strategy for the Agency of Natural Resources. It contains a compilation of the many “products” of this planning effort including summaries of the various public involvement activities, the 1997 Lands Conservation Plan Survey Results, the 1999 Public Comment and Responsiveness Summary report on the draft Lands Conservation Plan, and the complete set of work group “White Papers”.

The land acquisition priorities and policy recommendations described in Volume I of the Lands Conservation Plan are, to a large degree, supported by the input, information, and ideas contained in this document. In this regard, Volume II serves as both a reference and technical appendix to the Plan.

While the planning activities described in Volume II provided a sound basis for plan development, the various results and recommendations contained herein **do not** necessarily represent Agency policy on land conservation activities. Nonetheless, the information contained in this document was essential input that was fully considered by the Steering Committee in developing the final Plan. Viewed in this light, Volume II provides a useful framework for interpreting the Plan.

**Agency of Natural Resources
1999 LANDS CONSERVATION PLAN**

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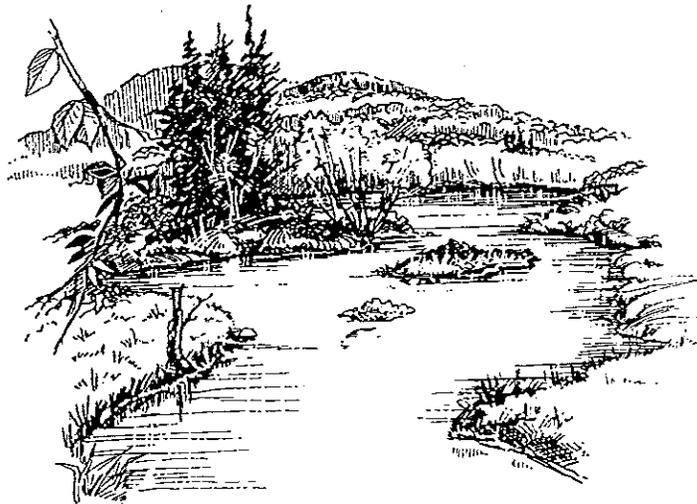
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I.

Review of Past Public Comment and Planning Documents Relating to Land Conservation Planning and Acquisition (April 1997)

**Review of Past Public Comment and Planning Documents Relating to
Land Conservation and Acquisition as part of the
Vermont Land Conservation Plan**



Presented to:

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April 22, 1997



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Commonalities and Trends in the Public Perception of Conservation Land and Acquisition

As one reviews the various plans and documents that have been prepared over the last ten years there are trends and common themes that become apparent in the public's perception and desires for land conservation and acquisition in Vermont. In some instance differences are observed between the southern half and the northern half of the state. In many instances there is a differing of view points on the importance of conservation/preservation versus economic opportunities for citizens. In the review of these documents the following needs, ideas and trends came forth:

- Forest lands are important for the economic opportunities and jobs they foster as well as land base for wildlife and recreation opportunities.
- Undeveloped shore line is valued in Vermont as perceived as a resource that is in danger from development and overuse.
- Critical wildlife habitat, natural areas, fragile areas and lands that support diverse communities especially species that may be rare or endangered are of high value to Vermonters and deserve protection.
- The majority of Regional Plans focus attention on forest lands, agricultural lands and natural areas and wildlife habitat. Many have goals and policies specifically for the protection or sustainability of these resources. Most recognize the first two as essential to the regions economic base. About half of the plans call for cooperation with federal and state agencies and/or nonprofit conservation groups to acquire important lands or protect them through easements or other measures.
- There is an overwhelming sentiment from the public that eminent domain should not be used as a land acquisition tool and if used only in the instances of a "friendly taking" in order to clear tile.
- The public and agencies more and more view alternatives actions such as purchase of development rights or conservation easements as a preferred alternative to fee simple acquisition.
- The public wants the costs of management and compensation to towns for loss of property tax to be considered as part of the full purchase price of a piece of property being considered for acquisition.
- Any acquisition should involve public hearing and weigh the benefits of acquisition versus other actions. This weighing process should consider local economies, tax base and private property rights.

- Consistently there is a call for partnerships between public agencies, nonprofit organizations, private individuals and the public at large for land conservation and acquisition.
- There is a need for a State discretionary fund for acquisition rather than appropriations for each individual parcel that needs to be acquired. These funds should be used in combination with federal and nonprofit conservation group funds to maximize benefits and opportunities.
- Recreation uses on public lands and private lands are increasing, both types of lands are important to the recreation base in Vermont.
- Access to land and water for recreation is a critical issue of concern which varies from lack of opportunities especially on water bodies to concern over land posting. Purchasing access rights to rivers, lakes and ponds are a high priority for Vermonters.
- Hiking trails, bicycle paths and greenways are important to Vermonters for the recreation opportunities they offer.
- Increased usage by a variety of different groups is increasing the conflict between user groups. Management for recreation, conservation and acquisition strategies should also be looking to resolve or eliminate these conflicts.
- Recreation is increasing becoming an important factor to the economies of regions and communities, it is important to consider the economic benefits of recreation and begin to better document these.

Past Public Comment on Land Conservation 1986-1997

Interest in conservation of public lands has a long history in Vermont where concern for public lands has been voiced by the public and Vermont Agency officials for several decades. In an effort to identify past and ongoing trends in public sentiment for lands conservation the following documents have been examined for public participation comments in regard to land conservation and acquisition. These documents span the period between 1986 and 1996, representing ten years of concern and interest for these lands and issues in Vermont. Documents examined include state agency documents, Regional Plans and relevant documents and reports produced by Federal agencies, nongovernmental organizations, power companies, and joint efforts around the Lake Champlain Basin. At the end of this report which summarizes significant documents to the Land Conservation Plan process is a section on commonalities and trends that have noted in the various reports as expressed by the public or policies makers in consultation with the public.

State Documents

December 1996. *A Plan for a Decade of Progress, Actions for Vermonts Economy.* Vermont Economic Progress Council

The Vermont Economic Progress Council was established in 1994 Vermont Legislature. The 1996 report states goals for employment, wages and per capita income. Each of the Council's recommendations aims to help meet three basic objectives for Vermont:

1. Full employment, by creating 66,000 jobs between 1994 and 2004 and maintaining an unemployment rate of no more than 4%,
2. Bringing Vermonters' average wages and average per capita income up to 100% of the national averages, and
3. Maintaining Vermont's unique quality of life.

The report identifies tourism, recreation, hospitality and entertainment as an important part of Vermont's economy the major recommendation related to this sector is to clarify Vermont's Recreational Use Statute in regard to landowner liability for injuries on private land open for recreation. This issue is currently being worked on in the 1997 legislative session. The Council also recommends expanding travel and tourism. Tourism and recreation accounts for about 15 percent of Vermont's gross state product, with eight percent of this derived from visitors. It is a growth industry with consistent gains in both the number of visitors and related tax receipts.

In regard to tax issues, the recommendation that has impact on open land, forestry and agriculture practices is a recommendation concerning Use Value Appraisal. The report states, "The preservation and utilization of Vermont's lands as an active rural landscape is essential to the character and visual appeal of Vermont. The Council believes that land under good management practices should be taxed at its use value, not its development value." One of the three themes that emerged from examination of this issue is:

Open land is important to Vermont's economy and heritage and, in many cases, a bargain for towns. Even at its use value, open land often produces more revenue for the town than it costs to provide services to the landowner. This is less often the case with developed land.

With more than three-quarters of its landscape forested, Vermont has a vibrant and vital forest products industry. It is an economic anchor in many local and regional economies involving jobs that require skill, judgment and creativity, and increasing levels of training. The report notes the Forest Resource Advisory Council's Rural Economic Development Subcommittee findings:

- Sustainable forest management will support a sustainable products industry.
- Uncertainty in property and use value taxation is affecting business investment in timber production.
- Market opportunities from Vermont wood is important particularly addressing loss of sawlog-quality wood to export markets for value is added and marketing assistance to small wood products manufacturers.
- Education and training in timber production technologies.
- Permitting issues affect some operators.
- Legislative attention (for forestry) is warranted for both substantive and symbolic reasons.

The Economic Progress Council endorses the work of C and its work groups to promote growth in the forest products industry and will look further incorporate their recommendations as they develop.

July 1996. *Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan July 1, 1996-June 30, 1999.* Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, Vermont Agency of Natural Resources.

Department Mission

The Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation is a key leader in advocating for the conservation, stewardship, and protection of Vermont's forest land, natural resources, and outdoor recreation opportunities, for this and future generations.

Who We are and What We Do

To fulfill the mission, the Department will continue to work, as we have for almost a century, for the wise management and use of Vermont's forests, forest land, other natural resources, and outdoor recreation opportunities. The Department's broad responsibilities are to:

- acquire, manage, and conserve state forests, parks, and natural areas,
- assist in managing other state and municipal land,
- assist in statewide protection of biological diversity, plant and wildlife habitats, and water resources,
- monitor statewide condition of forests,
- protect forests from large-scale outbreaks of diseases, insect pests and wildfire,
- plan, provide, monitor, and promote outdoor recreation opportunities,
- protect significant other resources on state land, such as historic and cultural sites,
- assist and promote forest-based businesses and rural-based economies,
- help private landowners be better stewards of their land and resources,
- assist communities in urban and community forestry,
- work in partnership with others on projects of mutual interest, and
- offer education on natural resource conservation.

While the Department deals with natural resources, an underlying, legislatively-mandated foundation of all our work is service to the people.

The Department has developed outcomes, objectives and strategies in response to trends observed in Vermont. Included here are the desired outcomes with objectives found in the plan.

A. Outcome: Good Land Stewardship.

Objective: Practice and promote concepts of sustainable, integrated natural resources conservation, management, and protection, on both public and private land.

B. Outcome: Healthy Terrestrial Ecosystems.

Objective: Participate in efforts to assess, monitor, and maintain healthy terrestrial ecosystems in Vermont.

C. Outcome: Sustainable Use of Vermont's Natural Resources.

Objective: Define, explore, and promote appropriate use of local and regional natural resources in a way that 1) are sustainable, 2) help strengthen rural

economies, 3) are compatible with rural lifestyles and values, and 4) are based on sound ecological principles.

D. Outcome: Undeveloped Outdoor Recreation.

Objective: Provide and promote opportunities for high-quality, undeveloped outdoor recreation experiences that are compatible with 1) the natural environment in which they occur and 2) rural lifestyles and values of Vermonters.

E. Outcome: Developed Outdoor Recreation

Objective: Provide, maintain, and promote appropriate facilities that 1) are compatible with the natural resource they use or affect, 2) respect the rural lifestyles and values of Vermonters, and 3) reflect interests of the local community.

F. Outcome: Educate Citizenry in Natural Resources.

Objective: Provide people of all ages and levels of education with information and education on the state's natural heritage and on natural resources management, so that they may better understand and participate knowledgeably in the conservation, stewardship, and protection of natural and cultural resources.

G. Outcome: Understand/Provides Excellent Public Service.

Objective: Relate to individuals, resource users, groups, and others as customers of services we provide. Involve people in a meaningful way in decisions that affect them and their communities. Maintain open communications--individually, and collectively--with the public, constituencies, Executive Branch, and the Legislature.

H. Outcome: Efficient operations and Effective Management

Objective: Continue to pursue efficient and effective operations of the Department, especially in the aftermath of downsizing, early retirements, and budget constraints.

The strategic plan is one phase of an ongoing, cyclical planning process. Periodically--and no less than every three years--the strategic plan will be reassessed to evaluate how the Department is progressing and make necessary adjustments, changes and improvements.

July 1996. Draft Strategic Plan. Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife

The Draft Strategic Plan of the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife identifies the mission of the organization, goals, objectives and strategies for facing the challenges of fish, wildlife and plant conservation.

The mission of the Department of Fish and Wildlife is the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the people of Vermont. In order to accomplish this mission, the integrity, diversity, and vitality of all natural systems must be protected.

Goals of the Department are:

- 1) Promote responsive management and effective customer service for all Department programs by providing opportunities for citizen participation and input, volunteer service, and partnerships and by stressing timely and accurate feedback to public inquires.
- 2) Develop and disseminate timely information and education materials about fish and wildlife resources, management issues, and Department programs in order to promote an informed citizenry.
- 3) Protect, enhance, conserve, and restore viable populations of native and naturalized species of fish, wildlife, and plants consistent with biological, social, and economic considerations.
- 4) Promote stewardship and protection of ecosystems, habitats, and natural communities.
- 5) Provide a variety of high quality fish and wildlife-based outdoor recreation opportunities compatible with the ecological integrity of affected resources
- 6) Improve access to Department lands, facilities, and public waters for fish and wildlife outdoor recreation.

May 1996. *Vermont Lake and Pond Recreation Survey.* Macro International Inc.

The Vermont Lake and Pond Study has attempted to obtain information on Vermonters in order to assist with the parameters and direction of the USE of Public Waters Policy, and to further efforts in managing the state's lakes and ponds and in providing additional public access. A questionnaire was developed by the steering committee for this project and Macro International, Inc. of Burlington, Vermont. The questionnaire was programmed in CfMC on a computer aided telephone surveying system at Macro International, Inc. Between February 9 and 28 of 1996, a total of 873 Vermonters 18 years or older were contacted by telephone using a random digit dialing. They were asked a series of questions concerning their recreational activities around or on Vermont's lakes and ponds. The following are some key findings from this study as they relate to land conservation or acquisition.

- About 82% of adult Vermonters used a lake or pond for recreation at least once in 1995.
- The top favorite lakes are Champlain, Bomoseen, Dunmore, Willoughby, and Carmi.
- Respondents were asked their opinion about how well Vermont is managing lakes for recreation use. About 47% of the respondents say they think Vermont is doing a good or excellent job in this regard. About 8% say that Vermont is doing a poor job managing its lakes and ponds.
- 67% use shorelines of lakes and/or ponds for sunbathing, picnicking, walking or hiking.

- 58% observe wildlife.
- 34% camp overnight.
- 33% fish from shore.

The when asked what were the most desirable aspects of lakes and ponds in Vermont, 86% of respondents stated the presence of wildlife and birds (moose, loons, etc.); 84% said solitude and quietness; 72% stated undeveloped shorelines or natural features; 64% Easy access to the water-parking close to beach, etc.; and , 23% stated the opportunity to be with many people.

February 1996. Vermont Residents' Opinions and Attitudes Toward Species Management. Responsive Management, Harrisonburg, Virginia.

This study was conducted for the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department by Responsive Management to gauge the opinions and attitudes of Vermont residents to provide input for the Department's species management plan. the survey assessed residents' opinions on habitat protection, nuisance wildlife, population levels for specific species, moose hunting, participation in wildlife viewing and hunting. also included in the survey were questions designed to assess hunters' satisfaction with recent hunting experiences and opinions regarding specific game species management issues including, season lengths, antlerless deer permits, bag limits and black bear licenses. The survey was randomly administered by phone during the hours between 9:00 am and 9:00 pm.

The first series of questions asked to participants concerned opinions towards habitat conservation. Five habitat conservation methods were presented to respondents. These were: working with planning commissions to design plans that work around and preserve important wildlife habitat; providing incentives to landowners; purchasing land; regulating logging areas; and protecting habitat through Act 250. All five options received very high support ranging from 94% to 82% supporting each option. The most popular option was working with town and regional planning commissions with 94% of the respondents in favor of this approach. This was followed by using Act 250 for protecting wildlife with 82% of the respondents supporting this option. Incentives to land owners was favored by 86% of respondents, purchase of land received 85% support from survey respondents, and regulating logging in areas with important habitat received 82% support.

Two-thirds of respondents indicated they would likely purchase a \$5 to \$10 habitat conservation stamp to generate money for the protection of important habitat in Vermont. Although it may be an over-estimation to conclude that 63% of Vermont adults will actually purchase a habitat stamp. To be most accurate, consider the percentages who said they would be very likely to purchase a habitat stamp, which was 29% of respondents. City respondents (56%) were the least likely to buy a habitat conservation stamp; 63% of small town respondents were likely and 71% of rural respondents were likely to buy, and 71% of farm respondents were likely to buy a habitat conservation stamp.

March 1995. *Vermont Residents' Opinions and Attitudes Toward Alternative Funding Mechanisms for the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife. Responsive Management, Harrisonburg, Virginia.*

This study was conducted for the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife by Responsive Management to gauge the opinions and attitudes of adult Vermont residents toward the Department performance, the amount of emphasis currently place on Department programs, and various funding mechanisms for fish and wildlife related programs in the state. A questionnaire was prepared and administered to 2809 random phone numbers. Of these 2809 numbers, 242 were disconnected numbers, 18 deaf or language barrier problems, 465 businesses, 311 "no answer" after 5 attempts, 465 hard refusals, 272 soft refusals, 35 terminated interviews, and 1001 completed surveys. Thus response rate for this survey was 56%.

The first series of questions aimed to assess residents' opinions of funding levels for five state government programs. One program was fish and wildlife conservation. Thirty nine percent of the respondents stated funding for fish and wildlife conservation programs should increase, 47% said remain the same, 8% said decrease, 5% don't know and 1% had no opinion. Wildlife recreationalists and those who donate to the state's non-game fund were more likely than those who do not participate in these activities to say funding for fish and wildlife conservation should increase. Specifically, 54% of hunter versus 35% of non-hunters; 47% of anglers versus 33% of non-anglers; and 41% of residential wildlife viewers versus 32% of individuals who do not view wildlife at home.

Nine Fish and Wildlife Department programs were presented to respondents who were instructed to indicate if they thought the amount of time and money spent on each program should be more the same, or less. The public lands program received the highest percentage of respondents indicating a preference for more time and money (47%). Seventeen percent of the respondents said the Department should spend much more money and time on the public lands program. This program includes managing Department lands, streams and lakes, increasing access to these areas as well as purchase of additional sites, 30% said slightly more, 40% said the same, 5% said slightly less and 4% did not know.

Twelve alternative funding mechanisms were presented to respondents who were asked if they would support or oppose each mechanism. A majority of respondents supported all twelve mechanisms. Charts Q27-38 illustrate the percentage of respondents that support and the percentage which oppose the various alternative funding mechanisms.

January 1995. *Long-term Goals and Financial Plan for Housing and Conservation. Vermont Housing and Conservation Board/Agency of Natural Resources*

This report to the General Assembly lays out the Administration's goals and plans to assist communities, community groups and the State in addressing affordable housing and conservation activities to be undertaken from 1995 to 2000.

Approximately 12% of Vermont's land base can be considered "public open space". Totalling more than 700,00 acres, these lands are owned by federal and state managing agencies, municipal governments or non-profit conservation organizations. The goals of the state's conservation efforts are in response to the loss of important natural resources which can be divided into two broad categories. The first is loss of access caused by factors such as posting of private land. The second is the permanent loss of resources, such as draining of a wetland or development of a previously pristine stretch of lakeshore.

The advisory committee who prepared this report concluded that loss of access to Vermont's recreation resources poses moderate threats to Vermonters' quality of life, but no health or ecological risk. Risks to quality of life include: 1) land posting; 2) reduced access to shorelines and river fronts; 3) increased recreation use of Vermont's public lands and waters resulting in overcrowding at some public facilities and resources; 4) increased expense for use of private recreation facilities and resources; 5) incompatible uses resulting in more user conflicts; and 6) reduced quality of outdoor recreation experiences from overcrowding, user conflicts and degraded resources.

Biologists, natural resource managers and policy makers increasingly speak about the importance of ecosystem management and the need to maintain large unbroken tracts of forest land, a specific natural resource value of importance to many Vermonters. There is no general agreement about the minimum size of such a forest ecosystem. A special task force of the Society for American Foresters reported: "To help establish the context for discussing ecosystem management in this report, we suggest a landscape may range from 100,000 to 1,000,000 acres in size, but recognize there will be circumstances where the size of the landscape may be either smaller or larger in achieving ecosystem management objectives." The North forests Lands Council noted in its study of land conversion activities:

"It is likely that development pressures from the vacation/second home market, while temporarily reduced, will continue to place significant conversion pressures on owners of certain lands with high amenities, particularly water frontage and scenic areas, especially for lands most accessible from major metropolitan areas."

This report points to the 1992 Recreation Survey and Environmental Index which notes that 77 percent of 510 respondents said they considered development along lakeshores to be a problem. Seventy three percent termed loss of wetlands to be a problem and 81 percent said destruction of wildlife habitat was also a problem. The table on the next page illustrates lands identified by ANR's Land Acquisition Review Committee as a priority for acquisition in each region of the state. This report notes that these purchases seem to have broad support in the Agency of Natural Resources.

Financial recommendations for conservation land in this report provides both a short-term and long term fiscal plan for acquisition and purchase of development rights. The short term financial needs exceeds 8.5 million dollars for

fiscal 1996. Alternative financing is discussed with alternative financing from private foundations of \$1,000,000, Long Trail Legislative Appropriation of \$250,00 and federal grants for State acquisitions of 400,00 along with \$2,250,00 from the Housing and Conservation board for a total alternative fund allotment of \$4,150,000. The report goes on to point out that acquisition cost should also consider the ongoing cost of management of acquired lands and the cost of taxes paid to towns on state lands. Currently, ANR pays 1 percent of fair market value of the land (or, if enrolled in current use value appraisal, 1 percent if its current use value). In most cases, this payment is less (sometimes considerably less) than property taxes that would be generated under private ownership. Increasingly local officials resist a proposed state acquisition simply on this basis and feel strongly that state lands ought to pay "their fair share" of taxes.

The report goes on the state, While it is true in most cases, public open space does not generate as much in property taxes as it would if the lands were left in private ownership, it should be recognized that such lands do not typically require the services associated with developed lands. In fact, recent studies have shown that on this basis, open space compares favorably with residential and even commercial development. Although developed land will generate greater property tax revenue than public open space, these gains are usually off-set over the long term because of the expensive cost of serving these lands (i.e. roads, sewers, water, schools, etc.) An increasing body of research has begun to illustrate the economic benefits of open space. According to a 1990 study by the University of Vermont, more than \$200 million per year is spent in Vermont by hunters and anglers on non-durable and durable goods related to hunting and fishing. These expenditures generate over \$10 million per year in state sales revenue. Another recent study shows snowmobiling generates over \$45 million per year in Vermont. These figures must be qualified by the fact that much hunting, fishing and snowmobiling occurs on private lands thus not all of these activity specific expenditures can be attributed to public lands. Nonetheless, Vermont's state forests, parks and wildlife management areas undoubtedly account for a significant portion of this economic activity.

January 1994. *Affordable Housing and Land Conservation in Vermont.* Report of The Interim Legislative Committee on The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board

The committee who worked on this report was charged specifically with developing "a long range plan for appropriate levels of state financial participation in the mission of the Vermont housing and conservation board."

The significant finding of this committee is that: Current data collection on affordable housing and land conservation activities in the state is inadequate for long range, inter-agency planning, or for program oversight by the executive and legislative branches. The recommendation which proceeded from this finding is that--The Governor should establish improved program information capacity, covering all affordable housing and land conservation activities in Vermont using state and federal funds, including the following features:

- 1) A central registry and clearing house of information.
- 2) Explicit assignments to individual organizations.
- 3) Common data formats and electronic reporting methods.
- 4) An annual schedule for collection and reporting of information.

Additional findings for land conservation include:

How to decide on the amount of other types of land to protect in the future is possibly even more difficult than agricultural land. However, based on historic rates of acquisition of ANR land, it may be observed that conservation land is today being protected at roughly the same, or greater, rate during the historically high point in Vermont of the 1960's. Thus, during the period in which the VHCB has been active, conservation land has been protected on average at the rate of 6,400 acres per year. Because the survey on which this figure is based was incomplete, land has been protected in fact at a greater rate. In comparison, the ANR acquired land during the 1960's at a rate of 6,100 acres. When comparing costs of acquisition, using inflation adjusted, 1993 dollar values, a greater amount is seen to be spent today than during the 1960's, an average of \$625 per acre today compared to \$407 per acre during the 1960's. However, both today and in the 1960's, the state share of the total cost has been about the same, approximately 60 percent. Thus the most notable difference in this nonagricultural land conservation activity between the 1960's and today, is that the decline in federal funds used for this purpose has largely been offset by a use today of private funds, which now make up 20 percent of the total cost.

December 1993. *Vermont Trails and Greenways Plan*. VT Dept. of Forests, Parks and Recreation.

The purpose of the *Vermont Trails and Greenways Plan* is to set forth an agenda for preserving existing trails and corridors, accommodating all trail uses while eliminating user conflicts, and developing additional trail opportunities and greenways. This plan is an element of the *Vermont Recreation Plan*. The plan provides a framework for:

1. identifying trails and greenways values;
2. assessing those values;
3. developing implementation strategies to protect those values; and
4. to set a course of implementation and direction for the next five years.

The Vermont Trails and Greenways Council, which evolved from the Trails Task Force, served as a steering committee for the planning effort. Three citizen task groups, with representation from both within and outside of the trails community, were formed to address the plan's subgoals: Mapping and Inventory; Issues and Research; and Marketing.

From this planning process seven major issues were identified and goals created for each of these issues. The seven issues and their goals created for trails and greenways include:

Issue 1: Protection of Resources

Goal: Adequately protect existing trail corridors and greenways, including the natural resources and to identify, develop and protect potential new trails and greenways opportunities while at the same time enhancing wetland, stream, upland, lake and pond habitats.

Issue 2: Establishing Trails for All Users

Goal: Maintain existing trails, and to identify and develop future trails and greenways to meet various user ability levels and experience needs for all types of trails, such as short and long distance trails, trails of varying difficulties, loop trails, trails accessible to persons with disabilities, and conservation greenways.

Goal: Improve information available to the public about existing trail and greenway opportunities.

Issue 3: Compatibility of Trail Activities

Goal: Minimize conflicts between trail organizations and other interest groups through good communication.

Goal: Provide both single and multiple use trails both different and same season use) that do not significantly reduce the quality of the experience or present safety problems.

Goal: Educate user to act in a manner to minimize problems and conflicts.

Issue 4: Partnerships

Goal: Coordinate services provided by trail and greenway land managers and user groups.

Goal: Encourage coordination and cooperation statewide, regionally and locally when identifying, developing and managing existing and new trail and greenway corridors and systems.

Issue 5: Maintenance

Goal: Maintain all trails to standards adopted by the trail organizations.

Issue 6: Funding

Goal: Establish adequate and stable sources of funding and support for trails and greenways.

Issue 7: Existing Laws

Sub-issue: The general landowner liability law needs to be updated to make it more understandable, to eliminate loop-holes and provide greater protection for landowners who make their land available for recreation.

Goal: Encourage landowners to make land available for trails by improving Vermont's existing landowner liability law.

Sub-issue: Class 4 highways and Trails continue to be thrown up or developed and lost as a trail resource.

Goal: Retain availability of Class 4 Highways and legal trails for recreation and trail use.

Sub-issue: Vermont does not provide any mechanism for compensating landowners who allow recreation trails on their lands.

Goal: Develop a program that provides incentives to landowners that encourages and supports them in making their land available for trails and greenways.

Each of these issues and goals have had actions developed to meet these challenges. Those actions can be found in Appendix A.

October 1993. Vermont Recreation Plan. VT Dept. of Forests, Parks and Recreation.

The 1993 Vermont Recreation Plan identifies and addresses the statewide recreation needs and issues. The plan serves as a prioritization tool by assessing citizens needs and relating those needs to legislative protections and resource allocations at the state level. Moreover the plan serves as a coordinating function by assuring the facilitates and resource opportunities, planned and developed by local, state, and federal providers, correspond with the needs of citizens and maximize opportunities for dollars spent.

Citizen involvement has been an integral part of accomplishing the goals of the Vermont Recreation Plan. To ensure this involvement six of the nine citizen task groups created for the plan were recommended to evaluate specific areas of Vermont's recreation resources. To augment the findings and issues addressed by the task groups and special studies, a sample of Vermont residents were asked to provide opinions about the importance of identified recreation issues and evaluations of the state's environmental resources. In total, 885 Vermont households were contacted yielding a total of 510 usable completed questionnaires. The results of this work has been used to assist in planning for recreation opportunities in the state.

The results of the questionnaires are illustrated here in Table 1, from the 1993 Vermont Recreation Plan. Table 3 from the plan illustrates the Importance of Recreation-related issues to Vermonters who were surveyed. Table 4 from the plan illustrates attitudes for the future direction of recreation in Vermont and compares those in 1992 with attitudes in 1988. Table five shows the publics priorities for recreation spending. All of these tables can be found in Appendix B.

Those attitudes that apply to land conservation in Vermont include:

- The majority of respondents feel that communities should plan for bicycle and pedestrian paths and greenways.

- Designated areas for all-terrain vehicles should be established on public lands in Vermont.
- There has been a decrease in the number of people who feel the government should acquire more land in Vermont for recreation from 1998 to the 1992 results.
- 51% of respondents feels that Government and private businesses in Vermont cooperate well in providing recreation opportunities.

Conclusions of the 1993 Vermont Recreation Plan point out that Vermont's environment and scenery continues to be perceived by Vermonters as the state's highest quality resource—a trend that has been measured since 1986. The quality of Vermont's water resources as both recreational and environmental amenities appears to be an area of concern. Issues perceived as "big environmental problems" include disposal of solid and toxic wastes, loss of agricultural lands, acid rain and the increasing development of Vermont. The majority of Vermonters surveyed agreed that the state was doing well in the protection of the natural environment; however, they did not agree that future generations would enjoy a better quality environment. Vermonters did not believe that the state's environmental laws were too strict and supported the idea that environmental protection and economic progress could go hand in hand. There is strong support was voiced for trails and greenways and including adequate shoulder development on new or improved roads for bicyclists. Overall, Vermonters perceived the effects of visitors and tourists to the state to be positive with creation of opportunities for jobs, cultural activities, shopping and recreation; however there was concern expressed for the impacts of tourists on traffic conditions, the costs of land and housing and crime in Vermont.

September 1993. *The Vermont Management Plan for Brook, Brown and Rainbow Trout*. VT Dept. of Fish and Wildlife.

The management of Vermont's fisheries resources is a multi-faceted program consisting of habitat protection, restoration and enhancement; regulation of angular harvest; and species introductions or restorations, which in some cases include the use of cultured fish. In addition to its many intrinsic values, fishing in Vermont is also important economically. In 1990, an estimated 119.9 million dollars were spent by anglers in Vermont. The following are excerpts from the VT Department of Fish and Wildlife Management Plan for Brook, Brown and Rainbow Trout. Strategies for each recommendation are only those which relate to land conservation or acquisition in Vermont.

Recommendations

As human population growth increases the pressures on natural resources, the importance of habitat protection will only increase. Habitat protection is essential to the departments efforts to sustain and manage the State's wild trout resource. If Vermont is to conserve this resource and with it, quality angling, then habitat protection and management must be our highest priority. to meet this need the following actions are recommended:

1. Participate aggressively in environmental regulatory process to protect and restore fish habitat.
2. Strongly advocate habitat protection with other agencies, developers, private landowners and the public.

Strategy: Work with the other departments of the Agency of Natural Resources in the development of policies, regulations and laws related to fish habitat.

Strategy: Work with other agencies and local governments to encourage sound land-use practices in and around streams/rivers and lakes/ponds.

3. Develop a program to restore damaged trout habitat. Evaluate the effectiveness of habitat enhancements.

Strategy: Investigate the use and development of incentive programs to encourage good riparian stewardship.

4. Identify irreplaceable and high value wild trout habitat.

Strategy: Consider purchase of the riparian property or development rights. Work with other land acquisition groups as necessary to fund the purchaser of property or development rights. Investigate additional funding mechanisms.

August 1993. Vermont Wetlands Conservation Strategy. VT Dept. of Forests, Parks and Recreation

The Vermont Wetlands Conservation Strategy project was undertaken by the Wetlands Office of the Agency of Natural Resources to increase awareness about Vermont's wetlands and wetland protection programs. Interviews were conducted or written comments were received from 65 individuals that represent conservation organizations, business and industry affiliates, government agencies, ongoing interstate initiatives and university professors. Responses were compiled by subject into nine major categories, the responses and information gathered on wetlands were the basis of developing a strategy. Some of the key objective which came out of this process are:

1. Update and improve the inventory of wetlands in Vermont through a consistent statewide approach, so as to provide better information to landowners, planning authorities, and regulators, and to better assess the status and trends of Vermont wetlands.
2. Improve the coordination and consistency among municipal, state, and federal regulatory programs so as to enhance wetland protection, increase the certainty and predictability of regulatory outcomes, and reduce duplication in permitting.
3. Improve our understanding of ability to assess wetland functions and values and cumulative impacts to wetlands.
4. Improve statewide education and outreach programs on the functions and values of wetlands and wetland protection programs.

5. Increase regional and local involvement in wetland protection and conservation efforts, and expand technical assistance programs to support the development of sound local protection efforts.
6. Develop and implement incentive programs, including land appraisal and taxing policies, that promote the private protection of wetlands.
7. Support continued planning and implementation of acquisition programs for especially high value and threatened wetlands.

A plan for monitoring and evaluating progress towards implementing the Vermont Wetlands Protection Goal is proposed based on these goals.

December 1991. *Land Acquisition Survey Report*. Jerry Jerkins.

The Land Acquisition Survey Report is the result of an 18 month study of Vermont conservation lands and conservation land acquisition policy. Its purposes are to summarize public land holdings, to examine the need for future acquisitions, and to suggest policies for future land acquisitions by the Agency of Natural Resources.

The conclusions of this study in regard to land acquisition are:

- In 1991, about 13% of Vermont or 700,000 acres is publicly owned conservation lands. The federal government is the largest land holder with 5.7% of those lands, the Agency of Natural Resources holds 4.5%, private conservation groups hold 1% and towns about 0.6% of total conservation lands in Vermont.
- In the four years prior to 1991 governments and private organizations have acquired between 4000 and 7000 acres of conservation land annually, with a total expenditure of between 8 and 12 million dollars per year. The largest purchasers have been the Green Mountain National Forest, the Vermont Land Trust and the Nature Conservancy. Major funding sources have been the US federal government (2 million dollars annually), the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (About 4 million dollars annually) and conservation groups and foundations (estimated expenditures are 2-6 million dollars annually).
- From the 1950's through the 1980's VT ANR had a vigorous acquisition program of between 4000 to 7000 acres per year. Funding was relatively steady and discretionary thus the Agency was able to do long range acquisition planning and work on incrementally large projects.
- From 1979-1988 funding to ANR for acquisition decreased by approximately 40% and became one time appropriations ear-marked for specific projects. The rate of land acquisition fell to about a third of what it was prior to 1979.

Conclusions for access and protection found in the study are:

- About 50% of the 281 lakes in Vermont which are 20 acres or larger have public access. Approximately 62 of these lakes have 80% or more of the shoreline publicly owned or available for public use.

- There are approximately 30 public access points on the 330 miles of Vermont shore of Lake Champlain. The total public shoreline is about 45 miles, or 14% of the lake, of which a third is wetland. Hence less than 10% of the Vermont shore of lake Champlain is available for land-based recreation.
- There are at least 180 sites on rivers that are regularly used for swimming, and at least twice that many are used for boating and fishing. There are very few developed access areas of any kind on rivers.
- Currently, access to rivers is generally good, but there are a number of areas--including important rivers--where river shores are posted, or where public access points are limited.
- About 63 lakes of 20 acres or more in Vermont have undeveloped shores; about 26 of these (41%) have 80% or more public ownership of the shores.
- The large and medium size rivers in the state have about 250 miles of river corridor which are undeveloped and have natural vegetation. About 40 miles of these corridors (16%) are publicly owned.
- Of the 113 wetlands (or groups of wetlands) of over 200 acres, about 18 (16%) have over 80% public ownership, and another 12 (11%) have 40-80% public ownership.
- There are least 100 significant waterfalls and gorges in Vermont, 52 are considered to be state significant or of the highest significance. About 425 of the significant waterfalls and gorges are on public land.
- There are about 150 to 200 large open cliffs in Vermont, of which 53 are considered significant. About 40% of the significant cliffs are on public land.
- There are approximately 357 plant species in Vermont which are considered rare they are know at 20 or fewer sites in the state. About 23% of these are on public lands, and about 50% of the species have at least one colony on public land.
- There are about 135 plant species in Vermont which are legally designated as threatened or endangered species. Fifty six of these species (45%) populations are on public land.
- There are approximately 40 sites in Vermont where natural communities which are rated as the highest significant examples of their kind in the state. Twenty one of these are on public land and another six have greater than 40% public ownership.
- There are approximately 120 sites in Vermont that have natural communities which are considered significant examples of their kind. Forty three of these are on public land and another eight are on lands with at least 40% public ownership.

These conclusions have been drawn of acquisition policy in the Jerkins Study:

~The highest priority areas for state land acquisitions are:

- Acquiring critical lands necessary to complete or protect existing state lands.
- Securing improved public access to the Champlain shore, to extensive privatized rivers, and to major lakes which currently don't have access.
- Acquiring lands that would make possible new long distance trail systems, either foot trails, bicycle trails or boat trails.
- Acquiring recreation lands on rivers, lake shores, and at quarries which are currently in public use, and where there is substantial danger that the public will be excluded in the future.

~The highest priority areas for land protection-which may or may not involve acquisition-are:

- Protecting undeveloped lakes and river shores.
- Protecting large tracts of forest lands to maintain the continuity of the central forested corridor in the Green Mountains.
- Protecting threatened natural communities, particularly lowland boreal forest, limy conifer swamps, old growth woodlands, and high diversity limy hardwood forests.

~There are three reasons that the areas listed above are considered of high priority.

First, because they involve lands of high value that are immediately threatened.

Second, because the lands involved are available now but may not be available in the future.

And third, because in many cases the Agency of Natural Resources is the only organization in the state interested in or capable of these type of acquisitions.

~In cases where the site is not currently threatened, the acquisition of habitat for endangered species, of wetlands, of high altitude lands, or cliffs, waterfalls, and gorges, of swimming holes and of other shore lands, may in some cases be desirable, but not as high a priority as the areas listed above

~If the Agency of Natural Resources is to undertake an organized program of land acquisition it will have to do the following things:

First, Make a decision, with public support and involvement, about what kind of acquisition goals it wants to pursue, and what kinds of acquisitions have the highest priority.

Second, seek a dedicated and reasonable stable acquisition budget that will allow it to work towards these goals, without having to seek separate appropriations or grants for each individual acquisition.

Third, hire a planner, or planners, who will be in charge of investigating, proposing and evaluating new additions.

Fourth, hire a data manager, who will work with the Heritage Program, the acquisition planners, and the GIS office, and who will maintain databases on the current location, ownership, ratings, and availability of conservation lands in general, and particularly of proposed acquisitions.

Fifth, research prospective acquisitions, choose the sites of the highest quality and those most consistent with policy goals, and solicit offers to sell from owners.

Sixth, recognize that the resources for acquisition will always be limited, and that state ownership is not necessarily the most desirable way of protecting land, cooperate with other organizations and investigate methods of protecting land and insuring public access that do not require acquisition.

July 1990. *Vermont Lakes and Ponds Recreation Management Study*. VT Dept. of Forests, Parks and Recreation.

This study of recreation use and needs on Vermont's ponds and lakes includes three documents, 1) the Delphi Process and Manager Interviews, 2) Prioritization Process for Lake recreation Management Actions and 3) the *Vermont Lakes and Ponds Recreation Management Study*. The Delphi Process was a survey and questionnaire process of interviews to approximately 100 state, regional, local officials, lake management authorities, recreation user groups, lake association members and other to ascertain uses levels, trends, issues, conflicts and other factors around management of this resource. The Management Plan is the compilation of these interviews and the Prioritization Process along with a review of literature on water recreation usage, analysis of current and future needs on Vermont lakes and ponds. A citizens steering committee oversaw the progress of this study. It consisted of representatives from recreation user organizations and groups, lake associations, state and federal agencies, the legislature and enforcement agencies. The general public also had the opportunity to review the study. Public forums were held to solicit the general public's comments and were incorporated into the final document. Many of the findings in this study relate to on-water usage, nuisance aquatic plants, water quality and other in or on water issues. Some of the key findings viewed as problem issues from the interview surveys and public input with relevance to land conservation are:

- Providing public access sites and misuses of public access sites
- Impacts of lake shore development
- Pressure on state and local governments to provide land and pond related services and management.
- Development of undeveloped lakes.
- Insufficient trail access to undeveloped lakes.

While the bulk on this study deals with water based recreation issues and management, it is important to note that many of these issues and conflict concern access, shoreline usage and abuse and the development of once undeveloped lakes which includes opening of lands around these ponds and lakes to greater public usage.

June 1990. *Deer Management Plan for the State of Vermont, 1990-95.* VT Dept. of Fish and Wildlife.

During the fall of 1989, the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department initiated a Citizens Participation (CP) Process to assist in the formulation of a white-tailed deer management plan. The "Draft Deer Management Plan for the State of Vermont, 1990-95" became the focal point of the CP process and approximately 5,000 copies were distributed to the public and interest groups. Comments on the Draft Plan were received verbally at 13 state-wide forums attended by approximately 1,500 people, and in writing. Many people took the time to send in a personal letter and over 1,7000 questionnaires were returned. Once this information had been reviewed by Deer Project Staff, eleven additional meetings with groups of 10 to 20 people were held. These "mini-meetings" were designed to address deer management issues in detail and to reach consensus about regional population objectives. After this input a final plan was created and presented to approximately 450 people who attended one of eight plan presentation meetings.

Survey Results and Recommendations that relate to Land Conservation and Acquisition:

Survey questions 1 through 6 relate to land conservation and acquisition.

1. Should the State of Vermont acquire more private lands to protect deer habitat? 83.4%-Approve; 4.2%-Undecided; 12.4% Disapprove.
2. Should the State of Vermont acquire more private lands to protect deer habitat even if a town's property tax base was negatively impacted? 61.6%-Approve; 12.9%-Undecided; 25.5% Disapprove.
3. Should the State of Vermont compensate landowners who cannot develop their lands as they want to because of critical deer habitat issues? 57.7%-Approve; 10.7%-Undecided; 31.6% Disapprove.

4. Where should moneys for land acquisition/compensation come from?

	<i>Approve</i>	<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Disapprove</i>
-income tax check-off?	63.2%	12.0%	24.8%
-conservation stamp?	73.0%	12.5%	14.5%
-general fund?	64.6%	13.2%	22.2%
-higher hunting license fees?	63.1%	6.2%	30.8%
-lottery?	71.2%	13.8%	0%
-other?	60.4%	29.1%	10.4%

5. Should the State of Vermont regulate logging in critical deer habitat (i.e., winter range)? 82.4%-Approve; 4.0%-Undecided; 13.6% Disapprove.
6. Should the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department play an active role in protecting bear habitat within the Act 200 process? 68.1%-Approve; 18.5%-Undecided; 13.4% Disapprove.

The responses to these survey questions and the other public input resulted in recommendation eight in the final plan: **Address Habitat Protection/Acquisition Issues, Hunting Access, and Hunter Recruitment Issues.**

The planning process documented that there are serious concerns about deer hunting and habitat issues, specifically the need to: develop a winter range protection and acquisition program; assess alternatives for keeping private lands open to deer hunting; and promote greater deer hunting participation by youths. Since similar issues are being raised concerning the management of other species, it is recommended that the Department address these concerns in the context of a unified planning effort for all species.

June 1990. *Black Bear Management Plan for the State of Vermont, 1990-95.* VT Dept. of Fish and Wildlife.

During the fall of 1989, the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department initiated a Citizens Participation (CP) Process to gather public opinion about the department's proposed 1990-1995 Black Bear Management Plan. The department wanted citizen input regarding bear population levels, season and method of take issues, and habitat considerations. Nearly 2000 copies of the Draft Management Plan were distributed to a variety of publics and interest groups. Five public forums were held state-wide with nearly 250 people attending these forums. A one page questionnaire was distributed at deer "mini-meetings" to solicit deer hunters views of bear/ deer season issues. Sixty of these questionnaires were returned. In addition, 600 management plan questionnaires were return by the public. Four Citizen's Advisory groups were formed to include a cross-section of fundamentally differing public interests. The eight to nine person groups were provided with summarized data and charged with developing recommendations that would largely fulfill the desires of the collective opinions expressed through the public involvement process.

Plan Assumptions:

1. There are biological and societal limits to the number of bears Vermont can support.
2. Bears must be hunted.

Survey Results and Recommendations that relate to Land Conservation and Acquisition:

Survey questions 13 through 17 relate to land conservation and acquisition.

13. Should the State of Vermont acquire more private lands to protect bear habitat? 78.8%-Approve; 7.7%-Undecided; 13.5% Disapprove.

14. Should the State of Vermont compensate landowners who cannot develop their lands as they want to because of critical bear habitat issues? 65.2%-Approve; 14.3%-Undecided; 20.5% Disapprove.

15. Where should moneys for land acquisition/compensation come from?

	<i>Approve</i>	<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Disapprove</i>
-income tax check-off?	71.9%	9.8%	18.3%
-conservation stamp?	77.8%	13.8%	8.4%
-general fund?	54.8%	19.1%	26.1%
-bonds?	38.1%	29.8%	32.1%
-higher license fees?	55.4%	12.3%	32.3%
-lottery?	61.5%	16.3%	22.2%

16. Should the State of Vermont regulate logging in Act 250-identified "necessary wildlife habitat?" 74.8%-Approve; 7.7%-Undecided; 17.5% Disapprove.

17. Should the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department play an active role in protecting bear habitat within the Act 200 process? 79.1%-Approve; 8.4%-Undecided; 12.5% Disapprove.

The responses to these survey questions and the other public input resulted in recommendation eight in the final plan:

Address Habitat Protection/Acquisition Issues.

The planning process documented that there are serious public concerns about the need for habitat protection and land acquisition. The deer management planning process identified the same concerns about deer habitat. To assure a consistent approach, it is recommended that the Department address these concerns in the context of a unified planning effort for all species.

State of Vermont Report of the 1989 Summer Legislative Study Committee on Land Acquisition

In 1989 the General Assembly, through passage of Act 117, created the Summer Legislative Study Committee on Land Acquisition to prepare recommendations regarding state land acquisition. Area to be studied were funding of acquisitions, exchange and divestment of state lands, public involvement in acquisitions, state programs and policies that effect the price of land, and a process for planning state owned land uses. The committee was staffed by the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation and assisted by the Legislative Council.

Findings

An idea land acquisition process would satisfy the following criteria:

- a) proactive as well as reactive;
- b) responsive to unforeseen opportunities;

- c) orderly, systematic, priority driven;
 - d) based on planning;
 - e) accountable;
 - f) involves the public in planning and setting criteria;
 - g) a reliable, predictable, discretionary source of funding; and
 - h) timely, direct, simple and objective.
- Stewardship must be planned for all state lands and funds allocated to insure public benefit.
 - Flexibility and coordination must be used to expand all types of acquisition efficiently. The "dual-goal" philosophy of the Housing and Conservation Board of land conservation and affordable housing should continue to be encouraged.
 - Public and private partnerships and the use of less than fee simple purchase are viable alternatives which should be pursued.
 - Incentives to the private sector (such as tax relief, clarification of land owner liability laws and awards and recognition for land owners who provide public benefits, as recommended by the Northern Forests Lands Study) that protect the public use of and benefits from private land should be considered.
 - The Agency of Natural Resources must possess a land acquisition capability including adequate staff for both planning and acquisition.
 - In the opinion of the Committee, in order to satisfy these criteria, the Agency of Natural Resources acquisition process requires a discretionary fund. Within this report two models for such a fund are proposed

This study also calls for the 1986 land acquisition program to be improved and modified so that it is more proactive and can be used as a decision making tool. It calls for coordination with other departments in ANR, other agencies, and non-profit conservation organizations in land acquisition. In addition the study committee prepared a very comprehensive analysis pertaining to the disposal of surplus state properties. It found, though the disposal of state property should be approached with caution, an evaluation system which can be used to identify properties to dispose or exchange needs to be incorporated into the Agency of Natural Resources land acquisition program.

January 1988. *Report of the Governor's Commission on Vermont's Future: Guidelines for Growth.* Governor's Commission.

The report of the Governor's Commission on Vermont's Future developed during 1987 and 1988. in response to an accelerated rate of growth seen in the proceeding years. The Commission took testimony, comments and ideas from thousands of Vermont residents. From these they developed *Guidelines for Growth* with specific references to planning, economic development, natural

resources, agriculture and affordable housing. Those guidelines for natural resources that relate to land conservation include:

- Natural and historic features of the Vermont landscape should be protected and preserved.
- The quality of air, water, wildlife and land resources should be maintained and improved.
- Greenways should be strongly encouraged in transitional areas.
- Natural and fragile areas should be given special protection.
- Outstanding water resources, including lakes, rivers, important aquifers, shoreline and wetlands must be given special attention and protection.
- Sound forest management practices should be encouraged.
- Recreational opportunities for Vermont residents and visitors should be maintained and enhanced.

The report calls for the to protect the tradition of open land in Vermont. Stating that Vermonters have long enjoyed a tradition of landowners allowing the public to use their land for outdoor recreation. the state must encourage the continuation of this tradition.

**Fall 1987. *A Commitment to the Future: The Vermont Forest Resources Plan.*
Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation.**

The Forest Resource Plan was created as a program of action into 1995. Currently, the plan is being revised by the Department of Forest, Parks and recreation. Included here are the goals and objectives which are part of the 1986 plan, these were developed by seven working groups who responsible for the plans creation.

Goal 1-Develop a stewardship ethic considering recreation, timber, wildlife, water and natural beauty.

Objective A: Increase public awareness of the importance of the forest resource.

Objective B: Develop a continuing education program for schools and youth groups.

Objective C: Develop statewide natural resource education program for schools and youth groups.

Objective D: Increase recognition and visibility of good forest management.

Objective E: Provide legislators, towns and regional policy makers with information on current forestry issues.

Goal 2-Maintain an adequate forest land base.

Objective A: Identify the resource and its condition.

Objective B: Initiate programs, policy, and legislation that will insure and adequate forest land base.

Goal 3-Increase the productivity of the forest.

Objective A: Increase acreage under management

Objective B: Increase growth of prime wood on managed forest lands.

Objective C: Reduce loss by protecting forest from existing and potential destructive forces.

Goal 4-Promote a favorable climate for Vermont forest products industry.

Objective A: Support research and development and improved utilization of primary and secondary wood industry.

Objective B: Promote and market Vermont forest products.

Goal 5-Manage public lands for long-term benefits of present and future generations.

Objective A: Provide opportunities not available on private lands.

Objective B: Practice and demonstrate best management practices to meet present and future demands.

Objective C: Maintain and enhance the visual quality of the public forest.

January 1986. *Land Acquisition Program of the Agency of Environmental Conservation.* Vermont Agency of Environmental Conservation

The primary purpose of this document is to guide the Agency of Environmental Conservation in land acquisition: it describes both policies and processes to do so. A related purpose is to inform the general public about the Agency's position in regard to acquisition--especially goals, activities, and constraints.

Eleven categories of land were identified in this report as types that may be considered by the agency for ownership these are:

1. Natural and Fragile areas
2. Lake Champlain Islands
3. Critical Wildlife Habitat
4. Wetlands
5. Shoreline Frontage: Lakes and Major Rivers
6. Expansion and Consolidation of Existing Public Land Ownership
7. Regional Riverway Corridors
8. Trail Corridors

9. Discontinued Railroad Rights-of-Way
10. Low-intensity Multi-purpose Large Tracts
11. Sites for Developed Recreation

The report lists eighteen general considerations and constraints to be considered before acquisition of property these range from size and location of the tract, to past history, state-wide or regional significance, to taxation and payment in lieu of tax issues, to name a few. The considerations are preliminary evaluations used by the Agency to begin evaluating a possible acquisition.

The following general guidelines are used to evaluate potential acquisitions, regardless of category.

Existing areas-adjacent lands or inholdings that will enhance existing parcels or acquisition of lands to protect existing holdings from encroachments. The following criteria are used to evaluate these types of acquisitions:

1. The land should be immediately adjacent to existing property or be an inholding within state property;
2. The acquisition must contribute a more specific purpose than just adding more acreage;
3. The addition must complement and enhance existing ownership.

Access to existing areas and water. Public access to Agency holdings is difficult in many instances, both from legal and practical standpoints. Many existing rights-of-ways are limited to ingress for logging or other management purposes only. Because of these access problems, considerable outdoor recreation potential lies just outside the reach of the public. The following criteria are used to evaluate access acquisitions:

1. The access must be available to the general public, for uses specified when the land was originally acquired;
2. The land must be of sufficient size and character as to permit development or required level of access;
3. The access must be geographically located to best serve public needs.

New areas-Lands of state-wide significance or regional significance that carry out the Agency's goal for providing wildlife, forest, watershed, natural and recreation areas for the public. The evaluation criteria for these include:

1. The property should have one or more values of state-wide significance;
2. The property should be of sufficient size to support Agency goals effectively;
3. The property should be undeveloped or relatively so, or developed in a way suitable for the envisioned use, or easily restored to an undeveloped state;
4. Special consideration should be given to those purchases where a broad spectrum of the public has shown active and concerted interest;

5. It should provide a resource which will be unavailable under other likely forms of ownership;
6. If property is for development it should have suitable site capabilities, such as soil, slope, aspect, etc.

A special category of new areas is Natural Areas, which are "limited areas of land which have retained their wilderness character, although they may not be completely natural or undisturbed, or have rare or vanishing species of plant or animal life or similar features of interest. They are worthy of preservation for the use of present and future residents of the State and may include unique ecological, geological, scenic and contemplative recreational areas on state lands." The criteria for acquisition of these lands are:

1. Areas should have outstanding scenic quality, vital ecosystems needing preservation, unusual or vulnerable land forms, or vulnerable and critical wildlife habitat;
2. Acquisition of such areas should include adequate land to ensure total protection and facilitate efficient management;
3. Large tracts must include diverse ecosystems which exist in a nearly undisturbed condition;
4. Areas should be of regional or state-wide significance, where the value is recognized as being "unique, rare, or one-of-a-kind."

All potential acquisitions are reviewed by the Agency's Land Acquisition Review Committee (LARC) composed of a Chairman, two members from the Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation, two from Fish and Wildlife Department, one from the Department of Water Resources and Environmental Engineering and one from the Agency Planning Division. LARC reviews each proposal in light of policies and criteria of the Agency's Land Acquisition Program, and makes a recommendation to the Secretary on whether or not the State should acquire the property, and if so, how and under what conditions. The Secretary, in consultation with the departmental commissioners, makes the decision to acquire, refuse, or continue negotiations; a decision to acquire is subject to the approval of the Governor. Sale or exchange of Forests, Parks and Recreation land requires legislative approval as well.

Regional Documents

December 1996. *Lamoille County, Vermont Regional Plan*. Lamoille County Regional Planning Commission

In regard to land in Lamoille County the Regional Plan states a mission of: *"To ensure the protection of the environment and conservation of the natural resources in Lamoille County, and to support the sustainability of the natural resource based economy of the region."* The plan sets forth policies and recommendations for agricultural, forest, earth, and fragile/natural areas resources. Threats that are identified in the region for agricultural and forest resources include the fragmentation of properties peripheral to forest land which can preclude access to large blocks for management and harvesting. Local roads and bridges that can create barriers to the movement of equipment and logs and perhaps the largest threat (according to the plan) is uncertainty in investing and managing forest resources over the long term due to rapidly changing regulations that may create a disincentive to forest investment. The plan states that management of forest resources must be encouraged and allowed to be flexible.

The regional plan identifies five fragile/natural areas totaling some 2,800 acres that are important to the region. These include

Fragile area	Location	Acreage	Critical features
Mt. Mansfield Alpine Area	Stowe & Underhill	200	significant alpine tundra, several rare & endangered species, alpine bog
Cambridge Pine Woods	Cambridge	22	old-age white pine and hemlock stand
Smugglers' Notch	Cambridge	1,424	arctic plant species, peregrine falcon nesting sites & geologic features
Miller Brook Cirque	Stowe	1,200	significant example of mountain valley glaciation
Molly Bog	Morristown	20	exemplary postglacial bog

The plan also identifies and discusses the importance of fish and wildlife resources as a benefit to residents and visitors alike. The plan note the importance of the resources to the economy of the region and the need to protect critical habitat to ensure these resources continue into the future. The three goals developed to support land resources include:

1. Ensure the long-term economic viability of the region's agricultural and forest lands.
2. Balance economic and environmental demands for the region's natural resources.
3. Develop a coordinated effort in the region to protect unique ecological and geological resources and important wildlife and fisheries habitat.

Each goal has a number of policies which support the goal.

The Lamoille County Plan discusses the importance of water resources in the region and their value for economic and environmental reasons. The plan identifies eleven waterfalls, cascades and gorges of importance in the region and supports public or semi-public acquisition of these locations where possible. These sites are:

Town	Feature	River	Type
Belvidere	Kelly River Falls	North Branch of Lamoille River	Cascade
Cambridge	Brewster River Gorge	Brewster River	Gorge/Cascades
Hyde Park	Upper & Lower Green River Falls	Green River	Falls/Cascades
Johnson	Dog Head Falls	Lamoille River	Falls
Johnson	Ithiel Falls	Lamoille River	Rapids/Cascades
Morristown	Cadys Falls	Lamoille River	Cascades
Morristown	Terrill Gorge	Kenfield Brook	Gorge Cascade
Stowe	Bingham Falls	West Branch of Waterbury River	Gorge/Falls/ Cascades
Stowe	Moss Glen Falls	Moos Glen Brook	Gorge/Falls/ Cascades
Stowe	Sterling Brook Gorge	Sterling Brook	Cascades/Gorge
Wolcott	Baldwin Brook Falls	Baldwin Brook	Falls Gorge

Goals for water resources include:

1. The maintenance, protection and restoration of the quality and quantity of both surface and groundwater in Lamoille County.
2. Minimize the loss of valuable wetlands in the region, and preserve their vital functions to the greatest extent possible.
3. Ensure private, public and community interest in the region's water resources in the formation of policy regarding water resources.

Each goal has coordinating policies to support them.

As of 1990, there were about 30,000 acres of publicly owned land in the county, totaling approximately 11 percent of the county's overall acreage. This includes land in state, town, village, cemetery, school district and fire district ownership. Between

1990 and 1996, there have been several large municipal and state acquisitions which significantly increased the acreage of Lamoille County public lands. The exact figures were not available at the time of this report. There are two primary issues regarding public lands in Lamoille County:

1. **Long Trail:** The Green Mountain Club, the organization responsible for maintaining and administering "The Long Trail" has a policy of actively purchasing properties over which the trail passes in an effort to secure long term ownership of the trail corridor. Presently the club has access by individual agreement with some landowners.
2. **Coordination among State Lands Management and Municipal Officials:** The presence of large tracts of state land in a municipality may have several impacts(both positive and negative) on host communities ranging from loss of tax revenue, traffic, recreational opportunities, road maintenance, etc. state land managers and planners must coordinate their activities with municipal officials to ensure the local needs and concerns are being adequately addressed.

The plan also notes the importance of recreation resources for the county and the benefits they bring to the region. Recreation goals with supporting policies include:

1. Maintain and enhance Lamoille County's recreational assets to meet both public and private recreational needs for current and future generations.
2. Retain Lamoille county's share of the recreation and tourism economy in Vermont by being sensitive to the region's needs, users' needs and employees' needs.
3. Land that is already in public ownership should remain as such for accessibility, public use, recreational trails, etc. unless a greater public benefit can be achieved otherwise.

October 1996. *Chittenden County Regional Plan.* Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission

The Chittenden County Regional Plan was adopted in October 1996. The plan contains policies and goals for the environment, water resources, recreation, forest and agricultural lands in Chittenden County.

Policy 14 states-Recreation opportunities and public access to them, should be enhanced and protected for all the regions residents and visitors. Judicious application of the Public Trust Doctrine, balancing public uses with limited restrictions, will be sought.

Goals to support this policy include:

- a) Plan and manage our natural resources and recreation amenities to maintain an enhance year round outdoor recreation opportunities for all people no matter their economic or physical circumstances.

- b) Establish a region-wide system of open space corridors (greenways) for multiple uses, including natural resource protection and recreation.
- c) Identify, provide and protect public access to non-commercial outdoor recreation opportunities.
- d) Provide delineation between town and countryside, assisting in growth center implementation by conserving major portions of the countryside as open space.
- e) Provide recreation and open space within developed urban areas.

Policy 15-Preservation of the region's agricultural and forest resources, for their economic and aesthetic value, is a matter of public good.

Goals: To...

- a) Preserve the long term viability for farm and forest use of agricultural and forest lands by limiting alternate uses on those lands to low gross density uses.
- b) Promote agricultural diversification.
- c) Employ the Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) programs in determining important agricultural and forestry lands.
- d) Develop strategies to encourage viable agricultural and forest industries.
- e) Plan the construction, expansion or provision for public facilities and services as not to reduce the resource value of important and economically viable adjoining agricultural or forestry lands.
- f) Retain parcels of agricultural and forestry lands that are viable in terms of size, quality and location.
- g) Preserve the aesthetic qualities of the forested and agricultural landscapes.
- h) Investigate the range of financial and legislative strategies to preserve open lands for agriculture and forestry, including but not limited to: Municipal transfer of development rights, preservation easements and legal covenants.

Policy 16-Areas of regional significance shall be identified by the CCRPC. Historic sites, earth resources, aquifers, rare and irreplaceable natural areas, recreation areas, and scenic areas so identified will have conservation programs recommended for their protection and use.

Goals: To...

- a) Identify the Region's historic sites, earth resources, aquifer, rare and irreplaceable natural areas, recreation areas and scenic areas, and determine which areas are regionally significant.
- b) Recommend strategies for the conservation and protection of historic sites, earth resources, aquifers, natural areas, recreation and scenic areas.

The plan also calls for investigating preservation of the regions earth resources for their economic value. Policy 17 states, "Preservation of the Region's natural earth resources, for their economic development value, for essential

construction in the Region, is a matter of public good." The following two goals stated within this policy have some possible implications in regards to the Vermont Lands Conservation Plan:

- e) Plan the use of the land, whether public or private, to protect earth resources: Where earth resources are adversely impacted, mitigation may be required to insure similar earth resources of the same quality and quantity is available.
- f) Investigate a range of financial and legislative strategies to preserve available earth resources deposits for future extraction, including but not limited to: municipal transfer of development rights, land trusts, tax relief programs, purchase of land development rights, preservation easements and legal covenants.

June 1996. *Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Plan.* Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission

The Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Plan was adopted in June of 1996 and included a number of hearings and public meetings in communities to develop and approve policies for the region. The plan includes broad goals for land use, agriculture and forestry, and natural resources.

Within land use the following areas are identified as Conservation and Resource areas in need of special protection. Goals and recommended actions have been proposed to limit impact to these areas.

1. land in excess of 25000 feet elevation;
2. slopes predominately in excess of 25% gradient
3. soils which are predominantly wet or shallow;
4. wetlands classified by the State of Vermont or U.S. Army Corps of Engineers;
5. flood plains and areas immediate to lakes and ponds;
6. land identified as containing critical wildlife habitats and endangered species; and
7. watersheds of existing or planned public water supplies.

Agricultural and forestry lands have been identified as important to the region within the plan. goals for these lands are:

1. Encourage the conservation, wise use and management of the region's agricultural and forestry resources, to maintain environmental integrity, and to protect its unique and fragile natural systems.
2. Protect the Region's rural character, scenic landscape and recreational resources.
3. Create and maintain an environment (physical, social, regulatory, and fiscal) that encourages entrepreneurship in agricultural and forestry activities, including those which add value to the Region's agricultural and forestry products.

4. Sustain agriculture and forestry in those areas of the Region where they are predominant land uses, and where soils, and other conditions enable them to remain economically viable.

Policies to support these goals have been developed for the region and recommendations for action for the Regional Commission, Communities and landowners to achieve these goals. In addition goals and policies have been developed for surface waters wetlands, wildlife resources and air quality. These recognize the value of these resource to communities and the natural environment a propose a means to minimize impact to these resources through sound planning and policies which limit activities in critical areas.

Recreational resources are recognized in the plan as opportunities that attract tourist, second homeowners, and retiree to the region as well as improve the quality of life for year round residents. Goals for recreation resources that range from historic or cultural resources and private lands for recreation, to public lands, trails and water access include:

1. To ensure the access, management, and information regarding outdoor recreation opportunities is available to meet the needs of residents, tourist, and the natural environment.
2. To develop greenways that provide corridors for wildlife habitat as well as recreational areas for hiking, biking and cross country skiing.
3. To maintain the tradition of public access with permission to private land that is important to the quality of life, the economy, and sense of community in the region.
4. To ensure that the roadways and town centers are safe for bicycle and pedestrian traffic. To promote recreation and a healthy natural environment as regional assets.
5. To plan development in a way that will ensure that those assets are sustainable.

Policies to support these goals are spelled out in the Regional Plan. In addition there are goals and policies for cultural, historic and archeological resources as well as scenic resources that benefit the region.

January 1995. *Regional Plan for the Northeast Kingdom*. Northeastern Vermont Development Association

This plan states concern over several issues around lands and development of important natural areas. There is a growing concern in the region over development on lakeshores and discharge of graywater and blackwater from camp development. Forest lands are of critical importance to the region both for jobs in the forest products industry and recreation. The plan calls for looking beyond planning, zoning and acquisition to explore other areas that can help local people while protecting natural resource values. It states, a strategy to maintain the resources and character of the area must combine innovative means to maintain

large private ownership and their public values, promote economic stability and allow land acquisition and protection.

The plan notes the importance of preservation of critical areas such as wetlands and natural areas that produce critical resources for wildlife such as stands of hard wood mast producing trees and deer yards. A set of seven conditions/policies are established to limit development or minimize the impact from development in wildlife habitat, agricultural and forest resources. The plan also has policies for large blocks of conservation/public lands. It states:

There is an increasing interest in large scale land conservation, public land acquisition and public acquisition of interests in land such as conservation easements. While these methods of land use planning may meet local, regional and statewide interests, they should proceed following these basic principles or guidelines:

- Eminent domain should be avoided.
- The residents of the municipalities directly affected should be fully informed about the activity.
- When public money is involved, there should be a public dialogue about the costs and benefits of the proposed actions.
- The conservation action should follow local, county and regional conservation and land use plans.

The plan stresses the need to balance conservation activities with the economic interests of local communities.

April 1994. Addison County Regional Plan. Addison County Planning Commission.

The Addison County plan recognizes the importance of forest resources to its economy and supports continuation of an active forest sector economy. Approximately 21% of Addison County's forest land is in public ownership or about 103,100 acres with 84.4% of that being managed by the Green Mountain National Forest. The plan notes the significance of unique forest resources and old growth forest stands. It is stated that Addison County currently has 14 natural forest communities represented at 25 different sites. Roughly three-quarters of these sites are either in public ownership or protected through easement. The plan supports GMNF guidelines for protection of old growth forests. The plan also notes the importance of maintaining and protecting wetlands, surface waters, scenic and cultural resources, and wildlife habitat.

The resource section of the plan also makes statements about property rights. It notes, much of the working landscape is privately owned, and in many cases represents the owner's life savings. Thus any regulation affecting it should be carefully considered. A passage from Vermont's Constitution is

restated in the text pointing out the importance of compensating landowners when they are asked to provide public benefits. It is additionally pointed out that compensation to land owners prevents property which contains public benefit from becoming private liability, should the need for protection associated with public benefit begin to interfere with the economic activity of the land owner.

November 1994. Rutland Regional Plan. Rutland Regional Planning Commission.

In Rutland County approximately 79% of the land is forested or roughly 475,500 acres, of this approximately 89% is privately owned. Rutland County considers the forest land base as essential to long term jobs in the forest products industry. It states in the plan, the loss of forest land, or regulation that prohibits access to it are the most likely threats to the sustainability of forest products in Vermont. the following goals and policies have been highlighted in the plan:

Goal: Protect significant agricultural and forest resources from threats to their sustainable economic use.

Policies:

- Encourage identification of regionally significant agricultural and forest resources.
- Encourage appropriate use and sustainable management of the Region's agricultural and forest resources.
- Encourage efforts to direct incompatible development away from agricultural and forest resources.
- Encourage actions that would maintain the size and concentration of agricultural and forest resources and do not pose a threat to their continued economic viability.

Goal: Reduce negative impacts and allow expansion of agricultural and forestry economy by coordinated planning

Policies:

- Support efforts to minimize negative impacts of agriculture and forestry.
- Promote the expansion of the agriculture and forest related economy by coordinating planning and economic development activities.

Goals and policies have also been developed in the region for natural features, these include:

Goal: Protect natural features in the Rutland Region.

Policies:

- Involve private land owners in protection of natural features

- Identify all natural features, including natural areas, fragile areas, wildlife habitats, rare endangered and threatened species, rare plants and animal communities and sites.

Goal: To have natural features of statewide significance be automatically considered of at least regional significance.

Policies:

- Encourage communities to identify all natural features of statewide significance.
- Encourage the creation of buffer zones and greenbelts to protect natural features.
- Discourage degradation of natural features of at least regional significance.

Goal: Emphasize the biodiversity within the natural features in the Rutland Region.

Policies:

- Encourage education about the natural cycles and checks and balances.

Goal: Protect, preserve and restore the natural features in the Rutland Region.

Policies:

- Encourage low impact or other appropriate levels of use, including no use, within the natural features.
- Encourage communities to identify, protect and preserve local natural features.
- Encourage efforts to monitor and mitigate effects on natural features by hydroelectric facilities, dams, sewage treatment plants and other water based development.
- Encourage greater recognition and understanding of the role natural features play in maintaining health, welfare and economy of the region.

May 1993. *Central Vermont Regional Plan*. The Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission.

This regional plan has goals and policies for the protection of agricultural land, forest land and ecologically sensitive areas. It is noted that 75% of the land in Central Vermont is forested, however, large tracts of managed, productive timberlands are being lost to subdivision and development due to inflated land prices and the comparative economic hardships of forestry use. The plan calls for forest lands in private ownership to be conserved through sound, long range forest management programs.

Natural areas in the region are important as amenities a natural heritage and a barometer into ecological health. Resource lands in need of protection in the plan include, natural and fragile areas, critical wildlife habitat, ground water recharge areas, surface waters, wetlands and scenic areas.

January 1993. *Bennington Regional Plan.* Bennington County Regional Commission.

The Bennington County plan shows concern over maintaining the integrity of surface waters including lakes and ponds, streams and rivers. Wetlands and floodplains are defined and encourage regulations on the community level to protect these resources. Agricultural and forest lands are noted as part of the rural heritage of the region and its economy. the plan notes that with the ruggedness of the regions forest lands along with the decline in agricultural land use and wood product extraction in the region, forest land acreage has increased.. Many of the towns in the region have zoned forest upland forest areas to limit development and permit only forestry, recreation and other activities that will protect the resource. The Green Mountain National Forest makes up the majority of public land in the region--it is noted as value through the public access and recreation opportunities the GMNF offers the region. Unique natural features and scenic resources are also noted in the plan. Policies developed that related to land conservation or acquisition include:

- Recreational uses such as fishing, canoeing and swimming are appropriate in natural settings in and along rivers, streams, lakes, ponds and wetlands. Development planning should include provisions for public access to these resources.
- Acquisition of land, easements, or development rights by a public entity or nonprofit conservation organization is an appropriate method to protect important resources or to provide public access fro recreation.
- Efforts to acquire important shoreline and public access areas in rural areas should be supported, as should improvement projects (such as riverfront parks and building renovation and reuse) along waterways in urban and village areas.
- Continued support should be given to public acquisition of important forest lands by the United States Forest service. The BCRC should complete a Taconic Range resource inventory and evaluation of municipal fiscal impacts of public land ownership.

April 1992. *Southern Windsor County Regional Plan.* Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission.

The Southern Windsor County Regional Plan was adopted in April of 1992 with approval from the towns within the planning district. These include, Andover, Baltimore, Cavendish, Chester, Ludlow, Reading, Springfield, Weathersfield, West Windsor and Windsor. Public meetings and hearing were held to adopt and approve all goals and policies.

The plan has set goals, policies and recommendations for forested, scenic and open lands. Goals include:

1. To promote efforts to ensure that the balance of forested/scenic/ open land uses to other land uses remains in the best interest of the environment and regional residents.
2. To promote silvaculture management planning and practices identified by the Vermont Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation, and conservation and preservation measures that maintain or enhance diversity of ecosystems throughout the region.
3. To protect the environmental character and integrity of significant natural and scenic resources as identified by local communities.
4. To support local, state or federal programs and legislative efforts which protect and enhance the economic, cultural, environmental, and aesthetic values of forested and significant scenic resources that provide public benefit.
5. Promote beneficial economic development that will provide jobs related to the forest industry.

These goals are backed by policies and recommendation which include such things as: discouraging fragmentation and subdivision of large, privately owned forested parcels; promote conservation of forested land through support of use of public private funds for purchase of development rights, fee simple or other measures; and work with towns and appropriate agencies to secure donations and acquisition of scenic easements, greenway segments, forested land, or other land and water resources which will enhance significant scenic resources.

December 1991. *Windham Regional Plan*. Windham Regional Commission.

The Windham Regional Plan is currently being revised. The Draft of that revision should be available to the public in late January or February of 1997.

The past plan calls for policies to enhance protection and appreciation of water resources, scenic resources and natural areas. Policies for natural areas, fragile areas and wildlife resources include:

- Protect natural areas, fragile areas and critical plan and animal habitats, especially those of State and regional significance.
- Preserve habitats of threatened, endangered and economically significant species and important ecosystems. If necessary, protect these areas from indiscriminate publicity by mapping them in very general terms.
- Protect natural and fragile areas from development that may cause irreversible damage. When development is proposed to occur near a natural or fragile area, a buffer strip designed in consultation with the appropriate State agency, must be designated and maintained between the development and natural or fragile area.

- Support State, Federal, and conservation group acquisition of land and/or conservation easements to protect critical wildlife habitats and encourage designation of State Natural and Fragile Areas for significant features and resources.

Northwest Vermont Regional Planning Commission

The regional plan for this region of the state is currently expired. The Regional Planning Commission is currently in the process of revising and creating a new plan, it is expected to be completed and approved by late June 1997 or early July of 1997.

Town Plans

In addition to Regional Plans and increasing number of town plans have adopted and approved plans which identify areas of special protection. there is often highlight given to increasing recreational access, particularly to water. For example, among the 32 towns of the Northeastern Vermont Development Association, about two dozen communities have plans, many of which support the need for more public access to water recreation opportunities. Fifteen towns in the Central Vermont Regional Planning District have specifically identified the need to take definitive steps to protect specific sites and areas suitable for recreation. most town plans in the Franklin/Grand Isle Region point to the need for grater access to Lake Champlain.

Other Documents

March 1997. *Acquisition Priorities in the Northern Forest.* Northern Forest Alliance.

The Northern Forest Alliance's fiscal Year 1998 report *Acquisition Priorities in the Northern Forest* identifies acquisition priorities in the northern forest of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York that they recommend for acquisition with funding from the federal Land and Conservation Fund. These lands represent those that they feel would help protect critical public resources in the Northern Forest. The Northern Forest Alliance advocates acquisition of public land and easements only from willing sellers.

In Vermont the Northern Forest Alliance has identified two key areas for acquisition. Total acreage of these areas identified is 7,390 acres. The first of these area is 20 miles of undeveloped shoreline surrounding the Green mountain Reservoir in northern Vermont. Surrounding the 1,000 acre Green Mountain Reservoir are more than 6,000 acres of forest land with public values that include fishing, hunting, hiking/camping, picnicking, cross-country skiing, boating, swimming, wildlife habitat and Bald eagle and loon habitat. It includes the state's largest length of undeveloped shoreline. A Vermont state recreation survey called the reservoir unique for its " large size in combination with its wilderness character. Its appeal is demonstrated by the long distances that visitors are willing to drive to

get there....a majority emphatically believe that the Green Mountain Reservoir should be left absolutely as it is." The amount of land proposed to be protected is 6,350 acres with an estimated value of \$2 million dollars. The proposal calls for \$500,000 from the State of Vermont, Private or other contributions and \$1.5 million dollars from Forest Legacy Funding.

The second area identified in Vermont are seven key parcels of land that are for sale on the northern section of the Long Trail, the nation's oldest long-distance hiking trail. The Northern Forest Alliance state that lost of these parcels would jeopardize the Trail's continuity. The seven parcels total 1,060 acres including 3.5 miles of the Long Trail itself. Public values include hiking, camping, scenic vistas and wildlife habitat. The estimated value of the seven parcels is \$325,000 with a funding request of \$162, 500 from the state, private or other contributions and \$162,500 from Land and Water Conservation Fund State Funding.

February 1997. *Wildlands-A Conservation Strategy for the Northern Forest-A proposal by the Northern Forest Alliance.* Northern Forest Alliance.

The Northern Forest Alliance proposes creating a system of Wildlands across the Northern Forest to maintain ecological balance, provide remote and wilderness recreation opportunities, provide solitude to rekindle the spirit, and support the region's forest-based economy. There are ten Wildlands described in this report which they believe should:

- Continue to provide open access for traditional recreation such as hunting, hiking, , fishing, canoeing, camping and other activities.
- Include permanent protection for ecologically and recreationally important areas within each Wildland to guarantee wildlife habitat and true wilderness experiences for future generations.
- Support sustainable timber harvest that meets clear ecological and sustainability guidelines.
- Remain essentially undeveloped, without new construction that is inconsistent with maintaining the area's wild qualities, ecological integrity and productive forests.

Of the ten Wildlands identified two are in Vermont. The first of these is the spine of the Northern Green mountains from Mount Mansfield to the Canadian border, including the Worcester Mountains. The approximate acreage of this area is 325, 000 acres and included the Green Mountain Reservoir, parts of the Lamoille River, Mount Mansfield, Worcester mountains and Jay Peak. The area contains diverse plant communities, ranging from alpine tundra to lowland bogs and rare plant communities. It is habitat for a wide range of species including bobcat, lynx, black bear, fisher, pine martin and potentially cougar. The area offers outstanding recreation opportunities for hiking, especially on the Long Trail, camping and cross-country skiing. The area has large portions of relatively undeveloped forest land

which runs a high risk of development due to the area's accessibility, scenic and recreational benefits, and existing infrastructure.

The second area identified in Vermont is the Nulhegan and Victory Basins in Vermont's northeast kingdom. The Nulhegan River and Victory Basin watershed is the largest relatively undeveloped area within northern forest of Vermont. The Wildlands represents the state's best opportunity to maintain extensive tracts of forest in something approaching a natural condition, and to conserve and entire watershed as an ecological unit. The area teams with wildlife, drawn by the rich diversity of plants, wetlands and forests. It is a large deer wintering area and is attracting growing numbers of moose. Approximately 390,000 acres are proposed for protection.

The Northern Forest Alliance advocates the following conservation tools to protect these Wildlands:

- Private conservation through easements, permanent land management agreements and land owner initiatives.
- Acquisition from willing sellers by local, state, federal, and private conservation agencies.
- Local or state protection through public planning and zoning; air and water quality regulations; wildlife management and open space protection programs.

The Northern Forest Alliance promotes a flexible approach to conservation, stating, that it may take years to determine exactly which areas should be conserved and how they should be protected, based on the land within the area and the traditions and preferences of each state, but it is important to begin conserving and restoring the Wildlands now.

October 1996. *Investing in Public Land-A Necessary Foundation for the Northern Forest.* Northeast Natural Resource Center, National Wildlife Federation.

This report was commissioned and completed by the National Wildlife Federation/Northeast Resource Center as a means to examine the economic needs and benefits to acquiring land in the Northern Forest of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York. The purpose of the report was to:

- Document the potential economic benefits of acquiring large blocks of public land in the Northern Forest region.
- Identify and describe situations where investments in public land have helped to provide a secure, long-term basis for a healthy economy while protecting outstanding natural features and recreation opportunities.
- Identify key ingredients that could be put together and guidelines that could be followed to make investment in public land an economic, ecological and social success in the Northern Forest.

The methodology for this study involved a search of existing literature containing information about situations in which public investments have helped to create healthy economics while conserving important natural features or habitat. Experts were interviewed to get unpublished information on the economic effects of land acquisition and data was analyzed to help illustrate regional social and economic trends. No original research into the economics of land acquisition was done. The study does not recommend areas of the Northern Forest where public land should be acquired, how such areas should be managed, or who should manage such areas. The study assumes that those decisions are best made by residents and the local and state levels.

The search of literature on the economics of land conservation resulted in several key findings. These include:

- **Economic well-being is affected by the provisions of certain public goods through public infrastructure.**

Public investments or other actions are needed to create and maintain sufficient public goods such as roads, schools, clean water and air, parks, wildlands, scenic views, wildlife habitat and ecosystem diversity. Some public goods are built others are natural¹

- **The balance of ownership and control of land affect the region's supply of land-based public goods.**

Forest land provides many basic public goods--clean water and air, recreation opportunities, wildlife habitats, and biological diversity, in addition to forest products. Ensuring a steady supply of public goods will require some combination of public land ownership and influence over land use.

- **The economy of the Northern Forest region is undergoing a major structural transformation. New infrastructure is needed to take advantage of that transformation.**

Advances in technology and engineering are causing employment in the goods-producing sector to decline in importance, and employment in the service-producing sector to gain importance. Advances in telecommunications and transportation are enabling increasing numbers of businesses and workers to locate wherever they choose. They are no longer bound to locate close to the extraction or manufacture of goods.

- **Public land would, in part, make the Northern Forest Region more attractive to business.**

A primary economic role of the outstanding natural resources of the Northern Forest will be to attract and hold people--business owners, workers and retirees--who want to enjoy benefits of those natural resources, such as clean air, outdoor

¹ Each finding has five or six statements associated with it. The one or two which best represent the points made have been listed.

recreation, and wildlife. In addition to amenity values, residents often enjoy direct financial benefits from the permanent protection of open land--increased land values and reduced property taxes.

- **The attractive qualities of protected land help to create relatively diverse, self-reliant and stable local economies.**

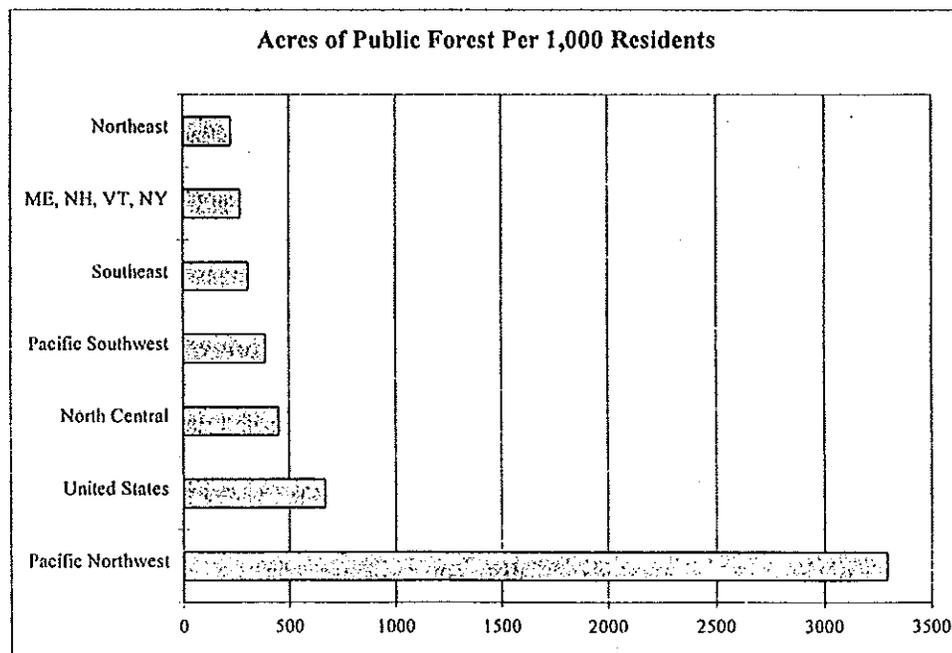
Public land serves as the economic base for several prosperous regions of this nation. There is reason to believe that this would be the case for a system of public land in the Northern Forest. The economic activity fostered by attractive living conditions helps to create a diverse, self-reliant and stable economy.

- **A Mechanism is needed to finance and coordinate regional infrastructure in public land attributes.**

Public land meets all of the definitions of infrastructure--it serves an essential public purpose; it contributes directly to economic well-being; it has a long and useful life; it is fixed in place; it is the responsibility of government to provide; and it provides ecosystem services necessary to sustain life and improve quality of life.

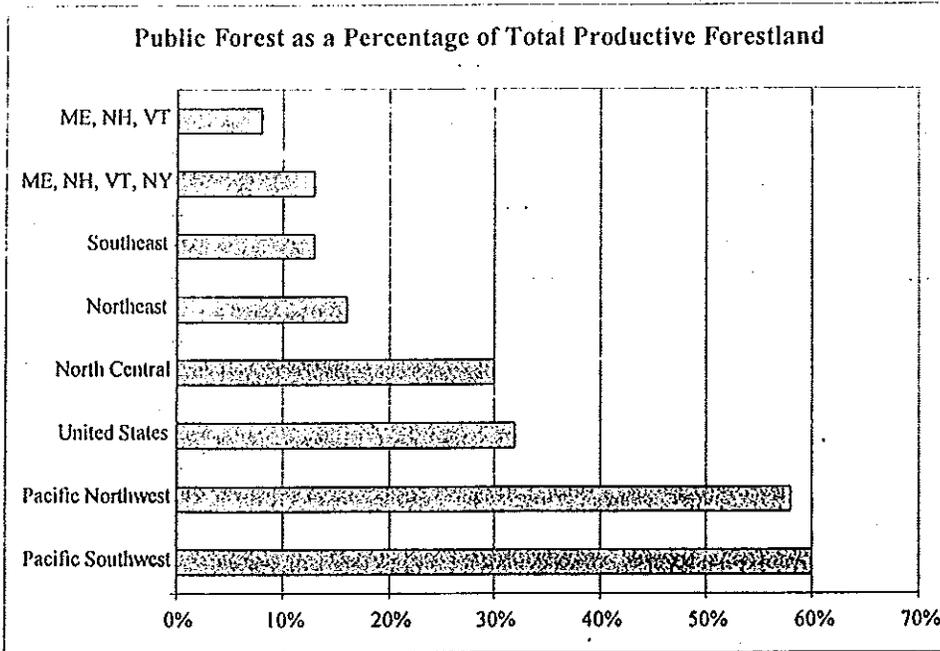
Figure 2 from the report illustrates acres of public lands in various region of the United States. Figure 3 and 4 on the next pages illustrates *Share of Publicly Held forest Land in ME, NH, and VT* and *Share of Timber Land Held by Industry Greatest in ME, NH, and VT*, respectively.

Figure 2: Northeast has Least Public Forest Land Acreage



(Source: USDA Forest Service, 1994)

Figure 3: Share of Publicly Held Forest Land Least in ME, NH, and VT

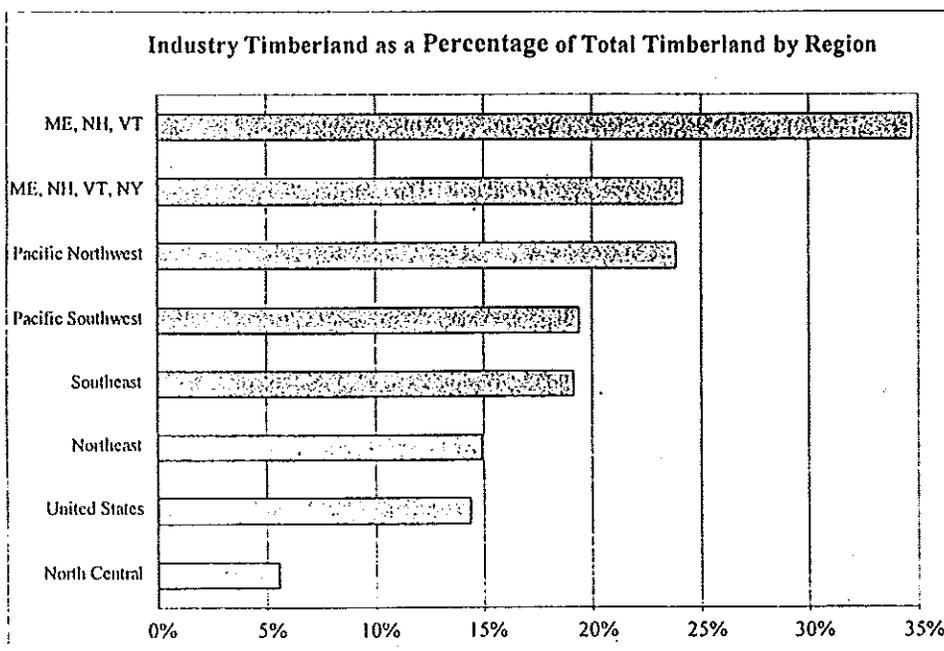


(Source: USDA Forest Service, 1994)

Generally, other heavily forested regions and the nation as a whole have a much higher percentage of timberland in public ownership than the Northern Forest states.

Conversely, a relatively high percentage of timberland in the Northern Forest states is owned by forest industry—companies or individuals operating plants which primarily utilize wood as a raw material.²⁵ (See Figure 4.)

Figure 4: Share of Timber Land Held by Industry Greatest in ME, NH, and VT



(Source: USDA Forest Service, 1994)

Conversely, a relatively high percentage of timberland in the Northern Forest states is owned by forest industry.

The conclusions of this report state that the Northern Forest is in a period of economic transition which will affect traditional patterns of land use and the stability of human and natural communities. It states that in the face of such changes, strategic public investments in land conservation, protection and acquisition can help to improve the long-term ecological, economic, and social health of the region. The study gathered information partially in response to critics of public land acquisition and protection who often claim that additional public land in the Northern Forest would cause impediments to healthy local economies, under-utilization of resources and loss of jobs, local property taxes and local control. The report counters this by documenting that protected and public land can be the basis of a healthy local economies and job prospects, and can improve local budgets, sustain a diversity of resource uses and enhance local self-determination.

The report calls for a coordinated, multi-jurisdictional, ecosystem approach to financing infrastructure and proposes a model for financing and coordinating investments in the Northern Forest. This model uses the experience of the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board as an example and suggests a Regional Citizens' Board to administer funds. The report also recognizes the role of public involvement in determining how and where investments should be made in the Northern Forest.

June 1996. *Opportunities for Action, An Evolving Plan for the Future of the Lake Champlain Basin.* Lake Champlain Management Conference.

On November 5, 1990, the Lake Champlain Special Designation Act was signed into law. The Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP) was established to coordinate the activities envisioned by this special designation act. the LCBP is a federally-funded initiative working in partnership with agencies, organizations and individuals toward the development of *Opportunities for Action*. *Opportunities for Action* is an evolving blueprint for coordinated action aimed at restoring and protecting water quality and the diverse natural and cultural resources of the Lake Champlain Basin. The document calls for an ecosystem-based approach to planning and management that considers the Lake and its entire drainage basin as a whole interconnected, complex system.

Since 1991 the LCBP has worked to involve the public and respond to research results in developing *Opportunities for Action*. Numerous public input meeting , citizen perception surveys, focus group discussions, technical workshops and research, monitoring and demonstration projects have help to identify issues and priorities for action. In the fall of 1994, *Opportunities for Action* was released to the public and in the spring of 1995 a series of six public meetings were held throughout the basin to receive feedback on the Draft Plan. Some of these recommendations from the public include:

- The plan should be shorter and easier to read.
- The actions presented in the plan should be prioritized.
- Additional economic information should be presented in the Plan.

- The Plan should oppose any inclusion of unfunded mandates.
- The Plan should emphasize education rather than expanded regulation.
- The Plan should promote and foster the vitality of existing organizations.

Within the Plan *Opportunities for Action* there are recommendations for actions that are a result of concern for recreation and public lands in the Lake Champlain Basin. Priority issue number three promotes managing fish and wildlife. Within this issue group the first priority for action is to *Identify and Restore Habitats and Conserve Vulnerable Wildlife Corridors*. This action calls for non-regulatory measures to be initiated with willing landowners to protect habitat. Action number six for this issue also calls to *Work with Landowners to Conserve, Enhance and Restore Fish and Wildlife Habitat*. This action calls for cooperative efforts at land conservation between private landowners and managers of public lands including interagency cooperation.

Protecting wetlands is the fourth issue of importance in the plan including restoration and permanent protection. The first priority action is to *Continue to Secure Funding and Implement all Four Phases of the Lake Champlain Wetlands Acquisition Strategy*. The priorities for action also include: Expand wetland restoration efforts in the basin and develop incentives for local municipalities and private landowners to protect, restore and enhance wetlands.

Managing recreation is the sixth issue of concern in the Plan. The highest priority is to *Develop and Implement a Strategy to Provide New Public Access Opportunities*. Other priorities for recreation include to provide funds to Local Governments and Non-Profits to develop additional public access sites and to develop local recreation management plans in high uses areas. Protecting cultural and archeological resources are also a priority of the plan including such things as promoting and developing heritage trails, protection of underwater historic resources and encouraging local efforts to coordinate heritage and economic development projects.

The plan, *Opportunities for Action*, includes a strategy for implementation that includes identification of key players and their potential roles. The plan stresses partnerships and coordination between organizations and individuals and continued public involvement. A framework has been established to implement the plan which includes several cooperative arrangements between agencies, states and countries. The *International Joint Commission* is set-up to resolve disputes on boundary water issues between the United States and Canada. The *Steering Committee* is composed of top officials from State Governments of Vermont and New York and the Provincial government of Quebec to provide a means of information exchange and coordination. The *Citizens Advisory Committee* is represented by appointed citizens and legislators and make recommendations to the Steering Committee on conditions and management of the Lake. The *Lake Champlain Fish and Wildlife Management Cooperative* was created through written agreement between the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the corresponding agencies in Vermont and New York to manage this resource. Lastly, the *Lake*

Champlain Research Consortium was established between seven academic institutions to provide a multi-disciplinary research and education program for Lake Champlain.

June 1996. *Lake Champlain Recreation-Assessment Report*. VT Dept. of Forest, Parks, & Recreation/New York Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

As part of the Lake Champlain overall planning effort, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and the Vermont Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation entered into a cooperative agreement with funding from the National Park Service to create a recreation action plan for Lake Champlain. The assessment report supports the recreation action plan and is based on substantial public input and recreation research over the last five years. The Assessment Report synthesizes results and provides recommendations for action.

Goal statements for five major issues identified in the recreation action plan are as follows:

- I. Expanding and enhancing public access opportunities on Lake Champlain for a diversity of users.
- II. Develop sustainable tourism opportunities that highlight the natural, cultural and historic character of the Lake Champlain Basin and instill a sense of appreciation and stewardship of the resources.
- III. Improve the quality of recreational experiences on Lake Champlain for a diversity of recreational uses by minimizing user conflicts and reducing congestion.
- IV. Improve safe recreational use of Lake Champlain
- V. Manage Lake Champlain, and its shorelines, and its tributaries for a diversity of recreational uses while protecting its natural and cultural resources.

To achieve the stated goals, the Lake Champlain Recreation Working Group recommended a series of thirty two actions. They stated that success in implementing hinges on bi-state, provincial and local commitment to work together. There is a call for the formation of innovative partnerships and to actively engage citizens in the creation of solutions to problems and implementation of the actions. The following actions outlined in the Assessment Report relate to conservation and/or acquisition on Basin lands.

- Establish a public access opportunities program that implements measures to improve existing boating and non-boating access sites on Lake Champlain as well as develop additional boating and non-boating access sites on Lake Champlain.
- Develop natural and cultural heritage interpretative trails that link unique and significant sites. Support current and future efforts to manage fish and wildlife in the Lake Champlain Basin
- Enhance responsible, low-impact recreational use of Lake Champlain's shoreland resources

- Develop an education program to improve public understanding and promote stewardship of Lake Champlain's shoreland resources.

The following charts help to illustrate ownership patterns and distribution of boat access sites, campgrounds, beaches and parks in the Lake Champlain Basin.

Table 1-3: Ownership patterns and distribution of campgrounds within three miles of the Lake Champlain shoreline.

<u>NY Lake Section</u>	<u>Public</u>	<u>Private/Commercial</u>	<u>Total</u>
Northern	2	6	8
Central	8	14	22
Southern	2	2	4
TOTAL	12	22	34

<u>VT Lake Section</u>	<u>Public</u>	<u>Private/Commercial</u>	<u>Total</u>
Northern	5	12	17
Central	4	7	11
Southern	0	0	0
TOTAL	9	19	28

Source: Lake Champlain Outdoor Recreation Facilities Inventory - Near Shore Sites (1995).

Table 1-4: Ownership patterns and distribution of beaches within three miles of the Lake Champlain shoreline.

<u>NY Lake Section</u>	<u>Public</u>	<u>Private/Commercial</u>	<u>Total</u>
Northern	4	3	7
Central	8	7	15
Southern	0	0	0
TOTAL	12	10	32

<u>VT Lake Section</u>	<u>Public</u>	<u>Private/Commercial</u>	<u>Total</u>
Northern	9	12	21
Central	12	8	20
Southern	0	0	0
TOTAL	21	20	41

Source: Lake Champlain Outdoor Recreation Facilities Inventory - Near Shore Sites (1995).

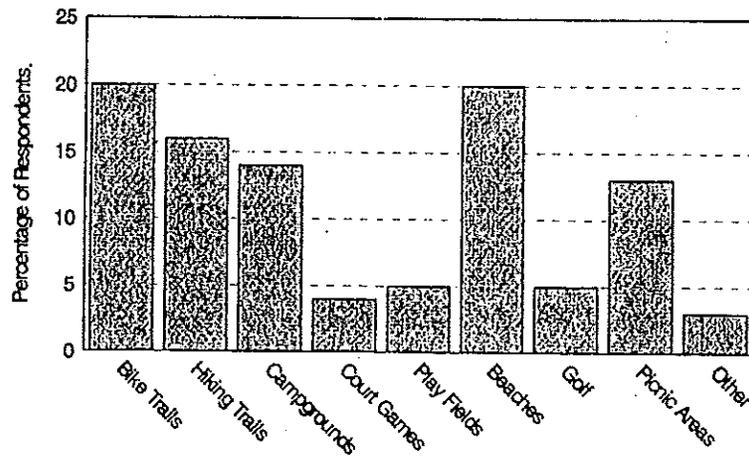
Table 1-5: Ownership patterns and distribution of state, county and local parks within three miles of the Lake Champlain shoreline.

<u>NY Lake Section</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>County/Local</u>	<u>Total</u>
Northern	2	20	22
Central	0	4	4
Southern	1	4	5
TOTAL	3	28	31
<u>VT Lake Section</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>County/Local</u>	<u>Total</u>
Northern	9	7	16
Central	6	58	64
Southern	0	1	1
TOTAL	15	66	81

Source: Lake Champlain Outdoor Recreation Facilities Inventory - Near Shore Sites (1995).

The Assessment Report found the number of existing public access sites along the shoreline quite disparate. Northern and central shoreline sections have more access than the southern section. These low number are due primarily to the physical characteristics and water quality conditions of the Lake in its southern reaches. It was also found that marinas, boating access sites beaches and parks are much more prevalent in Vermont than in New York, however the number of shoreline campgrounds is slightly higher in New York. Figure 1-3 from the Assessment Report illustrates the non-boating needs in the Lake Champlain Basin. This information came from Recreation User Surveys which were conducted.

Figure 1-3: Non-boating activities and facilities needed within the Lake Champlain Basin as illustrated by the Lake Champlain Recreation User Surveys:



Source: Lake Champlain Recreation User Surveys - public access site users, marina users, shoreline property owners, park users (1995).

The Assessment Report concludes that there are a numerous variety of recreation opportunities in the Lake Champlain Basin that are currently used as well as needs that should be developed so use can occur as deemed from user surveys conducted as part of the recreation assessment.

January 1996. *White River Partnership Public Forums*. George D Aiken RCD & US Forest Service, Rochester District.

The White River Partnership came together as an informal organization in 1995. It was envisioned as a grass roots organization which would work with communities and citizens to protect the White River of Vermont and enhance the economic and educational opportunities in communities in the White River Basin. In the fall of 1995 six public forums were held to have citizens chart a direction for the organization, identify a vision for the future and voice their issues of concerns. The following is the executive summary for the six public forums held.

The White River Partnership has come together to develop a "grass roots" organization that will actively promote the social, economic, and environmental health of the White River watershed. The two principles that guide the White River Partnership are: (1) to maximize its effectiveness, the initiative must be developed by residents of the White River watershed; and (2) the initiative is to be developed collaboratively; any and all interested persons and parties may take part. This approach encourages creativity in developing solutions to problems, in overcoming potential conflicts among parties, and in identifying opportunities that address the social, economic, and environmental needs of the communities within the watershed.

During October and November of 1995, six public forums were held in the towns of Bethel, East Randolph, Randolph, Sharon, Stockbridge and Tunbridge. People from communities throughout the White River Basin came together to express their views on how they wanted the future of the White River Watershed, what were the issues that needed to be addressed and what steps should be taken next by citizens to correct problems in the watershed. Approximately 150 people attended these forums, they included landowners, farmers, teachers, students, business owners and citizens interested in the future of the White River watershed.

Visions for the future

People who attended the White River Partnership forums voiced their visions for the future of the watershed. Their visions included a wide variety of ideas that encompassed everything from environmental protection to secure jobs in their communities. The following are some examples of shared visions in communities throughout the watershed:

- Maintain a working landscape with a viable agricultural and forestry sectors
- Ensure future access to river for recreation, create a trail network in the basin
- Have natural areas along river without development

- Create vegetated buffer/ riparian zones along river and repair areas of erosion
- Have a river clean enough for swimming and maintain water quality
- Have neighbors and communities work together to solve problems
- Maintain rights of property owners, have people ask permission and respect private property
- More control in watershed from people who live there with local involvement in land use /resource planning
- Create economic benefits and jobs in communities while preserving environmental quality
- Improve river/wildlife habitat
- Have a good fishery
- Maintain the free flow of the river, something that makes the White River unique
- Schools incorporate the river into environmental education programs

Issues and Problems Facing the White River Basin

Those who attended the forums broke into groups in order to brainstorm and prioritize the issues that most concerned them in the White River Watershed. The groups generated long lists of good ideas, issues and concerns. These have been recorded and included in the larger report. The participants then voted individually for the five issues of most importance to them from the group's list of issues by giving the highest priority a number 5, the next a 4 and so on. The group added up the ratings on each issue, the five issues with the highest cumulative ratings were determined to be the highest priority issues for the group.

The following issues were rated as high priorities in at least one of the groups in the six towns.

<u>Issues to address in the White River Watershed</u>	<u>East Randolph</u>	<u>Stock bridge</u>	<u>Turbridge</u>	<u>Randolph</u>	<u>Sharon</u>	<u>Bethel</u>
Pollution prevention & monitoring					x	
Protect & preserve water quality		x		x	x	x
Water temperature increases/lack of shade	x	x		x		
Loss of buffer zones/need more riparian habitat	x		x	x	x	x
Stream bank erosion problems needs stabilization	x	x	x	x	x	x
Decline of native fish stocks	x	x			x	
Need for money to correct problems in river	x				x	x
Control of point source & non-point source pollution	x		x	x	x	x
Declining fishery in the river	x			x	x	x
Public awareness of problems and progress	x	x	x	x	x	x
Property tax impacts on farmers/forestry	x			x	x	
Public must have access to the river		x	x	x	x	
Maintain working landscape/agricultural & forest	x		x		x	x
Remove gravel to stabilize banks		x				
More local control/input to solve problems			x	x		x
Need environmental education in schools around river				x	x	x
Create recreation and trail opportunities in watershed		x		x		

Next Steps for Success

People thought about their visions for the future, and issues of concern, and suggested steps to take to address the issues so they could achieve their visions. The majority of people wanted to focus on problems in their own backyards and communities. They were willing to commit time and energy to projects that could solve problems and build success for future projects. While each community is uniquely different, they all seem to share a concern and commitment to keeping the White River Watershed as a wonderful place to live. Some of the next steps people want to take are:

Next Steps	East Randolph	Stok bridge	Turbridge	Randolph	Sharon	Bethel
Identify local and state resources available					x	
Gather and present information on watershed issues	x		x	x		
Have neighbors working together on local projects	x	x	x	x	x	x
Hold informational forum on gravel issue		x				x
Hold informational forum on the Conte Refuge		x		x		x
Work on local erosion projects		x	x	x	x	x
Should better inform people in the watershed about issues	x	x	x	x	x	x
Work closely with landowners	x	x				
Need good local project to keep interest in WRP		x		x		
Should be a "bottom-up" organization	x	x			x	
WRP should foster communication between stakeholders	x	x	x	x	x	x
Define goals and project priorities then DO THEM!	x	x	x	x	x	x
Start smaller local projects to get quick successes	x	x	x	x	x	
Use a newsletter to get the word out to others	x	x		x	x	x
Inform the media of working being done	x			x	x	
Involve the schools	x	x	x	x	x	x
Bring more interested people into the organization	x	x		x		x
Should find sources of funding to do projects			x	x		
Keep it fun			x	x		x

A long range and broad view of the White River Watershed can help us meet the needs of all our communities in a way that does not compromise the natural resources for future generations. Working together as communities will ensure our visions for the White River Watershed become a reality. Your efforts and interest in the White River Basin has given life to the White River Partnership --we are looking forward to working together to create success projects for the White River Basin.

October 1995. *The Silvio O Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, Action Plan and Environmental Impact Statement.* US Fish and Wildlife Service.

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service initiated an action plan and environmental impact statement in response to the passage of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge Act of 1991 which proposed a fish and wildlife refuge which encompassed the Connecticut River watershed. This refuge would be different than those normally administered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service in that the Service proposed to initiate a watershed-wide cooperative management and education effort to help carry out the long term purposes set forth in the Silvio O. Conte Act versus direct ownership as it had normally done in the past with refuges. This effort proposed to initiate a limited land protection program using a combination of easements, cooperative management agreements and fee title acquisitions--with emphasis on endangered, threatened, rare and uncommon species and communities. In addition the Service would continue to fulfill its other legislative mandates in the watershed.

The creation of the Action Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) included a scoping process, data collection and creation of a range of alternatives for action. The Draft EIS was put through a public review process. This process included over 1,500 copies being mailed to potentially affected government agencies, businesses and organizations, all public libraries in the watershed and others who requested a copy. To provide opportunities for public comment a series of walk-in sessions, public meetings and formal hearings were held in the watershed. In Vermont those communities were Brattleboro, Guildhall, Hartford, South Royalton, Springfield, and St. Johnsbury. In total 348 written comments and seven petitions containing 897 signatures were received. Over 290 people attended afternoon walk-in sessions and over 700 people attended the evening public meeting and formal hearings including 94 who testified. All comments received both written and verbal were taken into final consideration in preparation of the final EIS and are part of the official record. Meetings, contacts and presentations were made to the following organizations in Vermont:

VT/NH Connecticut River Joint Commissions	Vermont Land Trust
Vermont Natural Resources Council	Two Rivers-Ottawquechee RPC
Vermont Agency of Natural Resources Commission	Windham Regional
The Nature Conservancy Forest	Green Mountain National
USDA Forest Service Experiment Station	Southern Windsor County RPC
Northern Vermont Development Association	Sen. Leahy & Jeffords
White River National Fish Hatchery Staff Subcommittee	JRC Mt. Ascutney

SCS Conservation Districts
Museum

VT Law School/Montshire

In addition, the Service distributed over 3,500 copies of the Issues Workbook between September 1993 and February 1994. All materials in the workbook were derived from the suggestions and comments made during the public meetings. People were asked to read through the work book and jot down their thoughts on the issues presented. The major grouping of issues were:

- Conserving fish and wildlife, and their habitats.
- Protecting private property rights and local economy.
- Providing opportunities for recreation, education and access.

Appendix C contains the percentage of responses to questions asked:

For the workshops held in Vermont the following results summarize the role people felt should be played by the US Fish and Wildlife Service in carrying out the purposes of the Silvio O. Conte Refuge.

- play a coordination role;
- work in cooperation with land trusts, other groups and agencies as well as private landowners, in all land conservation efforts;
- respect private rights and always work in cooperation with private landowners;
- recognize the use of eminent domain as a real issue, actively avoid its use, and adopt a policy of "never, never, almost ever" using it;
- provide fair and just compensation for all lost property values; and
- develop incentive programs through the use of matching grants and other possible sources of funding.

Major issues which came out of the comments and responses were:

- Several organizations and individuals requested that the Service not acquire prime farmland.
- The US Fish and Wildlife Service should not take forested land out of production.
- Some felt the economic analysis conducted for the EIS was insufficient and were concerned about loss of future development potential.
- More negative comments were received from the far north of the watershed which voiced concern over eminent domain; curtailment of snowmobiling; concern about more regulations or general skepticism of the government.
- US Fish and Wildlife Service's use of eminent domain was a major issue of concern.

- Curtailment of snowmobiling was a concern, the Service recognized its value and the history of cooperation the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers has with State and Federal agencies.
- There was a call for continued citizen input into the Conte planning effort, Advisory Committee meeting held throughout the watershed would continue as a means for input.

As a result of the Conte planning effort and comment on the Draft EIS, Alternative D, as modified by public comment, was selected to fulfill the purposes of the Silvio O. Conte Fish and Wildlife Refuge Act. The scope and actions for Alternative D can be found in Appendix C.

September 1994. *Finding Common Ground: Conserving the Northern Forest.* Northern Forest Lands Council.

The Northern Forests Lands Council was created in 1990 and has been active in seeking ways for Maine, New Hampshire, New York and Vermont to maintain the "traditional patterns of land ownership and use" of the Northern Forest. This report is the effort of in-depth research, assessed data, consultations with experts, public meetings and listening to the public. The result has been a document with approximately fifty recommendations for the future of the Northern Forest. Within this summary trends and public policies that now inhibit conservation of the forest resources,, the Councils broad recommendations and those specific to conservation of public lands will be identified. Appendix D contains the public comment from Vermont that was generated from this process.

Those public policies and trends which the Council feels inhibit conservation of the region's forest resources include:

- increased polarization among forest user groups.
- rising property taxes, causing loss of land from natural resource uses.
- pressure for development of high value areas near shorelines and scenic places.
- jobs lost to competition from other regions and countries.
- incomplete knowledge of land management techniques to maintain or enhance biological diversity.
- lack of funding and clear priority setting for public land and easement acquisition.
- insufficient attention to public land management.
- fear of losing public recreation opportunities and access to private lands.
- loss of respect for the traditions of private ownership and uses of private land.
- failure to consider forest land as a whole, as an integrated landscape.

The Council's recommendations in response to the issues identified and the creation of the report include:

- supporting property owners to hold and manage land for forest products or other benefits.
- helping communities strengthen their natural resource-based economies.
- protecting biological diversity through management based on sound scientific principles.
- acquiring lands for public ownership based on clear public priorities, demonstrated need, and fairness to landowners.
- providing public recreation on public and private land as an important part of the region's economy and way of life.
- recognizing that for the very long term, the use of conservation easements to protect lands from development will be needed to ensure sustainability of the forest resource in areas with significant development pressures.

In regard to public land management and acquisition, the Council states in the report: *"Public land acquisition and management are important tools in protecting components of the full range of values in the Northern Forest, where private lands cannot be expected to provide or protect such values. The Council supports public land acquisition and easements as set forth in recommendations of this section, as an overall strategy to conserve the Northern Forest."*

Those recommendations include:

- to fund public agencies.-Congress and the states should provide sufficient funds to public land management agencies to manage and maintain existing public lands holdings and recreation facilities for increased public use; to protect fragile areas; and to enhance public health and safety at exiting facilities. Congress and states should also provide sufficient funding to meet the costs of administering conservation easements held by public agencies.
- to institute a national excise tax on recreation equipment. Congress should institute a national excise tax on outdoor specialty recreation equipment (e.g., climbing gear, hiking boots) to support wildlife and recreation management on public lands, and to support recreation opportunities on private lands through assistance and compensation to landowners.
- to refine land acquisition planning programs. By June 1996, states, in consultation with local governments, should refine their existing state land acquisition programs to follow a goal-oriented public planning process that:
 - a) identifies and sets priorities for acquisition of fee or less-than-fee interests in exceptional and important lands. The criteria for such lands include:

- places offering outstanding recreational opportunities including locations for hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking, camping, and other forms of back-country recreation;
 - recreational access to river and lake shorelines;
 - land supporting vital ecological functions and values;
 - habitat for rare, threatened or endangered natural communities, plants or wildlife;
 - areas of outstanding scenic value and significant geological features
 - working private forest lands that are of such significance or so threatened by conversion that conservation easements should be purchased.
- b) acquires land or interest in land only from willing sellers
 - c) involves local governments and landowners in the planning process in a meaningful way that acknowledges their concerns about public land acquisitions.
 - d) recognizes that zoning, while an important land use mechanism, is not an appropriate substitute for acquisition.
 - e) ensures that the unilateral eminent domain will only be used with the consent of the landowner to clear title and/or establish purchase price (i.e.: "friendly" condemnation).
 - f) efficiently uses public dollars by purchasing only the rights necessary to best protect identified and exceptional values.
 - g) weighs the potential impacts and benefits of land and easement acquisition on local and regional economies.
 - h) considers the necessity for including costs of future public land management in the assessment of overall costs acquisition.
 - i) minimizes adverse tax consequences to municipalities by making funds available to continue to pay property taxes based at least on current use valuation of parcels acquired, payments in lieu of taxes, user fee revenues, or other benefits where appropriate.
 - j) identifies the potential for exchanging currently owned public land for privately held land of greater public value.
 - k) provides that lands purchased are used and managed for their intended purposes.
- to fund the Land and Water Conservation Program. Congress should fund the overall Land and Water Conservation Program at the current authorized level, with at least 60% of the fund's going to the states. Along with adequate funding, Congress should revise the law to provide greater flexibility to the states allowing increased efficiency in expenditure of LWCF moneys. The states should use

broad based planning processes to allocate LWCF moneys within their boundaries.

- to fund state land acquisition programs. States should continue their history of providing funding for land acquisition through land purchase bonds, dedicated funds, private contributions, and legislative appropriations to purchase fee or less-than-fee interests in lands in conformance with the land acquisition process described above.
- to employ a variety of conservation tools. States should employ a variety of tools in addition to fee acquisition to conserve working landscapes and public values including:
 - a) exchanges of land and less-than-fee interests such as perpetual conservation easements
 - b) short and long term cooperative agreements with landowners for the protection of plant and animal species, scenic overlooks and trailheads.
 - c) public purchase of specific public recreation rights (independent of other property interests) such as fishing and boating access, snowmobiling, cross country skiing and hiking trails.
 - d) partnerships with private land trusts to acquire land in situations where emergency actions and bridge loans are needed, or where complex approaches, such as partial development or land exchanges, are appropriate.

Related recommendation can be found in this report for State easement programs, management of public lands, identification of lands of exceptional value and conservation transactions.

June 1994. *Lake Champlain Recreation-Public Involvement.* VT Dept. of Forest, Parks, & Recreation/New York Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

This joint effort to gather public views on recreation on Lake Champlain was completed by the Vermont Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation and the New York Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The overall goal of the public involvement effort for the Lake Champlain basin was to solicit opinion from a wide variety of groups and individuals on: 1) the problems related to the state of recreation on Lake Champlain; and 2) suggestions for resolving these problems. The process was designed to ensure the successful development and implementation of the Lake Champlain Recreation Plan. The objectives of this process included:

1. engage recreation user groups, shoreline town officials and individuals in a dialogue where opinions are voiced and ideas exchanged;
2. inform users of each other's recreational issues and concerns regarding Lake Champlain;
3. identify potential solutions to recreational problems on Lake Champlain;
4. identify opportunities and potential resources to develop and implement solutions.

Overall findings of the public involvement process for recreation found:

- Lake Champlain is enjoyed by a diversity of year-round recreationalist, all seeking different experiences and having different and sometimes conflicting needs. In managing for any recreation issues or problem, the complete myriad of views needs to be carefully discerned.
- The quality of Lake Champlain's water and other natural resources have a direct effect on the recreational experience of the Lake. The concerns and perceptions of all affected recreationalists must be recognized in managing for improved water quality.
- Inadequate public access is a concern in all geographical areas of the Lake's shoreline. Careful evaluation of these needs, including potential resources for future development, must be done for the entire lake shore to accurately prioritize future access improvements or development (willing sellers only)
- Boating congestion is a perceived problem in localized areas of Lake Champlain and not a perceived problem on the lake overall. Through partnership arrangements, local municipalities and various state agencies need to address boating congestion in localized areas.
- Lake Champlain has tremendous potential as a tourist destination. Many recreational activities such as bicycling, kayaking, scuba diving and sailboarding need to be "discovered" and appropriately enhanced as important aspects of the Lake experience. In addition, Basin residents need to realize the economic benefits of existing and potential low-impact tourism.
- Recreational user conflicts occur throughout the Lake due to lack of awareness and respect of others sharing or living on the Lake. Education is needed to inform recreationalists of existing and potential conflicts and to encourage respectful and appropriate use of the Lake.
- Increase education is needed to address growing safety concerns. Recreationalist need to be more knowledgeable of boating laws and safe boat handling skills.
- The unique cultural and historic resources of Lake Champlain and the Basin need to be preserved to maintain and enhance high quality recreational experiences into the future.
- Management of recreational issues on Lake Champlain must always include active participation by local governments.
- Grassroots efforts are critical in recreation planning.

November 1993, *Listening Log of Public Comments on the Findings and Options. A compilation of all public comment on the Findings and Options considered by the Northern Forest Lands Council as it transformed its Options into Draft Recommendations.* Northern Forest Lands Council.

Comments from Vermont Citizens and groups, and listening log of public hearings in Vermont can be found in Appendix D.

1986. *Land and Resource Management Plan Green Mountain National Forest.* US Dept. of Agriculture, Forest Service, Eastern Region.

The Green Mountain Land Resource Management Plan is now ten years old, it is in the process of being revised during 1997 through 1999. As part of the public participation for the Vermont Lands Conservation Plan, Environmental Collaborative will keep track of developments, meetings and ongoing work of the Green Mountain Forest Plan revision process.

The current Green Mountain Plan sets out goals, objectives, standards and guidelines for management of specific land areas. In the plan the following public uses and needs were identified:

Wilderness recreation	Backcountry recreation
Big Game Hunting	Small Game Hunting
Nongame Wildlife Recreation	Fishing
Timber Harvest	Down Hill Skiing
Cross-Country Skiing	Camping
Berry Picking	Swimming
Hiking	An other recreational pursuits

Seventeen goals have been developed in the plan for public use and enjoyment of the Green Mountain National Forest these range from providing a wide range of recreational opportunities, to better maintaining existing facilities to ensure that only the existing ski areas remain in the National forest and no others are built. In regards to camping, one goal is to allow state parks and private campgrounds to meet the increasing need for car-based camp sites and not to build more in the National Forest.

The plan also contains immediate priorities for land ownership adjustment, as well as long range direction for evaluating and prioritizing future adjustments. The highest priority for landowner adjustment was given to tracts which include the Appalachian National Scenic Trail and the Long Trail, tracts which include frontage on the White River and other significant recreational streams, tract in or near wilderness and other backcountry areas, and tracts which would help consolidate the forest. Public lands adjacent to the trails would protect public use of the trails and help meet the goals of the National Scenic Trail program. The White River has been identified as a major spawning stream in the Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon reintroduction program. To achieve the objectives of this program

the plan considers acquiring rights in property with frontage on the river, rather than acquiring the parcels in fee simple. Tracts which would consolidate public ownership would enable the Forest Service to manage more efficiently and would help fulfill their role in providing large contiguous areas of public land for backcountry recreation and wildlife habitat.

Green Mountain National Forest personnel worked closely with the Vermont Agency of Environmental Conservation to develop a plan for forest resources in Vermont. The GMNF is about 5% of the state land area and about 50% of the public lands in the state, so it is an important part of the State's resource. The State Resource Plan recommends a role for the GMNF and the GMNF believes the Green Mountain Plan is consistent with recommendations in the Vermont Forest Plan.



II.

Summary of Stakeholder Interviews (July 1997)

**Vermont Lands Conservation Plan
Summary of Stakeholder Interviews**

Presented to:

Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation
103 South Main Street-10 South
Waterbury, Vermont 05671

From:

Environmental Collaborative
15 Park Street
Randolph, Vermont 05060
802/728-6026

July 21, 1997

Stakeholders Interviewed in this Summary

Timber/Forest Products

Bill Sayre
Roberta Borland

Conservation

Jennifer Ely

Environmental Advocacy

Jim Shallow
Ande Colnes

Local Officials/RPC

Bill Samal
Sue Sinclair
Don Bourdon
Tom Kennedy
Sandi Young
Lou Sorenson
Charles Carter

Sporting groups

Harry Montaque
Willard Taft

Recreation

Paul Rea
Rosemary Shea
Bruce Epstein

Business Group

VT Chamber of Commerce
Chuck Nicols
Sue Kruthers

Commercial user

Gray Stevens
CVPS-Linda Buzzell

Forestland Investors

Landvest-Rick Carbonetti

Regional

Conte Refuge-Larry Bandolin

Watershed organizations

White River Partnership-Dennis
Borchardt

Legislators

Mary Sullivan

Other

Matt Jacobson

Summary of Stakeholder Interviews for Lands Conservation Plan

As part of the public participation component of the Lands Conservation Plan, twenty five stakeholders were interviewed in person or over the phone to gather input on their views on issues and priorities for the plan. Those interviewed were selected through suggestions of the Land Conservation Steering Committee and are representative of major stakeholder groups identified by the committee.

This report summarizes the findings of these interviews and highlights major issues stakeholders felt should be addressed in the Lands Conservation Plan. Under each question asked are the range of responses for each of these questions. Land type priorities for conservation are expressed as number of respondents out of twenty five who classified each type as either high, medium, low or not appropriate for acquisition. These have been sorted into the top five priorities for acquisition and the five least desired for acquisition.

Major Issues identified

- Need to develop an acquisition system based on priorities and the ability to manage those lands.
- Need to have a clear inventory of what lands are currently owned and the values they have.
- Need to develop a process for involving the public and particularly communities in the acquisition process.
- Payment in Lieu of Taxes is an important issue to evaluate and make more equitable in the plan.
- Land management is seen as inextricable tied to acquisition-land should not be purchased if there is not adequate money for management.
- Balancing the need for jobs and economics with conservation and preservation.

Responses to questions

- ◆ *What do you think are the most positive things about the Vermont Agency of Natural Resource's management of public lands and its past land conservation and acquisitions actions? What do you view as some of the negative aspects?*

Positive:

They have assembled a broad array of lands and have protected ecologically critical areas.

Preserving land for public use.

Past management for multiple use.

Ability to relieve development pressures; Protect valuable resource functions.

Taking opportunities to buy land.

Acquisition of threatened lands.

Protection of rare and endangered species.

Parks are a service to tourist and residents.

Purchase of development rights in Essex County; Stream bank program.

Protecting special resources in the state.

Lands acquired for public trust that provide recreation or a natural setting.

ANR has traditionally been an advocate of multiple use and local logging jobs.

Keeping campgrounds simple; Proactive in exotic species extermination.

Beginning to look at ecotourism and its benefit to the state's economy.

Having lands for multiple use rather than single use; Protecting Long Trail and Catamount Trail; Beginning to work with other groups.

Opportunity to manage lands for the public interests that private land owners may not manage for.

Recreation management is good; State parks are important to the economy.

Good management at Emerald Lake.

Trying to use public participation in their land planning efforts.

Has shown leadership in acquiring lands that fit the Agency's mission.

Use of limited resources to protect some very fragile lands.

Good job of actively acquiring land and coordinating with NGOs; Most land managers are doing a good job with recreation but timber should not be a priority; Collaboration with Green Mountain Club on Long Trail; Proactive on connecting Green Mountain National Forest.

Timber management in state forests.

Negative:

Under funding of land management; Too high emphasis of game species and timber; Park seasons are too short.

Towns losing tax revenue.

It seems there is less focus now on multiple use and more on appeasing single user groups.

Lack of communication with local communities; Acquisition seems to be made on political decisions rather than science, resources or public interest.

Lack of staff for management.

There is an attack on private landowners (heavy cutting bill)

Legislature is in the hands of liberal, urban centered people.

Permit process for guides-needing separate permits from different agencies is not good.

Turn-over in ANR staff-staff stretched too thin.

Concern over how well state forests are managed.

No master plan for acquisition or clear criteria-creates lack of public trust.

Private property rights are being threatened by public land purchases and regulations.

The Agency seems to forget that they are stewards on behalf of the public.

ANR is moving away from multiple use management; They seem hungry to buy land for the sake of buying and are buying lands that are not needed such as the Hancock land, Victory bog and Belvedere bog which are protected by wetland laws.

Not all lands should be open to all uses.

To few dollars going into recreation.

Different departments of ANR do not coordinate well-also other state agencies do not coordinate with each other; In terms of recreation there is no recreation department and F, P, & R is not close enough to recreation users; Trails are often overbuilt; There is more service to snowmobilers than other trail users.

Current acquisitions do not seem strategic.

Lack of money-budget for F, P & R needs to be maintained; Trading away state public resources; Selling campgrounds; State forest lands sold to Killington; Don't sell public lands it violates public trust.

Lack of public involvement when land is acquired-especially at the municipal level.

Feels that with some land swaps state has not gotten the best deal.

Lack of coordinated planning effort for lands conservation and management; Department is not adequately staffed; Department does not articulate its goal to the public well of what, how, why and when acquisition is needed; Need to look at a watershed approach to acquisition.

Lack of community support for acquisitions-need a more formal process.

- ◆ *How do you, your organization, and/or its members benefit from Vermont's public lands and/or its management?*

Refer to individual interviews.

- ◆ *What are the most pressing issues or needs for the future of public lands in Vermont?*

Regular and consistent funding for land acquisition; Increased money for management; A need to increase focus on ecosystem and biodiversity management.

Public access to water and recreation opportunities; Funding.

Lake shore lands and access-water resources are highest priority; Critical habitat; Lack of consistency between ANR, Economic Development and AOT.

Management plans that promote quality sustainable forest management; Acquisition issues of criteria for acquisition, property tax issues and overcoming the reluctance of municipalities to accept public acquisition in their community; Citizen involvement and funding for management of lands.

Balancing needs of user groups; Commercial development especially telecommunication towers.

Proper management; Development of access; Funding to staff management; Utilizing lands for highest and best use.

Random purchase of land-should have a more strategic approach to acquisition.

Linking public lands together rather than patchwork purchases.

Access to land for recreation-fears private land will be posted and put more pressure on public lands.

More acquisition of sensitive habitats and in large blocks.

Recreation, especially small scale developed recreation for regions of the state; Swimming and fishing access-there is a lot of pressure on lakes; Open up unknown but interesting sites.

Overuse of public lands; User conflicts; State does not adequately compensate towns for lands they own in these towns.

Manage what you have to the best interest of the public-find a balance between human use and wildlife.

Need for more local involvement in acquisition of public lands; Equal payment in lieu of taxes; appraisal of state lands-purchase price not used for taxes but lower value given for tax payments; Good balance between public and private ownership; Coordinating between public agencies for purchases.

Interconnecting large tracts for wildlife; Limiting uses for different properties to reduce user conflicts and impacts; Coordination between state, regional and local entities; Ridge lines need attention.

Balance between use and protection and getting the public to understand this.

Public land is becoming controversial in Vermont; Private landowners are important for recreation access; Too many user conflicts.

Competing uses-user conflicts; Managing amount of use -there are too many people on public lands; As more land is acquired, how will stewardship cost be paid.

Ecosystem management-protecting core areas; Connectivity between core areas.

Having large, undeveloped tracts of forest lands; Watershed protection; Public access; Ecosystem integrity and function.

Keeping existing state areas as they are and in good shape.

Telecommunication towers; Adjacent land use to public lands; Fragmentation; Overuse and incompatible use.

Payments in Lieu of taxes-needs to be clarified and come to understand that works for towns; Consultation process with local governments; Defining what are wildlife corridors and where; User conflicts.

The most important lands that are threatened by development need to be protected; All Vermonters need to understand the need and importance for this.

Watershed approach to conservation; Population pressures on public lands; Resolving user conflicts; Radio towers.

Maintain what you have and manage it for multiple uses.

- ◆ *Of the issues and needs you have mentioned could you prioritize which you feel are most important for the Agency to address in this planning process?*

A need to increase focus on ecosystem and biodiversity management and consistent funding.

Public access and the balance between economics and preservation-need a mix of use and balancing of concerns.

State forests should be models of high quality, sustainable forest management: including BMPs, recreation, water quality; public involvement-a process for getting it and overcoming municipal reluctance.

Need a plan that is needs and priority based and expresses what citizens want; Enforcing existing laws is important.

Get a good inventory of what we have and accurately map these.

Need a natural resource inventory done for public lands geared towards recreation uses.

The state trying to control private property-too many rules and regulations.

Creating recreation opportunities; Educating public to the Agency's long term goal.

Overuse of public lands and its impacts.

Keeping public lands available for multiple use.

Connections for wildlife; special use areas to reduce user conflicts.

Competing uses-will it take more land to disperse these uses?, Is a permit system needed? Or policies against some uses?

Ecosystem management approach.

All issue fit together and can not be separated.

Better defining priorities for acquisition.

Have a system that prioritizes all land acquisition and is defensible.

Priorities and targets for acquisition (ranking system for land types and different approaches that can be used for conservation)-Where does Vermont want to be in 2097?

Maintain what you have; Less planning-revise planning process.

- ◆ *What do you feel are appropriate future uses or purposes for the Agency's acquisition of public land? Are there inappropriate uses of public land? If yes, what are they?*

Appropriate:

Protect biodiversity; Protect important ecological areas; Parks; Passive recreation.

Recreational access.

Public land with recreation opportunities; Conservation of unique resources; Land acquisition should be based on priorities and needs.

Open space, recreation and wildlife.

Balancing forests for multiple use.

Providing outdoor recreation for residents and tourists.

Public lands should be directed towards conservation efforts.

Greenways and trails are important for the state.

Need standards of use for each type of area purchased.

There is a need for primitive campgrounds on rivers.

Protection of special resources.

Truly critical or fragile lands that are endangered by development.

Lands for quiet, non-motorized recreation.

Sustainable forest management; Critical or unique natural areas; Recreation; Stream corridor protection.

Recreation lands for public use.

Recreation; Wildlife; Watershed protection.

Important habitat; Watershed protection; Demonstrating sustainable forestry practices.

Public access; Recreation; Productive forests; Wilderness.

Acquisition should be directed towards parcels with strong conservation values.

Large blocks of habitat; Conservation biology needs to be incorporated into the plan.

None are appropriate-more acquisition is opposed.

Inappropriate:

Dirt bike trails, jet skis and other intrusive ,damaging motorized uses; Acquisition solely for normal timber management; Clear-cuts; Introduction of exotic species.

Buying land and not allowing public access.

Land that is not used for multiple use.

Large parcels of timber land that will not have cutting.

Large scale logging; Commercial development; Allowing a single user group to dominate an area.

Do not take working forests or farms out of production.

Care needs to taken of having recreation or other uses that may impact habitat such as RVs in sensitive habitat or hiking trails near sensitive or breeding habitat.

Productive lands should be left in private hands; Timber resources should be left to the private sector.

Locking up traditional multiple use lands for no use or single use (Mt. Mansfield project is an example)

Timber clear cutting.

Not lands for timber harvest; Mining; ATV use.

Industrial logging; Resource extraction.

Lands that are need or appropriate on a local or regional level for development.

Mountain top communications; Not for timber production-only for maintaining healthy forest and demonstration of sustainable forest management.

Purchasing working forests; Manage what you have before expanding public lands.

- ◆ *Of the types lands I will mention which should the Agency consider a priority in its future land conservation efforts? Could you rank them, with H being high priority for acquisition, M-medium priority and L-being low priority. If you feel a land type is not appropriate for public lands acquisition please indicate with NA. Are there other types of lands that I did not mention that you feel are priorities?*

Providing for recreation opportunities

H-14, M-6, L-1, NA-0

Assuring working forests

H-7, M-5, L-5, NA-3

Mountain top communications

H-2, M-2, L-4, NA-11

Protecting rare and endangered species

H-19, M-1, L-0, NA-0

Sites for developed recreation

H-7, M-3, L-9, NA-0

Municipal water supply

H-7, M-4, L-3, NA-4

Ecological communities/biodiversity

H-14, M-2, L-1, NA-2

Lake shores/river frontage/islands

H-14, M-6, L-0, NA-0

Waterfall/gorges/geological features

H-13, M-7, L-1, NA-0

Large forested sites

H-9, M-3, L-3, NA-3

Expand/consolidate existing public lands

H-6, M-7, L-4, NA-1

Critical wildlife habitat

H-20, M-1, L-0, NA-2

Wilderness areas

H-5, M-7, L-5, NA-2

Working farms

H-4, M-5, L-6, NA-7

Scenic lands

H-5, M-7, L-2, NA-1

Greenways/trails

H-10, M-8, L-4, NA-0

Wetlands

H-8, M-6, L-4, NA-1

Landfills

H-2, M-0, L-5, NA-11

Natural areas

H-12, M-4, L-2, NA-1

River/stream corridors

H-11, M-5, L-2, NA-1

Current dam sites

H-0, M-4, L-8, NA-7

Public facilities

H-2, M-2, L-8, NA-5

Ranking of top five priorities based on number of people responding as a high priority

- I. Critical wildlife habitat
- II. Protecting rare and endangered species
- III. Lake shores/river frontage/islands
- IV. Providing for recreation opportunities
- V. Ecological communities/biodiversity

Ranking of not appropriate or lowest priorities based on number of people responding as not appropriate or low (lowest priority=I)

- I. Landfills
- II. Mountain top communications
- III. Current dam sites
- IV. Public facilities
- V. Working farms (Note: people felt farms are important but feel the Vermont Land Trust or other non-profits are the appropriate means to protect farms either through purchase or easements)

◆ *What criteria should the Agency consider in evaluating parcels of land for future acquisition?*

Role in protection of biodiversity or ecosystem integrity; Rare species or critical wildlife habitat for species needing large protected areas; Number of public values protected particularly those not filled in private markets and land.

Benefits to the public versus cost; Weighing purchase against investing in land already owned.

Is it a threatened parcel; Is it a rare resource.

Priorities listed above and good management, sustainable forestry.

Local support; Proximity to existing state lands.

Access for local people; More selective acquisition based on priorities and purpose of use.

Is the land important to the community it is in-either for taxes or as used open space; Potential uses; Is it an unique or threatened area.

Should be priority driven criteria based on above categories (Question 8 priority land types).

Is it an irreplaceable resource; Is it a resource important to the public that is under development pressure.

Are there special or unique resources on the property; Consolidating existing lands; Access to water; Can the state afford to manage it.

Will it protect the parcel from development; Does the parcel contain unique areas or ecosystems; Maintaining healthy forests.

What is the probability for development; How much protection does the land need; Tax impact to towns; Appraisal impact on private property values; Local support and approval.

Creating connections for wildlife corridors; Creating buffers to existing parcels; Parcel does not have past hazardous waste or other liabilities attached to it.

Priority uses and values the parcel holds.

Who will be able to use the land; Will all uses be represented.

State or regional significance; Recreation use; Importance to wildlife; Adjacent to other state lands; Historic or archaeological significance; Amount of people the purchase would benefit.

Location; Size (larger better); Significant ecological features.

Protecting large contiguous ecosystem areas; Valuable ecological or recreation resources; Proximity to other protected areas.

Access for the public; location; Surrounding area (development).

Better review of local and regional plans (how does the land fit into their plans); risks to parcel; Land use on adjacent lands.

Threat to wildlife habitat; Does it fit the acquisition priorities; Threat to endangered or rare species; Accessibility for public; Extent of possible uses by public; Cost benefit between acquisition and use of other conservation tools.

Protecting important resource such as water, forests and biodiversity.

Criteria built around a watershed approach; Land type priorities and important resource values.

Criteria are need-purchases seem haphazard; must be compatible with multiple use.

◆ *How much land do you feel should be in State ownership?*

The majority of respondents stated that this was a meaningless and poor question.

◆ *Given that the state has limited resources to purchase and manage land, should the state sell or trade existing land in order to obtain more valuable parcels?*

Of the twenty five stakeholders interviewed, four stated no to this question. Twenty one said yes but many added that first the state needs a good inventory of the lands they have and values they hold; and secondly, they need a clear process that involves the public to conduct sales, swaps or trades.

- ◆ *Are there specific areas or regions of Vermont you feel the Agency should concentrate future acquisitions efforts?*

The majority of respondents said no to this question. Those who stated preferences are as follows: Access to water resources was mentioned by several respondents. Several people stated that connecting the two parts of the Green Mountain National Forest was very important. The New England Power Company lands in Southern Vermont were mentioned by several people as were large parcels in the Northern Forest. Three people mentioned the Worcester Range.

- ◆ *Should state acquisition be focused on the areas of the state which are more impacted by development as opposed to remote areas?*

Nineteen respondents stated no to this question with many stating that acquisition should be based on priorities as in question eight. Six stated yes saying this was important in maintaining rural character in those areas threatened by development.

- ◆ *For every dollar that goes to conservation, what percent should go to acquisition and what percent to management of existing lands or those purchased? Is ANR doing a good job managing their existing lands?*

Most respondents felt they did not know enough about how things worked at the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation to answer this question. All respondents felt that management was important and that adequate money should be available for management if a parcel was going to be acquired by the state. Many people stated that the cost for management of existing lands should be totalled and what is left over should be used for acquisition. Others stated- Do not acquire what you can not afford to manage.

- ◆ *How can your organization or its members assist in addressing the needs and issues you have identified as those of concern?*

The next three questions are best examined by looking at the individual interviews.

- ◆ *What role do you feel your organization or its members should have in developing the Agency's Land Conservation Plan?*
- ◆ *How can we best involve your organization/interest group in the planning process? Would you like to stay involved in the planning process?*
- ◆ *To what extent do you feel local control/input should influence state land conservation decisions?*

All respondents felt local input and control was important and essential. It was stated that there should be a well defined process for involving local

communities and that the issue of payment in lieu of taxes was very important and should be examined and made more equitable in this plan. When asked if a community should have veto power over a state acquisition, all but two respondents stated no. They felt if veto was available the state would never be able to acquire land and that there are often greater public benefits to acquisition than are apparent to a community.

- ◆ *Should the State considered conservation tools other than acquisition, such as purchase of development rights; land exchanges; perpetual conservation easements; short and long term cooperative agreements with landowners for protection of plant and animal species, scenic over looks and/or trails; public purchase of specific recreation rights (independent of other property interests) such as fishing and boating access; or partial development of the land to finance the purchase? When are these appropriate and how would you rank these mechanisms I mentioned? Are there other approaches which should be considered?*

All but one respondent said yes to this question. People felt that these were all valuable tools that could save money while still protecting important values. It was felt that there was no priority of which tool was more desirable but rather to use the one most appropriate on a case by case basis.

- ◆ *How do you see government, non-profit organizations, and private landowners working together to protect those lands you identified as a priority?*

All but one respondent felt that it was important to develop cooperative relationships between these parties so that resources were better used and a wide range of tools and approaches could be employed for conservation. Of the one who did not support collaboration, they stated that they supported private ownership and were uncomfortable with land trusts and non-profits purchasing lands and turning them over to the state or taking them out of private ownership.

- ◆ *Would you support the concept of holding periodic "conservation forums" between land conservation organizations with the purpose of sharing respective land conservation priorities?*

All respondents answered yes to this question. It was felt this was not only a good idea but necessary to have a coordinated conservation effort and a means to reduce duplication of effort and save money.

- ◆ *What questions or issues did we not ask you about that you feel are important to address in the Lands Conservation/Acquisition Strategy?*

The need for communication and input from communities and the public; How to balance economics with preservation.

Management is the weak link-until we can afford to manage what we have it is best not to have additional acquisition.

If land is going to be purchased and promoted to the public there needs to be a working set of use standards.

There are a lot of scattered parcels-work should be done to link these together; A clearly articulated plan is important.

Active recreation area should have equal standing with conservation and preservation areas.

The Agency have ignored public input on issues in the past-they should act more responsibly towards public input.

The public can not participate fully in all the planning processes going on (too busy); The purchase process-as soon as landowners smell state purchase land values go up-the state is rewarding liquidation.

Conservation needs to work in concert with sustainable development in the state-Does conservation make long term economic sense?-If so you must make the public understand this.

The need to work closer with the Green Mountain National Forest on land acquisition issues in Vermont.

Getting towns more involved in purchases-getting their opinion and mitigating financial impact.

Creating a good public process for acquisition.

This summary represents those opinions of twenty five people who were interviewed from various stakeholder groups identified by the Lands Conservation Steering Committee. The list of stakeholder groups and people identified for interviews can be found in Appendix A. The interview instrument used is located in Appendix B.



Appendix A

Stakeholder Groups and Individuals Identified



Stakeholder Interviews

Timber/Forest Products

Bill Sayre
Henry Manchester
Cersosimo Rep.

Conservation

Warren King
Virginia Rasch
Leo Laferrier
Jennifer Ely

Environmental Advocacy

Jim Shallow
Ande Colnes

Property Rights Advocates

David Edson
Dennis Carver

Local Officials

Jamaica Selectman
Bill Samil
Mike Metcalf
Allen Rich-Lunenburg
Pat French-Randolph
Arlington Selectman
Rutland Selectman
Granby Selectman

Sporting groups

Harry Montaque
Trout Unlimited-Phillip Kelleher
Ducks Unlimited-Mike Billig
Lake Champlain Walleye Assoc.
Willard Taft

Recreation

Bryant Watson
Paul Rea
Eric Chittenden
Rosemary Shea
Bruce Epstein
Eric Edelstein

Landowners

John/Peter Meyer
Don Tase
Dan Kowoliski
James Engle

Business Group

Chris Barbieri
Kerrick Johnson
David Baresch

Commercial user

Gray Stevens
Carl Spangler
Bill Stenger
ETV Rep.
NEPCO-John Raganese
CVPS-Linda Buzzell

Forestland Investors

Henry Wittimore
Meadowsend Lumber
Larry Brown
Landvest(Carbonetti)

Regional

Conte Refuge-Larry Bandolin
CT Joint River Commission
Lake Champlain Basin Comm.

Researcher/Educators

Tim Traver
Dave Capean (UVM)

Agriculture

Harvey Smith
Art Manut

Native American

Rick Two-Bears
Homer St.Francis

Watershed organizations

Lewis Creek Assoc.
Mad River Watershed Assoc.
White River Partnership

Historic Preservation

Giovanni Peebles
Townsend Anderson
Paul Bruhn

Other

Matt Jacobson
Brendan Whittaker
Sean McKean
Gov. Howard Dean



Appendix B

Interview Instrument



Questions for Stakeholder Interviews for Lands Conservation Plan.

Interview will begin with introduction and scope of the Lands Conservation Plan planning and public process to the respondent. Interviews will be for approximately 1/2 hour and in a relaxed informal manner conducive to receiving unbiased feedback and input. Fact sheet and maps will be sent prior to interview.

- Questions 1-4 as informal ice breakers to set the stage for key questions.
1. Could you explain what you or your organization does?
 2. Are you aware of what the VT Agency of Natural Resources does? The role of the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation?
 3. What do you think are the most positive things about the Vermont Agency of Natural Resource's management of public lands and its past land conservation and acquisitions actions? What do you view as some of the negative aspects?
 4. How do you, your organization, and/or its members benefit from Vermont's public lands and/or its management?
- Key Questions to further scope the plan.
5. What are the most pressing issues or needs for the future of public lands in Vermont?
 6. Of the issues and needs you have mentioned could you prioritize which you feel are most important for the Agency to address in this planning process?
 7. What do you feel are appropriate future uses or purposes for the Agency's acquisition of public land? Are there inappropriate uses of public land? If yes, what are they?

8. Of the types lands I will mention which should the Agency consider a priority in its future land conservation efforts? Could you rank them, with H being high priority for acquisition, M-medium priority and L-being low priority. If you feel a land type is not appropriate for public lands acquisition please indicate with NA. Are there other types of lands that I did not mention that you feel are priorities?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> providing for recreation opportunities | <input type="checkbox"/> critical wildlife habitat |
| <input type="checkbox"/> assuring working forests | <input type="checkbox"/> wilderness areas |
| <input type="checkbox"/> mountain top communications | <input type="checkbox"/> working farms |
| <input type="checkbox"/> protecting rare and endangered species | <input type="checkbox"/> scenic lands |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sites for developed recreation | <input type="checkbox"/> greenways/trails |
| <input type="checkbox"/> municipal water supply | <input type="checkbox"/> wetlands |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ecological communities/biodiversity | <input type="checkbox"/> landfills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> lakeshores/river frontage/islands | <input type="checkbox"/> natural areas |
| <input type="checkbox"/> waterfall/gorges/geological features | <input type="checkbox"/> river/stream corridors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> large forested sites | <input type="checkbox"/> current dam sites |
| <input type="checkbox"/> expand/consolidate existing public lands | <input type="checkbox"/> public facilities |

9. What criteria should the Agency consider in evaluating parcels of land for future acquisition?

10. How much land do you feel should be in State ownership?

11. Given that the state has limited resources to purchase and manage land, should the state sell or trade existing land in order to obtain more valuable parcels?

12. Are there specific areas or regions of Vermont you feel the Agency should concentrate future acquisitions efforts?

13. Should state acquisition be focused on the areas of the state which are more impacted by development as opposed to remote areas?

14. For every dollar that goes to conservation, what percent should go to acquisition and what percent to management of existing lands or those purchased? Is ANR doing a good job managing their existing lands?

15. How can your organization or its members assist in addressing the needs and issues you have identified as those of concern?
16. What role do you feel your organization or its members should have in developing the Agency's Land Conservation Plan?
17. How can we best involve your organization/interest group in the planning process? Would you like to stay involved in the planning process?
18. To what extent do you feel local control/input should influence state land conservation decisions?
19. Should the State consider conservation tools other than acquisition, such as purchase of development rights; land exchanges; perpetual conservation easements; short and long term cooperative agreements with landowners for protection of plant and animal species, scenic over looks and/or trails; public purchase of specific recreation rights (independent of other property interests) such as fishing and boating access; or partial development of the land to finance the purchase? When are these appropriate and how would you rank these mechanisms I mentioned? Are there other approaches which should be considered?
20. How do you see government, non-profit organizations, and private landowners working together to protect those lands you identified as a priority?
21. What questions or issues did we not ask you about that you feel are important to address in the Lands Conservation/Acquisition Strategy?
 - *These questions are to be asked if appropriate for the organization being interviewed*
22. Would you support the concept of holding periodic "conservation forums" between land conservation organizations with the purpose of sharing respective land conservation priorities?
23. What is your organization's experience regarding the on-going management costs associated with its land holdings?
24. What is your organization's long term commitment to funding these ongoing management costs?



III.

1997 Lands Conservation Plan Survey Report (July 1998)

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1997

**LANDS CONSERVATION
PLAN**

SURVEY REPORT



July 1998



1997 Land Conservation Survey Report

Executive Summary

Vermont has a long history of land conservation. The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, through its Departments of Forests, Parks and Recreation and Fish and Wildlife are responsible for acquisition, and management, of state lands and parks. Since 1986, The Agency's land acquisition efforts have been guided by the Agency's "Lands Acquisition Program" report. The Agency is now in the process of developing a new plan to guide its land conservation activities. The new Lands Conservation Plan will look beyond just fee acquisition and explore a full range of conservation options and strive to develop an acquisition priority system based on the needs and desires of Vermont's citizens. To better understand citizen's priorities the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation engaged the Center for Rural Studies at the University of Vermont to conduct a random phone survey throughout the State. The Goals of this survey include:

- To determine the public's awareness and use of state-owned lands;
- To determine the degree of public support for continued state land acquisition;
- To determine what land types and uses the public feel are a priority for future land acquisition efforts;
- To determine public opinion on a variety of issues related to state land conservation that will need to be addressed in the plan.

Methodology

In September of 1997, The Center for Rural Studies at the University of Vermont conducted a phone survey of 790 Vermont residents chosen at random from a 1996 database of listed phones in Vermont. Three hundred eighty-eight participants had received an information packet by mail with background information on the Vermont Land Conservation Plan and the survey instrument; 402 participants were contacted who had no advance knowledge of the plan or survey. There was no statistically significance difference in responses between the two groups, thus findings summarized in this report are for the two groups combined, or the full 790 participants.

Findings

- State residents are very aware of the public lands. Overall, approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of the respondents indicated they were at least somewhat aware of state-owned lands.
- The survey also shows that state-owned conservation lands are visited frequently by Vermonters, the average number of visits to state lands in 1996 was 8 days with approximately one quarter visiting state lands more than 11 days per year
- By and large, the survey results indicate that Vermonters are generally supportive of continued state land acquisition. Most respondents (61%) feel the relative amount of state-owned conservation land in Vermont should increase.
- This finding is reinforced in analyzing the responses to a follow-up question in which respondents were asked whether state funding levels for state land acquisition should increase, decrease or stay the same. About $\frac{1}{2}$ of the respondents favored level funding while another third favored an increase in funding

- The types of land types or purposes with the greatest public support for state acquisition include:

1. Protect public water supplies	97%
2. Protect unique natural areas	97%
3. Provide outdoor recreation	95%
4. Protect wildlife habitat	95%
5. Maintain biological diversity	93%
6. Provide non-motorized recreation	92%
7. Protect shorelines on lakes, ponds & rivers	91%
- There is widespread support for the idea that the State's tax payment to communities for state-owned land should be the same as if it were in private ownership.
- There is also very strong public sentiment in favor of the State informing communities and soliciting their input on state land acquisition activities
- Interestingly, while nearly 2/3 of respondents agree that towns should have the ability to stop state land acquisitions, a majority also feel it may be appropriate, in certain instances, for the state to acquire land even if there is Selectboard opposition.
- While an overwhelming majority of respondents believe funding for land acquisition should include money for management, as a routine cost of all land acquisitions, nearly 2/3 of the respondents felt the state should still pursue land acquisition even if adequate funding for state land management may not currently exist.
- Sixty percent of respondents disagreed with the statement that the state should purchase more land only if it sells or exchanges a comparable amount of land and there is no net gain in state land acreage.
- There is widespread support for the State to exchange certain land for other with greater importance to the public, with 84% agreeing. There is only limited support for the state selling its conservation or recreation lands with 59% who do not believe the state should consider selling some of the lands under their jurisdiction
- Just less than half of the respondents felt the State should accept donated land even if the Selectboard opposes the land going to the State. For donation of properties near existing state lands that contain no special resources, 50% felt it should be accepted for purchase.
- The survey results indicate there is widespread support for the increased use of conservation easement, and other tools that are less than fee simple purchase, for conservation of important land types or purposes in Vermont.

Overall, the survey for state conservation transactions reinforces the need for a priority-based system and provides some insight into what, from the public's perspective, ought to be considered in developing such a system. It should be understood that while this survey is an important piece of public participation information in development of a new State Land Conservation Plan it is not the only piece that will be considered. The survey results will be evaluated and weighted carefully against input received through other public involvement activities that will assist in developing a plan that is responsive to the needs and desires of Vermonters.

1997 Land Conservation Survey Report

Executive Summary

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- Appendix A-Survey Instrument
- Appendix B-Survey Data and Demographics

Introduction

Vermont has a long history of land conservation. The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, through its Departments of Forests, Parks and Recreation and Fish and Wildlife are responsible for acquisition and management of state lands and parks. Since 1986, The Agency's land acquisition efforts have been guided by the Agency's "Lands Acquisition Program" report. The Agency is now in the process of developing a new plan to guide its land conservation activities. The new Lands Conservation Plan will look beyond just fee acquisition and explore a full range of conservation options and strive to develop an acquisition priority system based on the needs and desires of Vermont's citizens. To better understand citizen's priorities the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation engaged the Center for Rural Studies at the University of Vermont to conduct a random phone survey throughout the State. The Goals of this survey include:

- To determine the public's awareness and use of state-owned lands;
- To determine the degree of public support for continued state land acquisition;
- To determine what land types and uses the public feel are a priority for future land acquisition efforts;
- To determine public opinion on a variety of issues related to state land conservation that will need to be addressed in the plan.

The survey was completed as part of a comprehensive public participation program designed to use a variety of methods to gather public and stakeholder input on the Land Conservation Plan's development. A seventeen member Steering Committee composed of representatives from stakeholder groups and the Agency of Natural Resources will use this and other public participation information to develop a draft Lands Conservation Plan for broad review by the public.

Methodology

In September of 1997, The Center for Rural Studies at the University of Vermont conducted a phone survey of Vermont residents chosen at random from a 1996 database of listed phones in Vermont. The total number of households listed in the 1996 SelectPhone CD-ROM database was 256,811. A representative sample of households in Vermont at a 95% confidence and a +/- 5% precision would need to contain 384 responses.

*Used for dichotomous data: $z^2 * P_y / E^2 (1 - P_y)$ Where $z=1.96$, $P_y=0.5$, and $E=0.1$*

Two independent samples (both representative samples of all Vermont households) were drawn from this initial frame. Potential respondents in the 'informed' group were mailed information about the state's land conservation activities, while those in the 'uninformed' group were not contacted in any way before the actual survey. The sample was split between informed and uninformed to see if up-front information better prepared respondents to answer the survey and increased survey participation. In order to obtain 384 completed surveys from both groups, the samples pulled from the sampling frame were increased 500 and 750 percent, respectively. This inflation was due to the fact that the accuracy of the sampling frame was unknown, and there were several other variables that would affect the response rate (see below). The resulting

samples were 2,000 'uninformed' and 3,000 'informed'. These two samples were randomly selected using the random filter function SPSS for windows. Households that were duplicated in both sample groups were assigned randomly to one or the other.

Three hundred eighty-eight participants had received an information packet by mail with background information on the Vermont Land Conservation Plan and forthcoming survey; 402 participants were contacted who had no advance knowledge of the plan or survey. There was virtually no statistically significance difference in responses between the two groups, thus findings summarized in this report are for the two groups combined, or the full 790 participants. Respondents were equally distributed throughout the 14 Vermont counties based on population, with a mean number of respondents of 44 per county. The mean number of years for time respondents had lived in Vermont was 33 years, with a mean age of 49 years. Income and education levels among respondents were uniformly distributed. There were a slightly higher number of male respondents to female with 53.5% and 46.5%, respectively. The survey instrument, demographics and collected data are found in Appendix A and B.

Variables Affecting the 'Informed' Sample

An effort was made to obtain better addresses for those returned due to "insufficient address". In addition, mail with "forwarding time expired" was resent to individuals if the address supplied was one that remained in Vermont. Despite this effort, undeliverable mail due to poor addresses, deceased individuals, and relocated households, decreased the 'informed' sample size from 3,000 to 2,272. Potential respondents from this 'informed' sample were also eliminated if they had not read the information either due to lack of time, interest, or ability.

Variable Affecting 'Uninformed' Sample

More 'uninformed' women than men were willing to respond to it to the survey. In order to counteract this potential bias, on the last day, only male registered voters were surveyed.

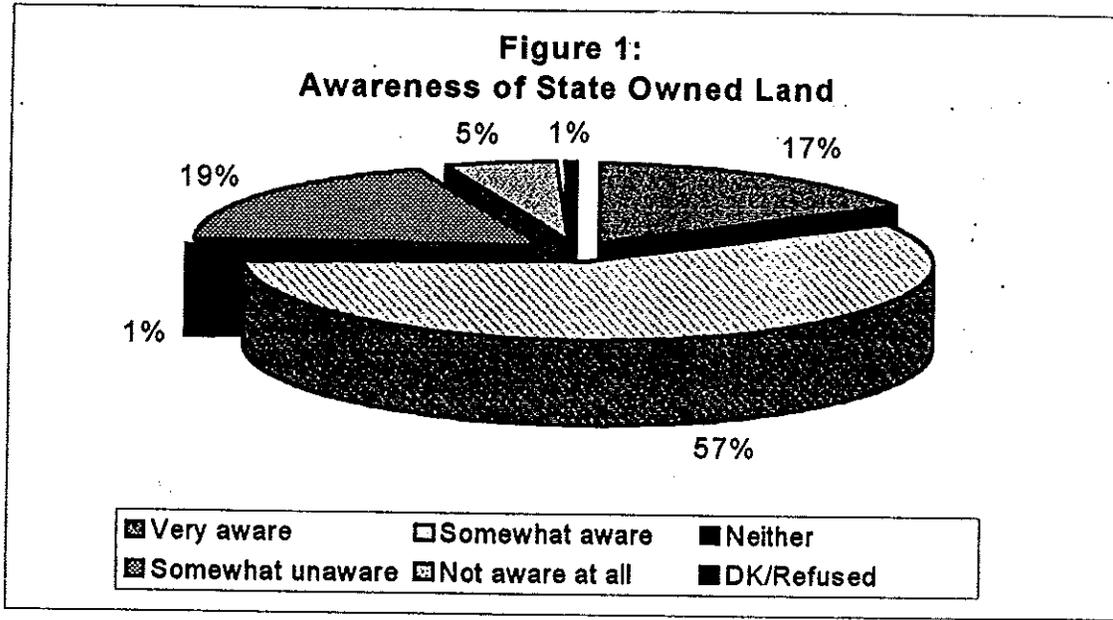
Variables Affecting Both Samples

An inability to contact potential respondents affected both samples almost equally. This may have been due to a wrong telephone number or disconnected line, individuals did not answer the telephone, or because the individual was too busy or not interested in answering the questions. These variables are inherent in telephone surveying and could not be helped.

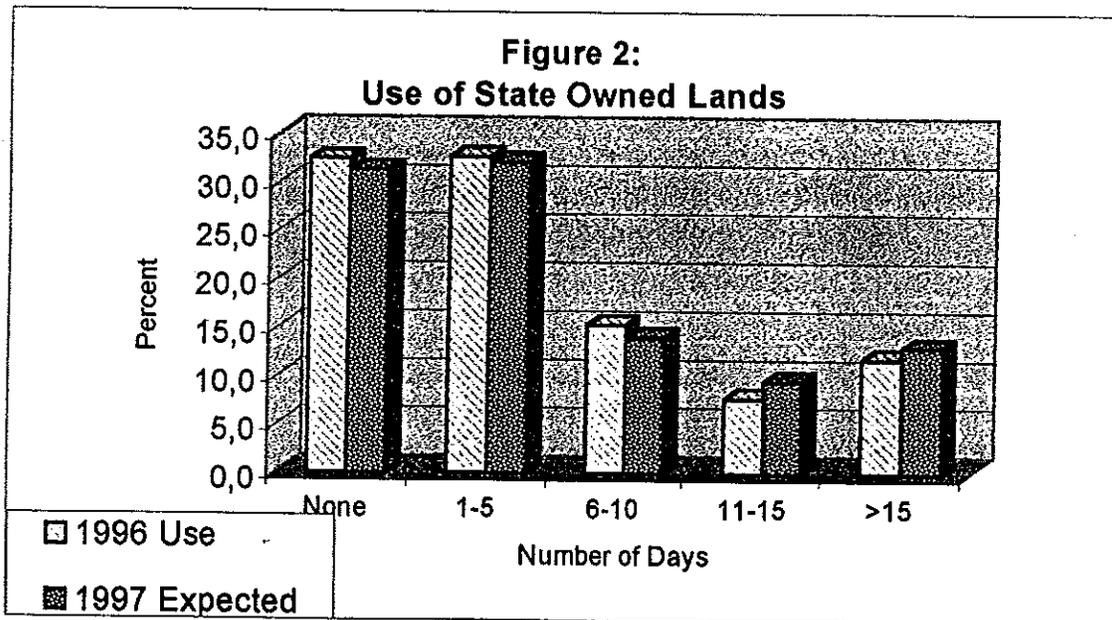
Since the target audience for the survey was Vermont registered voters, any potential respondent was disqualified if he or she was not a registered voter. Two other variables were related to length. The length of the survey (20-30 minutes, in most cases) made completion difficult, as it increased the number of terminations. In addition, the many questions with over 15 words led to some difficulty in comprehension and also increased to overall length of the survey, as respondents often requested that these questions be repeated. Lastly, some of the questions (particularly those outlining scenarios for accepting land donations) were deemed too vague to be answered, as there was not enough background for the respondent to make an informed decision.

Awareness and Use of State Owned Land

Several questions were asked to determine respondents' awareness of state lands, use of state land and feelings about acquiring land and amount of public ownership. Overall, approximately 3/4 of the respondents indicated they were at least somewhat aware of state-owned lands. The distribution of responses is provided in Figure 1.

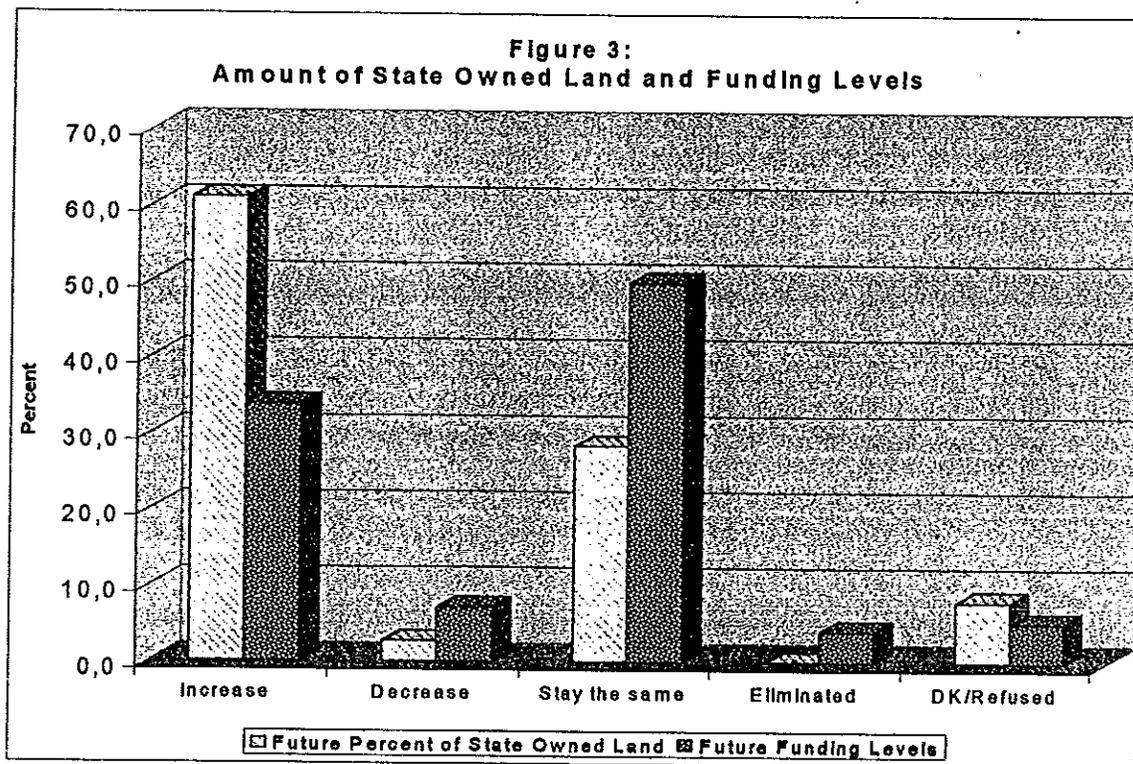


The survey also shows that state-owned conservation lands are visited frequently by Vermonters, as illustrated in Figure 2. The average number of visits to state lands in 1996 was 8 days with approximately one quarter visiting state lands more than 11 days per year.



Public Support for Continued State Land Acquisition

The survey results indicate that Vermonters are generally supportive of continued state land acquisition. Most respondents (61%) feel the relative amount of state-owned conservation land in Vermont should increase. Another 28% feel the amount should stay the same. Only about 3 % of respondents favored a decrease in the amount of state-owned conservation land. This finding is reinforced in analyzing the responses to a follow-up question in which respondents were asked whether state funding levels for state land acquisition should increase, decrease or stay the same. About ½ the respondents (49.9%) favored level funding while another third (33.8%) favored an increase in funding. Eleven percent felt funding for state land acquisition should be reduced or eliminated. These findings are graphically illustrates in Figure 3.



Public Priorities for Land Conservation

Survey participants were asked to rate the relative importance of 20 potential purposes or land types that could be used to support future state land acquisition activities. When rated on an individual basis, all but five of the land types or purposes were rated as important or very important by at least 75% of the respondents. Those categories that were rated as least important include:

Land Type or Purpose

% of Respondents which Rate Category as either Unimportant or Inappropriate

- Provide for motorized recreation 67%
- Provide for mineral extraction. 47%
- Provide for mountaintop communication 46%
- Provide for landfills/waste disposal 25%
- Provide forest products 25%

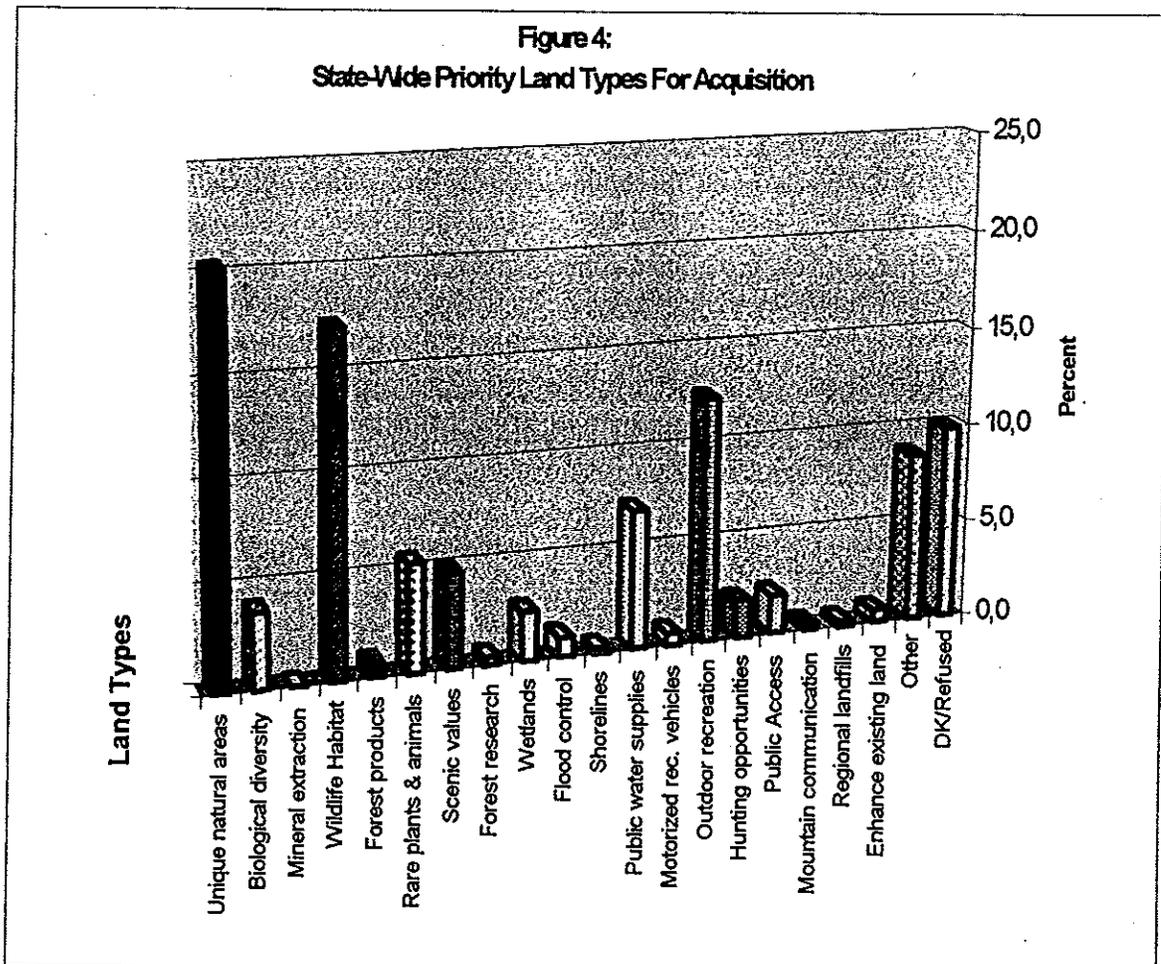
The categories for which there seemed to be the greatest overall support (over 90%) when ranked on an individual basis included the following categories:

Land Type or Purpose

% of Respondents Which Rated category as either Somewhat Important or Very Important

- Protect public water supplies 97%
- Protect unique natural areas 97%
- Provide outdoor recreation 95%
- Protect wildlife habitat 95%
- Maintain biological diversity 93%
- Provide non-motorized recreation 92%
- Protect shorelines on lakes, ponds & rivers 91%

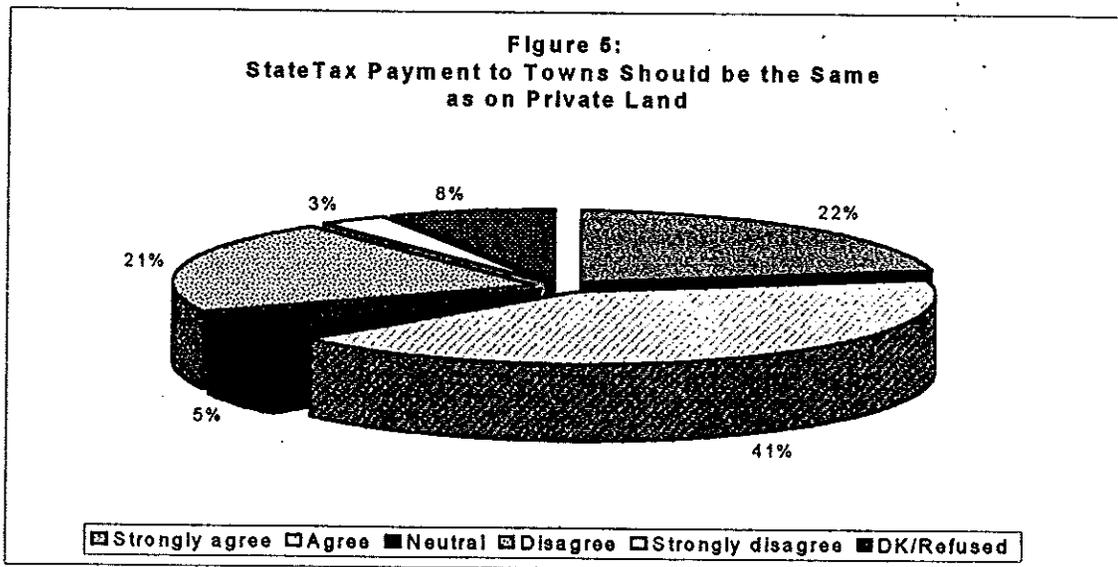
Perhaps more indicative of the public's sense of what the state's general land conservation



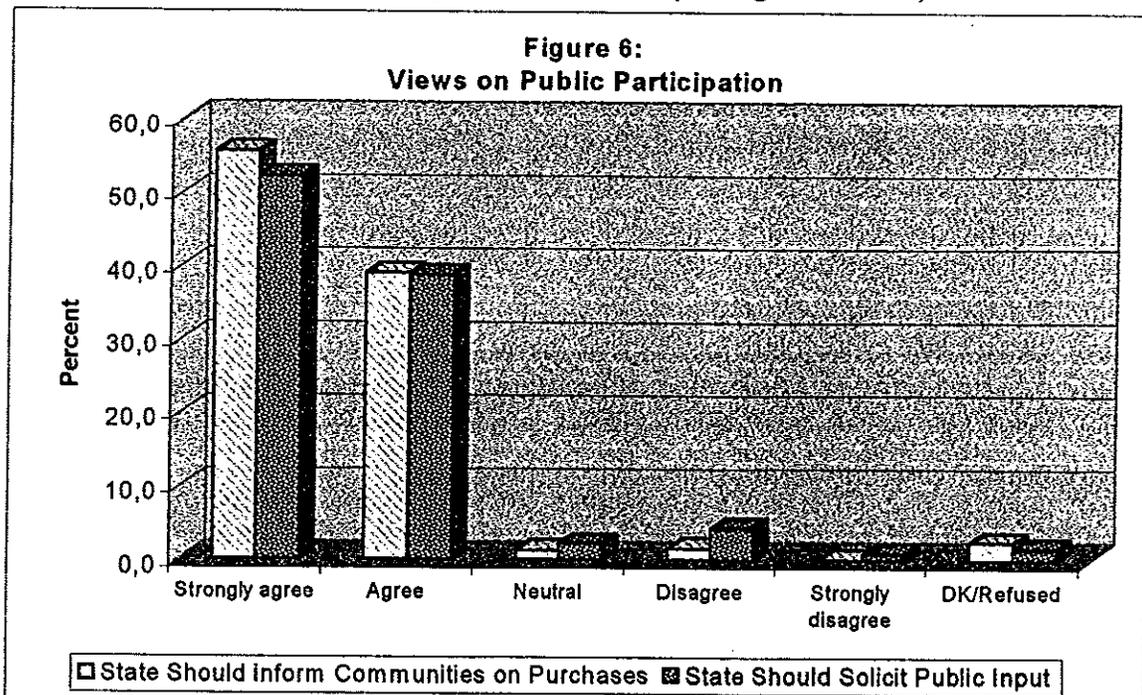
priorities should be are the responses to a follow-up question in which respondents were asked to choose the specific land types they felt were most important for the state as a whole. The top three categories or land types most often cited were Unique Natural Areas, Areas for Outdoor Recreation, and Wildlife Habitat areas. Figure 4, above, summarizes the responses received for all 20 land type categories.

Community Relations and State Land Acquisition

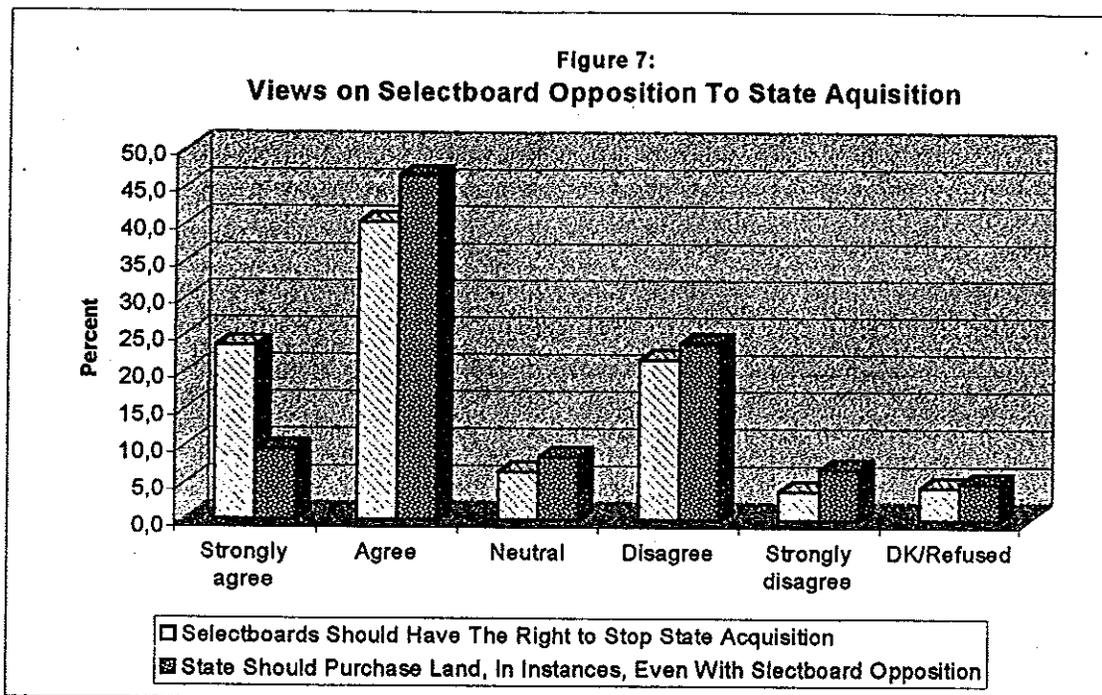
Several survey questions dealt with the State's relationship with communities in regard to land acquisition and other land activities. As figure 5 shows, there is widespread support for the idea that the State's tax payment to communities for state-owned land should be the same as if it were in private ownership.



There is also very strong public sentiment in favor of the State informing communities and soliciting their input on state land acquisition activities (see Figure 6 below).

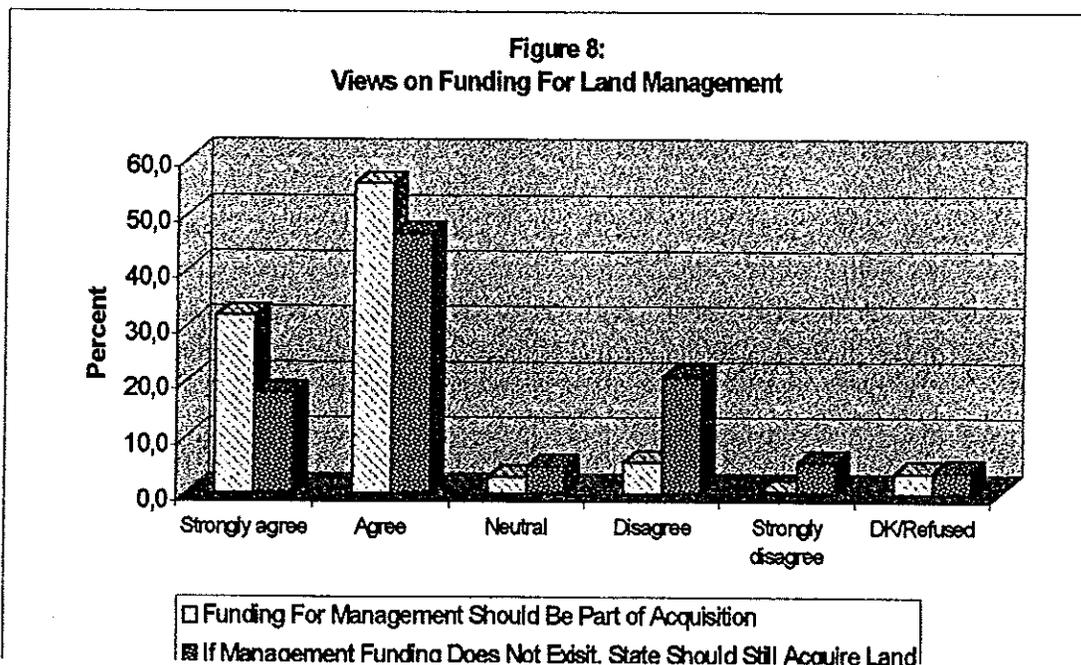


While nearly 2/3 of respondents agree (63.5%) that towns should have the ability to stop state land acquisitions, a majority (56%) also feel it may be appropriate, in certain instances, for the state to acquire land even if there is Selectboard opposition. These responses are graphically depicted in Figure 7, below.



Land Management Costs and Acquisition

A large majority of respondents (87%) believe funding for land acquisition should include money for management, as a routine cost of all land acquisitions. At the same time, nearly 2/3 of the respondents (65.7%) felt the state should still pursue land acquisition even if adequate funding for state land management may not currently exist. (See Figure 8)



Other Issues Pertaining to State Land Conservation

Respondents were asked for their opinions on a variety of land conservation issues. Topical areas include the State's purchase price for land acquisition versus the appraised value, whether the state should sell, exchange or dispose of lands, when the state should accept donations of land, and whether the state should make increased use of conservation easements.

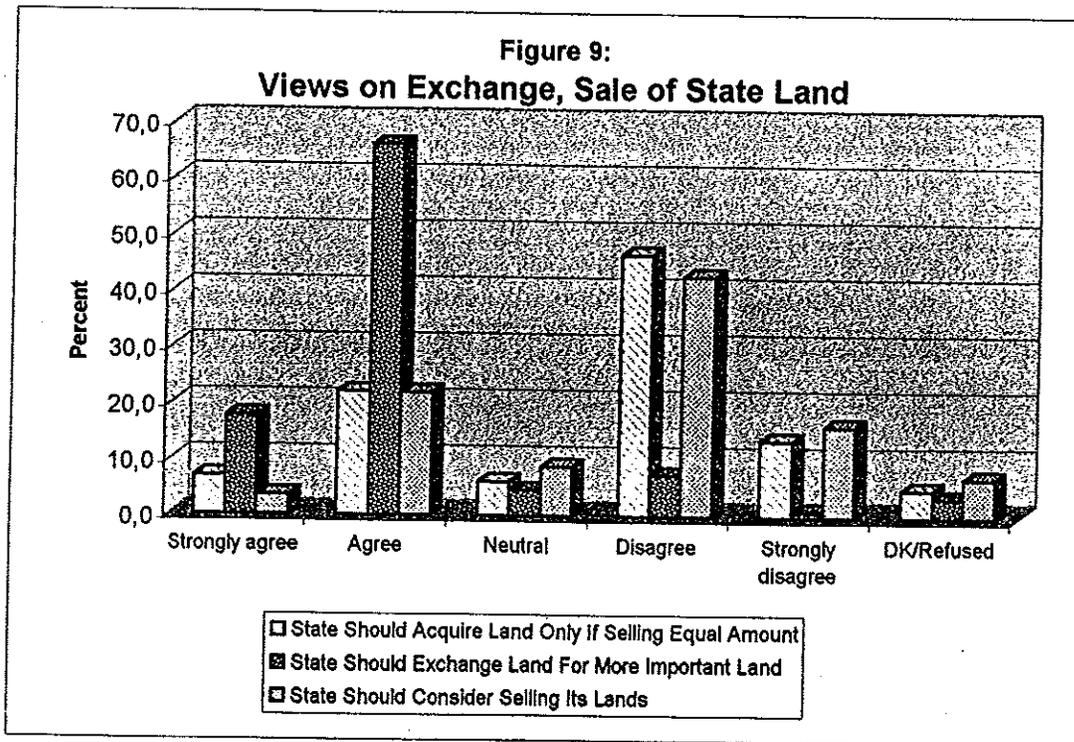
Paying more than appraised value for a parcel

Respondents were closely split in their views on whether the State should ever pay more than appraised value for a parcel of land. Forty six percent of those responding agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that, "In certain instances, it may be appropriate for the State to pay more for property than its appraised value", while 45.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Exchange and sale of state land

Sixty percent of respondents disagreed with the statement that the state should purchase more land only if it sells or exchanges a comparable amount of land and there is no net gain in state land acreage. Twenty five percent agreed with this statement.

There is widespread support for the State to exchange certain land for other with greater importance to the public, with 84% agreeing. There is only limited support for the state selling its conservation or recreation lands with 59% who do not believe the state should consider selling some of the lands under its jurisdiction while 25% believing they should. (See Figure 9)



Donations of Conservation Land to the State

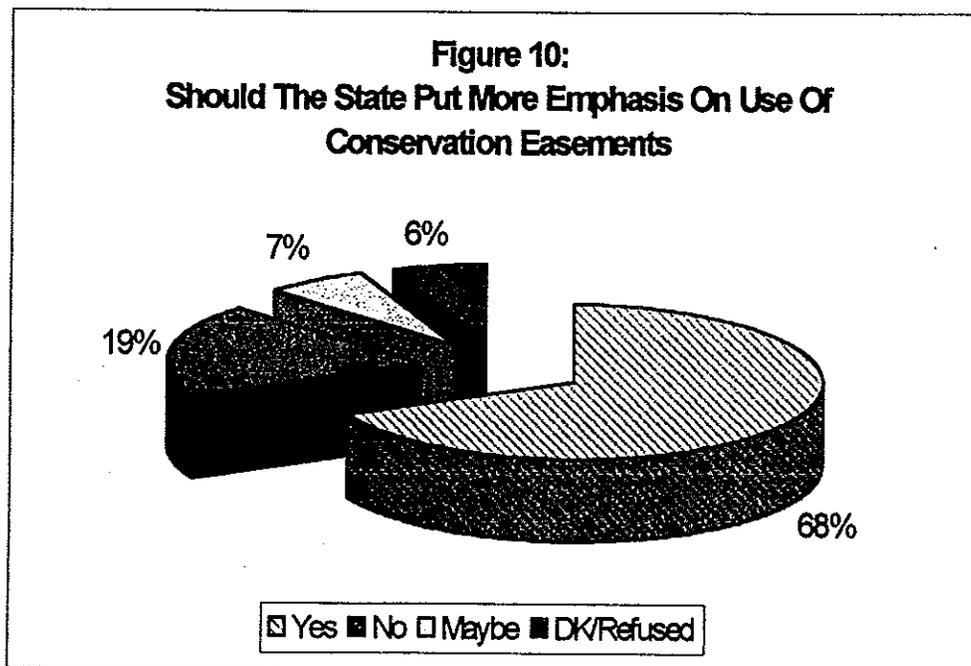
Just less than half of the respondents (45%) felt the State should accept donated land even if the Selectboard opposes the land going to the State, while 33% stating the land should be refused.

There was an equal division of responses between accept or refuse donated land that may pose a significant management or liability concern to the state.

For donation of properties near existing state lands that contain no special resources, 50% felt it should be accepted for purchase and 41% felt the donation should be refused.

Appropriateness of Conservation Easements

The survey results indicate there is widespread support for the increased use of conservation easements for conservation of important land types in Vermont. Sixty eight percent of the respondents felt the state should put more emphasis on conservation easements that help keep land in private ownership but prohibit most types of development, as illustrated in Figure 10.



Conclusions of Survey

Generally the survey shows a high level of support for State land acquisition, and is consistent with findings from other natural resources surveys and land conservation documents. State residents are quite aware of the state-owned lands and visit these lands quite often. One third utilize these lands 1-5 days per year, 15% use State lands 6-10 days per year and 12% stated they

use state conservation or recreation lands more than 15 days per year. The types of lands that people support for state acquisition cover a wide range but as in the past surveys wildlife habitat areas, areas for outdoor (non-motorized) recreation opportunities and unique areas are highest priority. Lands adjacent to water bodies are also listed as very important. The survey shows there is a high level of support for continued land acquisition with 61% supporting an increase in state land acreage. This high level of support is tempered by the finding that only about one third (33.8%) of respondents feel that funding should increase for acquisition, while 50% feel it should remain the same. This seems to illustrate that while residents' support an increase in the amount of state acreage they do not generally support increases in the amount of funding that is allocated for such purposes.

State tax payments to communities have been an issue to many communities for some time. The survey shows strong support for equal tax payments for state land. It is clear that the public feels that payments from the state should be equal to those from private landowners. Also, informing communities of proposed State land conservation transactions and soliciting input from communities and public on these activities are of high importance to people. A majority of respondents (63.5%) feel that Selectboards should be able to stop a State purchase. At the same time, nearly as many (56%) feel there may be instances where the State may be justified in pursuing an acquisition even with opposition from Selectboards. The survey also seems to indicate that the public supports a flexible approach to state land conservation including use of land exchange and conservation easements. However, the outright sale of state conservation and recreation lands is not something that is broadly supported by the public.

Overall, the survey for state conservation transactions reinforces the need for a priority-based system and provides some insight into what, from the public's perspective, ought to be considered in developing such a system. It should be understood that while this survey is an important piece of public participation information in development of a new State Land Conservation Plan it is not the only piece that will be considered. The survey results will be evaluated and weighted carefully against input received through other public involvement activities that will assist in developing a plan that is responsive to the needs and desires of Vermonters.

Appendix A-Survey Instrument

F# 1 _____
Hello, my name is _____, and I'm calling from the Center for Rural Studies at UVM. May I speak with _____?

(YES) Great!

a. We are interested in Vermonters' opinions on the state's land conservation plan in order to help state planning. Would you be interested in taking a few minutes to give your opinions about this issue?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No [INTERVIEWER: see b.]
- 3. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read response - see b.]
- 4. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read response - see b.]

(NO)

b. May I speak with another adult living at this address? (YES, start again.)

(NO Ask "Is there a better time to call back?")
(YES, record date and time to call back.)
(NO, Say "Thank you for your time" and dial another number.)

F# 2 _____

Thank you. The survey should take less than 10 minutes and all your responses will be kept strictly confidential.

State-owned land includes lands used for conservation and recreation purposes, like state parks, state forests, fishing and boat access areas, and wildlife management areas. Do you recognize any of the following state-owned land? Victory Basin Wildlife Management Area, Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area, Coolidge State Forest, Groton State Forest, Colchester Point Access Area, Hoyt's Landing Access Point, Button Bay State Park, Sand Bar State Park, Emerald Lake State Park, or Maidstone State Park?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
- 4. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

F# 3 _____

How would you rate your overall awareness of state-owned conservation and recreation lands in Vermont? Are you.....

- 1. Very aware
- 2. Somewhat aware
- 3. Neither aware/unaware [INTERVIEWER: Don't read response]
- 4. Somewhat unaware
- 5. Not aware at all
- 6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
- 7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

F# 4 _____

About how many days did you use or visit state-owned conservation and recreation land in 1996?

[INTERVIEWER: TYPE IN RESPONSE AND THEN PRESS ENTER]

_____ days

F# 5

About how many days do you think you will visit state land
in 1997?

[INTERVIEWER: TYPE IN RESPONSE AND THEN PRESS ENTER]

_____ days

F# 6

How do you feel about the state acquiring additional land
for conservation and recreation purposes? (i.e. state parks,
state forests, etc.)

[INTERVIEWER: TYPE RESPONSE AND PRESS ENTER]

F# 7

About 5% of the land in Vermont is owned by the state. Do
you think the percentage of state-owned land should.....

1. Increase
2. Decrease, or
3. Stay the same
4. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
5. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

F# 8

STATE funding for new STATE land purchases has ranged from
\$1 to \$3 million annually over the last 10 years. Please
indicate how you feel about future state funding levels for
new state land purchases.

1. Funding should be increased
2. Funding should remain about the same
3. Funding should be decreased
4. Funding should be eliminated
5. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
6. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

The following list of reasons has been used to support state ownership of land. To help the State understand what you consider most important, please rate the following as being Very Important, Somewhat Important, Not Very Important, or Not Important At All.

.....to protect unique natural areas like waterfalls, gorges, and mountain tops

1. Very Important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Not Very Important
5. Not At All Important
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

.....to maintain biological diversity in places such as ecological reserves and wildlife areas

1. Very Important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Not Very Important
5. Not At All Important
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

.....to provide opportunities for mineral extraction such as from gravel pits

1. Very Important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Not Very Important
5. Not At All Important
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

.....to protect wildlife habitat like deer wintering areas, wildlife corridors, and waterfowl habitat

1. Very Important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Not Very Important
5. Not At All Important
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

.....to provide forest products from large forested tracts and working forests

1. Very Important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Not Very Important
5. Not At All Important
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

.....to protect rare, threatened, and endangered plants and animals

1. Very Important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Not Very Important
5. Not At All Important
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

.....to protect scenic or aesthetic values.....for example viewsheds

1. Very Important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Not Very Important
5. Not At All Important
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

.....to provide research and demonstration areas
[INTERVIEWER: DO NOT READ-UNLESS RESPONDENT ASKS FOR
EXAMPLE: forest-health monitoring, acid-rain deposition,
sand dune restoration]

1. Very Important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Not Very Important
5. Not At All Important
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

Now here are a few that have to do with water resources.
Please tell me if you think each is Very Important, Somewhat important, Not very important, or Not at all important.

.....to protect wetlands

1. Very Important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Not Very Important
5. Not At All Important
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

..... to provide flood control or maintain lake levels
at existing dam sites

1. Very Important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Not Very Important
5. Not At All Important
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

.....to protect shorelines on lakes, ponds, rivers,
and streams

1. Very Important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Not Very Important
5. Not At All Important
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

.....to protect public water supplies

1. Very Important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Not Very Important
5. Not At All Important
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

Now here are a few that have to do with recreation. Please rate each one as being Very Important, Somewhat Important, Not Very Important, or Not Important At All.

.....to provide opportunities for riding motorized recreational vehicles like 4-wheelers

1. Very Important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Not Very Important
5. Not At All Important
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

.....to provide opportunities for non-motorized recreation like bicycling, hiking, and cross-country skiing at trails and greenways

1. Very Important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Not Very Important
5. Not At All Important
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

.....to provide areas for outdoor recreation activities like camping, swimming, picnicking and hiking at state parks

1. Very Important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Not Very Important
5. Not At All Important
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

.....to provide public hunting opportunities in places such as wildlife management areas

1. Very Important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Not Very Important
5. Not At All Important
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

.....to provide public access areas for fishing and boating
along rivers, lakes, streams, and ponds

1. Very Important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Not Very Important
5. Not At All Important
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

Alright, there are just three more in this list

.....to provide mountain top communication facilities

1. Very Important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Not Very Important
5. Not At All Important
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

.....to provide for regional landfills or other waste
disposal facilities

1. Very Important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Not Very Important
5. Not At All Important
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

.....to consolidate or enhance existing state land
holdings [INTERVIEWER: DO NOT READ UNLESS RESPONDENT ASKS
FOR EXAMPLE: in-holdings, lands adjacent to state lands]

1. Very Important
2. Somewhat Important
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Not Very Important
5. Not At All Important
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

Are there any other reasons for protecting land or land categories you'd like to include that I haven't already mentioned?

[INTERVIEWER, TYPE RESPONSE AND THEN PRESS ENTER. IF RESPONDENT SAYS NO, JUST PRESS ENTER]

How would you rate this (reason or land type): Very Important, Somewhat Important, Not Very Important, or Not At All Important?

- 1. Very Important
- 2. Somewhat Important
- 3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
- 4. Not Very Important
- 5. Not At All Important
- 6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
- 7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

From a statewide perspective, which one of the previously mentioned purposes do you consider to be the most important reason for the state to acquire land?

[INTERVIEWER: DON'T READ UNLESS PROMPTING IS NEEDED]

- 1. Protect unique natural areas
- 2. Maintain biological diversity
- 3. Provide mineral extraction opps.
- 4. Protect wildlife habitat
- 5. Provide forest products
- 6. Protect rare/threatened/endangered plants and animals
- 7. Protect scenic or aesthetic values
- 8. Provide forest research and demonstration areas
- 9. Protect wetlands
 - A. Provide flood control
 - B. Protect shorelines
 - C. Protect public water supplies
- D. Protect opportunities for motorized rv's (4-wheelers)
- E. Provide areas for outdoor recreation activities
- F. Provide public hunting opportunities
- G. Provide public access areas for fishing and boating
- H. Provide mountain top communication facilities
- I. Provide for regional landfills or other waste disposal facilities
- J. Consolidate or enhance existing state land holdings
- K. DK/Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read response]
- L. Other (please specify)

Which one of the previously mentioned purposes do you feel is most important and appropriate for your region?

[INTERVIEWER: DO NOT READ LIST UNLESS PROMPTING IS NEEDED]

- 1. Protect unique natural areas
- 2. Maintain biological diversity
- 3. Provide opportunities for mineral extraction
- 4. Protect wildlife habitat
- 5. Provide forest products
- 6. Protect rare, threatened, & endangered plants/animals
- 7. Protect scenic or aesthetic values
- 8. Provide forest research and demonstration areas
- 9. Protect wetlands
 - A. Provide flood control
 - B. Protect shorelines
 - C. Protect public water supplies
- D. Provide opportunities for motorized rv's (4-wheelers)
- E. Provide areas for outdoor recreation activities
- F. Provide public hunting opportunities
- G. Provide public access areas for fishing and boating
- H. Provide mountain top communication facilities
- I. Provide regional landfills/other waste disposal fac.
- J. Consolidate or enhance existing state land
- K. DK/Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
- L. Other (please specify)

Are there specific areas within your region of the state that you feel should be a priority for state land acquisition efforts? (please describe) [INTERVIEWER: PLEASE TYPE RESPONSE AND THEN PRESS ENTER]

Now I am going to read several statements. Please tell me if you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree:

The state's tax payment to towns for state lands located within the community should be the same as if the land were in private ownership.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

The State should seek to inform communities on all state land acquisition proposals within a community.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

The State should seek to solicit public input on all land acquisition proposals within a community.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

Towns should have the right to stop proposed state land acquisitions within their community.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

In certain instances, it may be appropriate for the state to acquire a property over the opposition of the local select board.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

The state must include adequate funding for land management duties as a routine cost of all future land acquisitions.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

Although adequate funding may not currently exist for state land management, the state should continue to acquire conservation lands.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

In certain instances, it may be appropriate for the state to pay more for property than its appraised market value.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

The state should only acquire new lands if it sells or exchanges a comparable amount of land, so that there is no net gain in state land acreage.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

Occasionally, the state exchanges certain parcels of land for others with greater importance to the public. The state should continue to pursue such land exchanges. Do you ...

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

The state should consider selling some of the conservation or recreation lands under its jurisdiction. Do you...

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neutral [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
7. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

Vermont is fortunate that many of its state lands were donated by private citizens for conservation or recreational purposes. However, this does not necessarily mean that all proposed land donations should automatically be accepted by the state. I'm going to read several situations where land is being donated. Please tell me if you think the land should be accepted or refused by the state.

The local select board opposes the donation going to the state. In this case do you think the state should.....

1. Accept the land, or
2. Refuse the land
3. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

What if the donated property poses some significant management or liability concerns to the state?, for example, a hazardous gorge or cave... Should the state.....

1. Accept the land, or
2. Refuse the land
3. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

The property abuts or is near existing state-owned lands but contains no special or noteworthy resources.

1. Accept the land
2. Refuse the land
3. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

Before I finish up with some demographic questions, I have one last question which concerns land conservation.

A conservation easement is an agreement between a private land owner and another party whereby the land owner owns the land, subject to some restrictions that are held by the other party. The purchase of a conservation easement can offer a less expensive alternative to buying all the rights on the land in that only a selected portion of the property rights (such as the development rights or the right to general public access) are actually purchased.

Should the state put more emphasis on conservation easements that keep land in private ownership but prohibit most types of development?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Maybe [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
4. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
5. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

Finally I'd like to ask you a few demographic questions. As with all answers, your responses will be kept strictly confidential.

Would you say you live in a rural, suburban, or urban community?

1. Rural
2. Suburban
3. Urban
4. DK [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]
5. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Do not read this response]

Was your household income more or less than \$30,000 in 1996?

1. More
2. Less
3. Exactly \$30,000
4. DK [INTERVIEWER: Don't read response]
5. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Don't read]

What is the highest level of education you have completed?
[INTERVIEWER: DO NOT READ THE RESPONSES]

1. Less than 12th grade
2. High school graduate or GED
3. Some college
4. Associates Degree
5. College Degree
6. Graduate Degree
7. DK [INTERVIEWER: Don't read response]
8. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Don't read response]

Was it more or less than \$15,000?

1. More
2. Less
3. Exactly \$15,000
4. DK [INTERVIEWER: Don't read response]
5. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Don't read]

Was it more or less than \$45,000?

- 1. More
- 2. Less
- 3. Exactly \$45,000
- 4. DK [INTERVIEWER: Don't read response]
- 5. Refused [INTERVIEWER: Don't read]

In which county do you live?

[INTERVIEWER: do not read list unless prompting is needed]

- 1. Addison
- 2. Bennington
- 3. Caledonia
- 4. Chittenden
- 5. Essex
- 6. Franklin
- 7. Grand Isle
- 8. Lamoille
- 9. Orange
- A. Orleans
- B. Rutland
- C. Washington
- D. Windham
- E. Windsor

F. DK/Refused (INTERVIEWER: DO NOT READ)

In what year were you born?

[INTERVIEWER: type in four number year and then press enter - if refused, type 1997 and press enter.]

How many years have you lived in Vermont?

[INTERVIEWER: type in number of years and then press enter - if refused, type 108 and press enter]

_____ years

Those are all the questions I have. You have been a great help. Thank you for your time.

[INTERVIEWER: Code Gender of respondent]

- 1. Male
- 2. Female

[INTERVIEWER: Type initials and press enter.]

Interviewers initials _____

[INTERVIEWER: Record phone number from call sheet and press enter.]

(Example: 555.1234)

Phone number _____

Appendix B-Survey Data and Demographics

Forests, Parks and Recreation Land Conservation Survey - September 1997

Table 1. Q2. Do you recognize any state-owned land?

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	364	93.8	375	93.3	739	93.5
No	24	6.2	25	6.2	49	6.2
DK/Refused	0	0.0	2	0.5	2	0.3
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 2. Q3. Awareness of state-owned land

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very aware	56	14.4	76	18.9	132	16.7
Somewhat aware	238	61.3	216	53.7	454	57.5
Neither	5	1.3	5	1.2	10	1.3
Somewhat unaware	74	19.1	73	18.2	147	18.6
Not aware at all	12	3.1	31	7.7	43	5.4
DK/Refused	3	0.8	1	0.2	4	0.5
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 3. Q4. How many days did you use state-owned land in 1996?

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
None	130	33.5	126	31.3	256	32.4
1-5	123	31.7	135	33.6	258	32.7
6-10	60	15.5	61	15.2	121	15.3
11-15	30	7.7	31	7.7	61	7.7
>15	45	11.6	49	12.2	94	11.9
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	
Mean Number of Days	7.972		8.177		8.076	
Median Number of Days	3.000		3.000		3.000	

Table 4. Q5. How many days do you plan to use state-owned land in 1997?

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
None	120	30.9	127	31.6	247	31.3
1-5	133	34.3	121	30.1	254	32.2
6-10	53	13.7	58	14.4	111	14.1
11-15	33	8.5	42	10.4	75	9.5
>15	49	12.6	54	13.4	103	13.0
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	
Mean Number of Days	8.696		8.794		8.746	
Median Number of Days	3.000		3.000		3.000	

Table 5. Q6. How do you feel about acquiring additional state land?

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Answered	379	97.7	393	97.8	772	97.7
Not answered	9	2.3	9	2.2	18	2.3
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 6. Q7. Do you think that the percentage of state-owned land should...

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Increase	234	60.3	248	61.7	482	61.0
Decrease	6	1.5	15	3.7	21	2.7
Stay the same	119	30.7	105	26.1	224	28.4
DK/Refused	29	7.5	34	8.5	63	8.0
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 7. Q8. How you feel about future funding levels for new state land purchases?

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Increase	133	34.3	134	33.3	267	33.8
Remain the same	192	49.5	202	50.2	394	49.9
Decrease	26	6.7	30	7.5	56	7.1
Eliminated	17	4.4	15	3.7	32	4.1
DK/Refused	20	5.2	21	5.2	41	5.2
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 8. Q9. ...to protect unique natural areas

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very important	261	67.3	290	72.1	551	69.7
Somewhat important	115	29.6	100	24.9	215	27.2
Neutral	1	0.3	2	0.5	3	0.4
Not very important	9	2.3	7	1.7	16	2.0
Not at all important	2	0.5	3	0.7	5	0.6
DK/Refused	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 9. Q10. ...to maintain biological diversity

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very important	223	57.5	257	63.9	480	60.8
Somewhat important	132	34.0	123	30.6	255	32.3
Neutral	11	2.8	4	1.0	15	1.9
Not very important	17	4.4	13	3.2	30	3.8
Not at all important	2	0.5	1	0.2	3	0.4
DK/Refused	3	0.8	4	1.0	7	0.9
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 10. Q11. ...to provide opportunities for mineral extraction

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very important	23	5.9	46	11.4	69	8.7
Somewhat important	144	37.1	120	29.9	264	33.4
Neutral	24	6.2	25	6.2	49	6.2
Not very important	120	30.9	140	34.8	260	32.9
Not at all important	57	14.7	55	13.7	112	14.2
DK/Refused	20	5.2	16	4.0	36	4.6
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 11. Q12. ...to protect wildlife habitat

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very important	253	65.2	284	70.6	537	68.0
Somewhat important	109	28.1	100	24.9	209	26.5
Neutral	4	1.0	5	1.2	9	1.1
Not very important	17	4.4	10	2.5	27	3.4
Not at all important	4	1.0	2	0.5	6	0.8
DK/Refused	1	0.3	1	0.2	2	0.3
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 12. Q13. ...to provide forest products

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very important	86	22.2	89	22.1	175	22.2
Somewhat important	175	45.1	174	43.3	349	44.2
Neutral	19	4.9	22	5.5	41	5.2
Not very important	73	18.8	67	16.7	140	17.7
Not at all important	23	5.9	32	8.0	55	7.0
DK/Refused	12	3.1	18	4.5	30	3.8
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 13. Q14. ...to protect rare, threatened, and endangered plants and animals

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very important	230	59.3	261	64.9	491	62.2
Somewhat important	114	29.4	113	28.1	227	28.7
Neutral	8	2.1	9	2.2	17	2.2
Not very important	23	5.9	15	3.7	38	4.8
Not at all important	10	2.6	3	0.7	13	1.6
DK/Refused	3	0.8	1	0.2	4	0.5
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 14. Q15. ...to protect scenic or aesthetic values

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very important	149	38.4	183	45.5	332	42.0
Somewhat important	181	46.6	158	39.3	339	42.9
Neutral	15	3.9	20	5.0	35	4.4
Not very important	28	7.2	24	6.0	52	6.6
Not at all important	11	2.8	10	2.5	21	2.7
DK/Refused	4	1.0	7	1.7	11	1.4
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 15. Q16. ...to provide research and demonstration areas

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very important	115	29.6	157	39.1	272	34.4
Somewhat important	185	47.7	174	43.3	359	45.4
Neutral	17	4.4	11	2.7	28	3.5
Not very important	52	13.4	42	10.4	94	11.9
Not at all important	15	3.9	11	2.7	26	3.3
DK/Refused	4	1.0	7	1.7	11	1.4
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 16. Q17. ...to protect wetlands

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very important	202	52.1	226	56.2	428	54.2
Somewhat important	138	35.6	137	34.1	275	34.8
Neutral	12	3.1	13	3.2	25	3.2
Not very important	24	6.2	18	4.5	42	5.3
Not at all important	11	2.8	4	1.0	15	1.9
DK/Refused	1	0.3	4	1.0	5	0.6
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 17. Q18. ...to provide flood control or maintain lake levels at existing dam sites

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very important	185	47.7	212	52.7	397	50.3
Somewhat important	148	38.1	145	36.1	293	37.1
Neutral	19	4.9	18	4.5	37	4.7
Not very important	22	5.7	18	4.5	40	5.1
Not at all important	3	0.8	4	1.0	7	0.9
DK/Refused	11	2.8	5	1.2	16	2.0
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 18. Q19. ...to protect shorelines on lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very important	213	54.9	237	59.0	450	57.0
Somewhat important	140	36.1	132	32.8	272	34.4
Neutral	8	2.1	7	1.7	15	1.9
Not very important	22	5.7	20	5.0	42	5.3
Not at all important	4	1.0	3	0.7	7	0.9
DK/Refused	1	0.3	3	0.7	4	0.5
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 19. Q20. ...to protect public water supplies

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very important	336	86.6	350	87.1	686	86.8
Somewhat important	40	10.3	42	10.4	82	10.4
Neutral	3	0.8	3	0.7	6	0.8
Not very important	8	2.1	4	1.0	12	1.5
Not at all important	0	0.0	3	0.7	3	0.4
DK/Refused	1	0.3	0	0.0	1	0.1
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 20. Q21. ...to provide opportunities for riding motorized recreational vehicles

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very important	23	5.9	32	8.0	55	7.0
Somewhat important	96	24.7	84	20.9	180	22.8
Neutral	10	2.6	13	3.2	23	2.9
Not very important	118	30.4	123	30.6	241	30.5
Not at all important	138	35.6	145	36.1	283	35.8
DK/Refused	3	0.8	5	1.2	8	1.0
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 21. Q22. ...to provide areas for outdoor recreation activities

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very important	239	61.6	266	66.2	505	63.9
Somewhat important	128	33.0	120	29.9	248	31.4
Neutral	7	1.8	6	1.5	13	1.6
Not very important	10	2.6	6	1.5	16	2.0
Not at all important	4	1.0	3	0.7	7	0.9
DK/Refused	0	0.0	1	0.2	1	0.1
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 22. Q23. ...to provide opportunities for non-motorized recreation

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very important	200	51.5	223	55.5	423	53.5
Somewhat important	155	39.9	146	36.3	301	38.1
Neutral	8	2.1	12	3.0	20	2.5
Not very important	18	4.6	17	4.2	35	4.4
Not at all important	5	1.3	4	1.0	9	1.1
DK/Refused	2	0.5	0	0.0	2	0.3
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 23. Q24. ...to provide public hunting opportunities

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very important	98	25.3	102	25.4	200	25.3
Somewhat important	160	41.2	161	40.0	321	40.6
Neutral	14	3.6	20	5.0	34	4.3
Not very important	58	14.9	75	18.7	133	16.8
Not at all important	53	13.7	40	10.0	93	11.8
DK/Refused	5	1.3	4	1.0	9	1.1
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 24. Q25. ...to provide public access to fishing areas

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very important	157	40.5	180	44.8	337	42.7
Somewhat important	189	48.7	180	44.8	369	46.7
Neutral	12	3.1	13	3.2	25	3.2
Not very important	22	5.7	21	5.2	43	5.4
Not at all important	8	2.1	6	1.5	14	1.8
DK/Refused	0	0.0	2	0.5	2	0.3
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 25. Q26. ...to provide mountain top communication facilities

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very important	39	10.1	69	17.2	108	13.7
Somewhat important	149	38.4	152	37.8	301	38.1
Neutral	30	7.7	27	6.7	57	7.2
Not very important	93	24.0	92	22.9	185	23.4
Not at all important	55	14.2	43	10.7	98	12.4
DK/Refused	22	5.7	19	4.7	41	5.2
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 26. Q27. ...to provide for regional landfills or other waste disposal facilities

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very important	99	25.5	116	28.9	215	27.2
Somewhat important	156	40.2	155	38.6	311	39.4
Neutral	20	5.2	24	6.0	44	5.6
Not very important	55	14.2	71	17.7	126	15.9
Not at all important	48	12.4	27	6.7	75	9.5
DK/Refused	10	2.6	9	2.2	19	2.4
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 27. Q28. ...to consolidate or enhance existing state land holdings

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Very important	103	26.5	97	24.1	200	25.3
Somewhat important	193	49.7	204	50.7	397	50.3
Neutral	32	8.2	24	6.0	56	7.1
Not very important	32	8.2	41	10.2	73	9.2
Not at all important	17	4.4	9	2.2	26	3.3
DK/Refused	11	2.8	27	6.7	38	4.8
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 28. Q29. Other reasons for protecting land that wasn't already mentioned.

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Answered	141	36.3	149	37.1	290	36.7
Not answered	247	63.7	253	62.9	500	63.3
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 34. Q35. State should inform community on state land acquisition proposals.

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Strongly agree	222	57.2	218	54.2	440	55.7
Agree	147	37.9	162	40.3	309	39.1
Neutral	6	1.5	4	1.0	10	1.3
Disagree	3	0.8	9	2.2	12	1.5
Strongly disagree	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
DK/Refused	10	2.6	9	2.2	19	2.4
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 35. Q36. State should seek public input on all land acquisition proposals.

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Strongly agree	200	51.5	213	53.0	413	52.3
Agree	152	39.2	155	38.6	307	38.9
Neutral	8	2.1	9	2.2	17	2.2
Disagree	18	4.6	16	4.0	34	4.3
Strongly disagree	4	1.0	3	0.7	7	0.9
DK/Refused	6	1.5	6	1.5	12	1.5
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 36. Q37. Towns should have right to stop proposed state land acquisitions.

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Strongly agree	83	21.4	102	25.4	185	23.4
Agree	159	41.0	158	39.3	317	40.1
Neutral	25	6.4	26	6.5	51	6.5
Disagree	82	21.1	89	22.1	171	21.6
Strongly disagree	21	5.4	10	2.5	31	3.9
DK/Refused	18	4.6	17	4.2	35	4.4
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 37. Q38. State should acquire land over opposition of select board.

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Strongly agree	40	10.3	35	8.7	75	9.5
Agree	176	45.4	191	47.5	367	46.5
Neutral	34	8.8	33	8.2	67	8.5
Disagree	93	24.0	95	23.6	188	23.8
Strongly disagree	30	7.7	24	6.0	54	6.8
DK/Refused	15	3.9	24	6.0	39	4.9
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 38. Q39. State must have funds for land as routine cost of future acquisitions.

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Strongly agree	115	29.6	137	34.1	252	31.9
Agree	222	57.2	218	54.2	440	55.7
Neutral	12	3.1	11	2.7	23	2.9
Disagree	24	6.2	20	5.0	44	5.6
Strongly disagree	0	0.0	2	0.5	2	0.3
DK/Refused	15	3.9	14	3.5	29	3.7
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 39. Q40. Although funding may not exist, state should still acquire land.

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Strongly agree	70	18.0	72	17.9	142	18.0
Agree	178	45.9	191	47.5	369	46.7
Neutral	18	4.6	20	5.0	38	4.8
Disagree	80	20.6	86	21.4	166	21.0
Strongly disagree	31	8.0	13	3.2	44	5.6
DK/Refused	11	2.8	20	5.0	31	3.9
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 40. Q41. State may pay more for property than its appraised value.

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Strongly agree	35	9.0	42	10.4	77	9.7
Agree	140	36.1	148	36.8	288	36.5
Neutral	21	5.4	17	4.2	38	4.8
Disagree	144	37.1	145	36.1	289	36.6
Strongly disagree	40	10.3	32	8.0	72	9.1
DK/Refused	8	2.1	18	4.5	26	3.3
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 41. Q42. State should acquire land if it sells or exchanges comp. amt of land.

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Strongly agree	23	5.9	31	7.7	54	6.8
Agree	82	21.1	92	22.9	174	22.0
Neutral	16	4.1	32	8.0	48	6.1
Disagree	184	47.4	184	45.8	368	46.6
Strongly disagree	63	16.2	44	10.9	107	13.5
DK/Refused	20	5.2	19	4.7	39	4.9
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 42. Q43. State should exchange land for others w/ more public importance.

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Strongly agree	67	17.3	72	17.9	139	17.6
Agree	257	66.2	265	65.9	522	66.1
Neutral	20	5.2	16	4.0	36	4.6
Disagree	29	7.5	29	7.2	58	7.3
Strongly disagree	4	1.0	4	1.0	8	1.0
DK/Refused	11	2.8	16	4.0	27	3.4
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 43. Q44. State should consider selling lands under its jurisdiction.

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Strongly agree	9	2.3	19	4.7	28	3.5
Agree	82	21.1	91	22.6	173	21.9
Neutral	45	11.6	24	6.0	69	8.7
Disagree	157	40.5	180	44.8	337	42.7
Strongly disagree	70	18.0	58	14.4	128	16.2
DK/Refused	25	6.4	30	7.5	55	7.0
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 44. Q45. The local select board opposes the donation going to the state.

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Accept land	175	45.1	182	45.3	357	45.2
Refuse land	132	34.0	130	32.3	262	33.2
DK/Refused	81	20.9	90	22.4	171	21.6
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 45. Q46. Donated property poses significant management / liability concern.

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Accept land	171	44.1	195	48.5	366	46.3
Refuse land	166	42.8	158	39.3	324	41.0
DK/Refused	51	13.1	49	12.2	100	12.7
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 46. Q47. Property is near existing state lands but has no special resources.

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Accept land	194	50.0	203	50.5	397	50.3
Refuse land	157	40.5	164	40.8	321	40.6
DK/Refused	37	9.5	35	8.7	72	9.1
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 47. Q48. Should the state put more emphasis on conservation easements?

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	251	64.7	284	70.6	535	67.7
No	81	20.9	72	17.9	153	19.4
Maybe	29	7.5	24	6.0	53	6.7
DK/Refused	27	7.0	22	5.5	49	6.2
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 48. Q49. Would you say you live in a rural, suburban, or urban community?

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Rural	256	66.0	257	63.9	513	64.9
Suburban	78	20.1	89	22.1	167	21.1
Urban	49	12.6	48	11.9	97	12.3
DK/Refused	5	1.3	8	2.0	13	1.7
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 49. Q50. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Less than 12th grade	34	8.8	20	5.0	54	6.8
High school grad. or GED	101	26.0	107	26.6	208	26.3
Some College	78	20.1	69	17.2	147	18.6
Associates Degree	14	3.6	35	8.7	49	6.2
College Degree	93	24.0	96	23.9	189	23.9
Graduate Degree	65	16.8	67	16.7	132	16.7
DK/Refused	3	0.8	8	2.0	11	1.4
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 50. Q51. Was your household income more or less than \$30,000 in 1996?

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
More	217	55.9	245	60.9	462	58.5
Less	147	37.9	116	28.9	263	33.3
Exactly \$30,000	6	1.6	11	2.7	17	2.2
DK/Refused	18	4.6	30	7.5	48	6.1
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 51. Q52. Was it more or less than \$15,000?

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
More	96	65.3	72	62.1	168	63.9
Less	41	27.9	35	30.2	76	28.9
Exactly \$15,000	8	5.4	6	5.2	14	5.3
DK/Refused	2	1.4	3	2.6	5	1.9
TOTAL	147	100.0	116	100.0	263	100.0
Missing	241		286		527	

Table 52. Q53. Was it more or less than \$45,000?

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
More	138	63.6	162	66.1	300	64.9
Less	67	30.9	76	31.0	143	31.0
Exactly \$45,000	10	4.6	3	1.2	13	2.8
DK/Refused	2	0.9	4	1.6	6	1.3
TOTAL	217	100.0	245	100.0	462	100.0
Missing	171		157		328	

Table 53. Q54. What county do you live in?

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Addison	24	6.2	31	7.7	55	7.0
Bennington	22	5.7	22	5.5	44	5.6
Caledonia	30	7.7	18	4.5	48	6.1
Chittenden	76	19.6	84	20.9	160	20.3
Essex	2	0.5	9	2.2	11	1.4
Franklin	13	3.4	37	9.2	50	6.3
Grand Isle	5	1.3	6	1.5	11	1.4
Lamoille	16	4.1	22	5.5	38	4.8
Orange	25	6.4	21	5.2	46	5.8
Orleans	23	5.9	11	2.7	34	4.3
Rutland	47	12.1	40	10.0	80	11.0
Washington	42	10.8	42	10.5	84	10.6
Windham	23	5.9	27	6.7	50	6.3
Windsor	40	10.3	32	8.0	72	9.1
DK/Refused	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 54. Q55. In what year were you born?

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1973 or after (24 or less)	4	1.0	20	5.0	24	3.0
1963 - 1972 (25-34)	41	10.6	65	16.2	106	13.4
1953 - 1962 (35-44)	89	22.9	102	25.4	191	24.2
1943 - 1952 (45-54)	89	22.9	95	23.6	184	23.3
1933 - 1942 (55-64)	70	18.0	45	11.2	115	14.6
1923 - 1932 (65-74)	56	14.4	34	8.5	90	11.4
1922 or before (75 or more)	33	8.5	25	6.2	58	7.3
Refused	6	1.5	16	4.0	22	2.8
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Mean Age	52		47		49	
Median Age	50		45		48	
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 55 Q56. How many years have you lived in Vermont?

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
9 or less	43	11.1	49	12.2	92	11.6
10 - 19	53	13.7	68	16.9	121	15.3
20 - 29	70	18.0	86	21.4	156	19.8
30 - 39	58	14.9	66	16.4	124	15.7
40 - 49	53	13.7	55	13.7	108	13.7
50 - 59	38	9.8	31	7.7	69	8.7
60 - 69	34	8.8	15	3.7	49	6.2
70 or more	34	8.8	20	5.0	54	6.8
Refused	5	1.3	12	3.0	17	2.2
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Mean Number of Years	35.82		31.01		33.39	
Median Number of Years	34.00		28.00		30.00	
Missing	0		0		0	

Table 56. Q57. Male or Female

Response	Sent		Not Sent		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male	241	62.1	182	45.3	423	53.5
Female	147	37.9	220	54.7	367	46.5
TOTAL	388	100.0	402	100.0	790	100.0
Missing	0		0		0	



IV.

Stakeholder Focus Group (Summary) (March 1998)

Vermont Lands Conservation Plan

Stakeholder Focus Groups

March 1998

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AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES LANDS CONSERVATION PLAN

Focus Groups

As a part of the public involvement process for developing the Agency of Natural Resource's new Lands Conservation Plan, five separate focus groups were convened during March of 1998 to address a number of key issues that are pertinent to plan development. These focus groups included representatives from the following interest groups: Recreation, Timber, Conservation/Environmental, Local/Regional Officials, and Business Community. The focus groups were comprised of four to seven individuals that had been identified as having an interest in the development of the Lands Conservation Plan. Several of the people who attended focus groups attended more than one since they had interest in issues being discussed in other focus groups. The focus groups were not intended to be representative of stakeholders' view for land conservation but were designed to solicit new ideas for difficult issues identified by the Lands Conservation Steering Committee. **Note: The individual comments and views summarised in this report are taken directly from the focus group discussions and do not necessarily represent facts or viewpoints of the Lands Conservation Plan Steering Committee or the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources.**

The Lands Conservation Plan Steering Committee, through its various work groups, identified a number of issues that must be addressed or considered within the plan. Many of these issues pose specific conflicts or problems for which the Steering Committee sought input. (A master list of these conflict issues is attached). Focus group members were invited to attend a facilitated session exploring issues identified for each group. Focus group members and those that were unable to attend were also encouraged to provide written comment on any of these issues to the Steering Committee, since only a few issues could be specifically addressed within the focus group meetings. Those issues that were suggested as highest priority for the focus groups to address within their respective meetings are as follows:

One common issue was addressed by all focus groups and was addressed from the perspective of each individual focus group. This issue was:

What are the public education needs in regard to state land conservation activities?

Recreation

Let people know that ANR is managing multi-use facilities-the public needs information on the impacts of different types of recreation and how to mitigate that impact.

Information is needed on the different types of public land, including Federal, and the purposes of each type. The State also lacks an inventory of handicap accessible recreation locations in the state.

A simple and direct way is needed to explain to the public the definition of multi-use lands and how multi-use is applied on the ground-color coded maps may be useful to define different use areas.

Information on what recreation opportunities exists on public lands and what is acceptable use.

Signage at trailheads would be useful on the ground information of acceptable uses of public lands. Signage will also be useful to inform tourists of proper use of public lands. The International Mountain Bike Association is a good model for multiple use signage.

State public lands information, uses and other recreation information could be put on the Internet with links to other recreation groups in the state.

The state should work with local communities, Chambers of Commerce, recreation goods retailers, lodges and welcome centers to provide information on recreation opportunities on public lands, use and stewardship ethic.

A simple list of Vermont recreation organizations that could provide information and training for the public to use-the Vermont Directory of Trails and Greenways could be expanded.

Have better coordination between Forests, Parks and Recreation and organizations and shops that cater to tourist. People don't know where to go to recreate in Vermont-coordination could provide consistent information on where to go for each recreation type and accepted standards of use. Better education is needed on how users can maintain the quality of areas.

Public/Private partnerships for recreation is the future since their will not be enough public money available to meet the growing recreation need.

Technical assistance to communities who want to build community trails.

Program to assist communities in setting up equestrian trails.

Timber/Forest Resources

Have ANR publish data that is integrated with Federal and non-profit data on the amount of timber that is cut on public lands. There is a misinterpretation that there is a lot of timber being cut on public lands. The public should know that in reality very little timber is being cut on public land. Let the public know that it is much more difficult to cut timber on public land as compared to private land.

Let the public know that forest products are the largest manufacturing sector in the state and is important to Vermont's economy. Present a balanced view of harvest and forest stewardship.

There is a need for educational materials that explain to the public the different types of timber cuts and forest management regimes.

Create children's books and materials that illustrates the importance of forestry and timber as a renewable resource-let people know that stumps are not bad.

Have signage on trails that let people know that viewpoints were created by cutting trees and that skid trails are often used as trails for recreation after harvest. Make signs visual and use pictures. Need education that timber harvest is compatible with other uses.

Have information on the connection between forestry and ecology. Illustrate that it is a renewable resource and has positive multiplier effects in communities.

Have logging on State land serve as a demonstration for responsible forestry, show how timber cutting fits into management plans. Coordinate with county foresters and let schools know where these location are so they can visit.

Illustrate visually with photographs what Vermont looked like 100 years ago with very few trees and now-this shows that timber cuts grow back. Also show products made from trees-an example is the log lean-tos used for camping on State lands-have signs on these that illustrate they were made from a renewable Vermont resource. Show the connection between timber harvest and wood products. Perhaps a brand on picnic tables and other wood products in State Parks that says, "Harvested and Made in Vermont with Pride"

ANR could do a better job of education on the history of human activity in the State and what it means to rural character.

Conservation/Environmental

More information and education is needed to help the public understand biodiversity. Seek partnerships with other conservation organizations to promote this through media programs, lecture series, etc.

Regional Planning Commissions, Conservation Commissions and Local Planning Boards are under equipped to plan for natural resources. They could use documents, slides and technical assistance on landscape scale land use planning and the benefits of conservation.

More education is needed on the benefits of a working landscape for the environment and the economy.

Landowners need more education on the value and preservation of wetlands and the do's and don'ts of timber harvest in and around wetlands.

State park summer programs are not as good as they use to be-why? ANR needs to advocate for itself through their state park programs.

Need to get the message out as to the importance of private lands for conservation, ecology and biodiversity. Support landowners that are willing to do a good job of conservation on their lands.

Connect tourism with public lands, show the benefits to the economy.

Local Officials/RPC

Education is needed for Conservation Commissions that can help them guide their community to understand conservation and acquisition.

There is a need for education on what are the positive and negative impacts of acquisition and conservation easements. Use experience to date and how these conservation efforts have worked for other organizations, landowners and town government. Also need education for adjoining landowners on impacts of acquisition for them and education for municipalities on tax implications of acquisition.

Inform communities and the public on a clear set of goals from ANR for conservation and acquisition.

Help municipalities understand their goals and desires for conservation, including the benefits and impacts.

Need education on what are good reasons for public investment-What communities get, what they give away.

Is there consistency among conservation easements in the State? Does inconsistency cause conflicts?

It would be useful to set-up purchases so they are supported in the community-seek approval at Town Meeting.

Forests, Parks and Recreation could play a lead role in showing communities the value of conserving land versus the hidden costs of development such as residents' needs for services. Give Selectboards information so they can make informed decisions.

The agricultural community spends a lot of time going to meeting to defend agriculture-there is a lack of understanding of the importance of agriculture to a community. Conservation easements are often too restrictive for best accepted agricultural practices.

Need education on the importance of forestry and agriculture and its role in conservation. Education is needs to be targeted to the urban population on the benefits of forestry on public and private lands.

Conservation means different things to different people. Does it mean keeping the land open or keeping it working for family income?

Need a clear distinction between private lands and public. The more public investment in forest lands the more conflicting values that come into play.

ANR could play an education role in bringing people up to speed on the ecology and habitat of rivers and floodplains-reduce floodplain development through education rather than acquisition.

Business

The natural attributes of Vermont, recreation opportunities, quality of life, attract entrepreneurial people to the state and highly skilled workers. The state can help promote these characteristics.

Jointly develop promotional materials with business groups that promote the natural and environmental assets of the State.

ANR needs to promote the message that when the State buys lands it has beneficial uses for business.

Project Learning Tree offers opportunities to link with business groups.

Publicity on Vermont forests and their good management are a way to promote Vermont wood products.

Green Certification (may be too much) but it is a useful concept for promoting wood products as a renewable resource.

For school children it would be useful to have an Environment for the Future program based on business and public land benefits.

Recreation Focus Group

What are specific recreational reasons, activities, and/or uses for the state to purchase lands?

Conservation and recreation easements may be a way to get new recreation opportunities for less money. Easements will allow use without buying the land.

There is a need for partnerships with communities and land trusts for recreation. These agreements need to be carefully structured as to what is and is not allowed, agreements should not be too restrictive. Some examples of recreation needs where partnerships may work are trail easements, remote river campsites, river access points, rock climbing faces, and para-gliding launch sites.

Easements will need maintenance; agreements could be made with community groups, scouts etc.

Recreation opportunities are needed for all types of recreation in the state. Currently, there is a lack of sites for ATV use. Easements on private forest roads could direct ATV use away from public lands. Communities could also create ATV areas that would provide a place for ATV use and direct them away from public lands where that use may be inappropriate.

The state needs to help build a diversity of recreation opportunities that will help strengthen economic opportunities; this includes opportunities for ATV and personal watercraft (Jet Skis). There is also a need for more services directed towards recreation users. These opportunities need to be provided while preserving the quality of what we have now and the characteristics that make Vermont unique.

Some of the specific recreation sites that are needed in Vermont include:

- Caves-this must be done carefully and may need to be controlled by the sanctioned organization in Vermont for cave exploration and preservation.
- Easements for a Hut to Hut hiking system-the huts could be maintained by a private organization.
- Parking lots for recreation access.
- Adequate trail heads
- Equestrian trails.
- Conservation of waterfalls
- Swimming holes and their access
- The West River Railroad right of way is trying to be made into a trail by interested people in Southern Vermont. Other major rail corridors for rail trails such as Lamoille Valley Railroad and White River Junction to Wells line.
- Facilities for the less adventurous and those in wheel chairs-such as nature loops, quiet paths and fishing access.
- Nature centers in existing state parks, perhaps run by the private sector.
- River and lake put-ins and take-outs, portages around dams and rapids, and water-based remote campsites.
- Land along major trail corridors of state importance (Long Trail, Catamount Trail, Cross Vermont Trail)

- Acquisition that provides links between recreational resources, land abutting existing conserved land.
- Acquisitions that provide benefits beyond recreation such as habitat protection, lake shore buffer, river greenway, etc.

What types of recreational resources should be given priority for public protection? Conversely, what recreational activities and/or uses should not be allowed on state lands or are not appropriate reasons for state land acquisition?

There are no inappropriate recreation types just the challenge of managing competing uses.

How can the State identify up front competing recreation and other resource uses associated with proposed state land acquisitions?

Contact, or having a meeting with, recreation groups to discuss potential recreation usage on a parcel being considered for acquisition.

Set up matrix of uses, and apply this to each parcel being considered for acquisition, identify possible uses and conflict and let the community decide based on this.

Contact local Conservation Commission to help identify local issues, RPCs may be able to assist in identifying regional recreation issues. It would be useful to develop a list of contacts, including individuals and organizations (public and private) that could be the state's "Thinking Partners" on these issues.

Does it matter if you know this up front? Won't these issues be worked on in the management plan for the property? Would up front knowledge of conflicts change the decision to acquire the parcel?

Other Recreation Issues

The recreation white paper discusses national recreation trends-there is a question rather the plan should prioritize needs based on these trends. State recreation policy should be based on Vermont needs.

What do we want the Vermont image to be for recreation? Can we provide everything for everyone? We need to prioritize based on Vermont traditional values.

What do outsiders think the Vermont experience should be? Why do people come here?

Vermont has a recognition problem-market share for tourist is declining. How do we get more people coming to Vermont?

Timber Focus Group

It should be noted that Associated Industries of Vermont and the Vermont Forest Products Association (who were both represented in the focus group) hold the view point that the State of Vermont should not buy any more land and particularly should not be involved in the purchase of timber lands. They state that timberlands are best held in private ownership.

Are there different levels of conservation easements that would be appropriate for conserving large tracts of working forestland that should be considered by ANR?

Forestland easements are not as well defined and tested as agricultural easements. The Vermont Land trust easements have problems in the view of the forestry industry. These are:

1. They serve as co-managers-won't allow activities that they feel compromise scenic, wildlife and aesthetic attributes.
2. Easements preclude other commercial activity such as paid guide or recreation.

Easements should be as simple and direct as possible to protect specific functions (such as hiking trail corridors). Easements should have a minimal entanglement of deed rights.

Easements should be for lands with multiply benefits, not necessarily just timber, and the easements should have provisions for timber harvest.

Need an analysis of the Hancock timber partnership to see how much state resources are used for this compared to this money being used for other management needs on public lands.

Should the State have any involvement in private timberlands? Can the State properly manage its currently held timberlands properly?

The State should support traditional ownership and aid landowners through better taxation and management rather than "forcing" landowners to sell because of their inability to pay taxes or inheritance tax issues.

In evaluating potential state land acquisition or exchange proposals, how can ANR identify up front primary and secondary uses of the land that would be compatible with ecological objectives? How can flexibility be built into this process so that ANR is able of considering new uses and activities for the parcel that may be proposed in the future?

Have a community meeting where parcel is located to see what uses and management objectives work on the parcel-use local priorities for the land.

Acquisition assumes buying public land means protecting the land-this is not always true because saving the land for one value jeopardizes another.

Purchase of public land makes it very difficult to keep a working landscape because there are too many stakeholders to satisfy. If we can't make this balance work on the lands we have now how do we expect to make it work on new lands that are acquired?

Do State parks unfairly compete with private campgrounds? Look to see if the private sector can meet needs for recreation before the State expands or purchases more land.

If more land is going to be purchased it should be financed with sale of other public lands.

Rural character is what attracts people to Vermont; this means people involved in farming and forestry.

Conservation/Environmental Focus Group

To a certain extent, state and federal regulations protect wetlands in Vermont. These regulations, however, do not guarantee public access nor do they necessarily ensure the protection of important wildlife habitat or other wetland values. In light of this, should the acquisition of important wetland areas in Vermont continue to be a priority for ANR?

Wetlands serve many important values and it is appropriate for the State to own them. There should be a system of prioritization for wetland acquisition based on functions and values.

Many things defined as wetlands under the regulations don't have high value and are better used a cropland, need to distinguish which wetlands are truly important.

Current wetland regulations are inadequate for protecting beaver flows, which are important for many wildlife species. Conservation Commission should be sent a survey to inventory, which important wetlands in their community are not on the existing wetland maps.

Favor a non-regulatory approach and no government acquisition to achieve environmental goals-education is a better approach.

Wetland buffers also need protection so to ensure wetland integrity.

What levels of state involvement (i.e., fee ownership, conservation easement, lease, management agreement, etc.) are appropriate for conserving biodiversity and other public resource values associated with land?

The State should study and promote biodiversity and have a system of reserves for this. Forestry can work into this but we need to know how continuous forestry modifies landscapes over time. We need places that act as controls where ecological functions work normally and can be used as a measure.

Private landowners need information on what harvest practices promote biodiversity outcomes-a system of reserves can show the full range of possibilities for this.

Planning done in 1998 should plan for reserves that will not be isolated in 2020.

Core reserves are important but not sufficient there needs to be connections and corridors between these areas.

Chittenden County is under represented for areas of ecological reserves. State should identify important areas in Chittenden County for conservation and acquisition. Other areas where reserves are needed include habitat conductivity with NH, ME and Canada for large mammal movement; connection between large conserved parcels; the Taconic range; habitat for rare and endangered species.

Green Mountain National forest and Adirondack Park already serve as reserves-national forest is now 50% larger than 20 years ago-these should be sufficient-there is already too much government ownership.

Local/Regional Officials Focus Group

What is an appropriate role for ANR to play in conserving floodplain areas? Should ANR consider the acquisition (by fee or easement) of floodplain areas for the purposes of flood protection? What criteria should the Agency consider in this regard?

In general, focus group participants felt that flood plain protection was not enough of a reason for ANR to get involved in acquisition by fee or easement of floodplains. Participants stated that there were other mechanisms such as local floodplain regulations and ordinances that could be effective at curbing floodplain development. Only if the floodplain area had other significant values such as rare and endangered species, or significant ecological habitat or resources should ANR consider acquisition.

It was questioned whether the State could have a more active role in controlling river erosion. It was stated that ANR could provide a role in helping communities have better floodplain ordinances and collect data on what is happening in floodplain areas due to watershed hardening (development).

How can ANR better work with and involve local communities and regional planning commissions in its land conservation activities? (A specific part of this issue that is of particular importance to the Lands Conservation Plan Steering Committee is How can ANR work to provide advance notification of proposed land conservation projects to communities and local/regional officials while still maintaining a level of confidentiality that is an inherent and necessary part of any real estate transaction?)

Need a clear set of criteria for acquisition. Acquisition should have a community sign-off; Involve landowners in the community and conform with Act 200 plan. The State needs to articulate conservation priorities and make them public

Regional Planning Agencies and ANR could work closer to communicate the priority sites for conservation in each region and make conservation a higher priority for RPCs.

Communities and RPCs should set priorities for acquisition in their community or region. State needs to intersect their goals with community and regional goals. State should consider local community assets that could be lost or gained and involve boards to understand this.

Forests, Parks and Recreation might consider a two tier mapping system for conservation lands that are desired in each region. The first tier would be the full extent of lands that have values that are important. The second tier would show more specific parcels that are desired but would only be pursued if there were a willing seller.

Establish ground rules of acquisition ahead of time and partner with local communities to acquire lands that are important to the community. Have Selectboards or other appropriate body explore issues of acquisition as they relate to their community.

Use executive session rules to inform Selectboards of a possible acquisition in their community.

Adjoining landowners should be informed of an acquisition because it will impact their taxes. If a significant feature on a landowner's property is going to be put on a map they should be informed.

The state needs to avoid conflict between expressed town use of land and the state acquiring it for conservation.

Business Focus Group

Recent public input as a part of the Lands Conservation Plan has shown that the following uses are generally considered by the public as inappropriate for state lands: electronic communications sites; regional landfill sites; and mineral extraction areas (gravel, etc.). Are there instances in which ANR should consider these uses in future state land conservation transactions?

Adopt a general policy stating the overall purposes and uses of public lands and adopt a policy stating the role public land should play in satisfying societies needs and wants for good and services. These policies should make clear that certain uses of public land can generally be better met on private land and the private sector whenever possible. The inappropriate uses listed above should be included in this policy. These policies may also include provisions that will allow, in unusual situations, for public lands to be used for identified inappropriate uses if it promotes public good.

Adopt a policy that contains criteria that would be used to assess proposals for identified inappropriate uses for public land. These criteria, or performance standards, would be similar in functions to those used to evaluate proposals for variances from municipal land use plans and regulations.

Land for ski area expansion may be appropriate-this provides positive cash flow to ANR's budget.

Direct telecommunications to already developed ANR lands like ski areas. Need flexibility on telecoms; may need to restrict road development but fewer limits on the actual telecom device. Need to look for compromise positions on telecoms-performance standards should be developed for telecoms on public lands.

Since ANR has limited funds it should refrain from purchasing lands with economic value.

In what ways can ANR work in partnership with the business community to further both state land conservation interests and economic interests?

Both groups could come together to describe conservation and economic goals. Identify overlapping goals and conflicting goals. Identify ways to work together to achieve common goals.

Reinforce efforts with ski areas to build business and strengthen recreation economy.

Create a marketing partnership between ANR and Private campgrounds.

Publicise economic and environmental benefits of state lands and work these into a public relations program.

Disposition of state lands can make sense if they benefit business and the public gets greater benefits.

Have a list of lands wanted for conservation that developers can access if they need to purchase land for mitigation purposes.

Have a partnership between ANR and agriculture to promote appropriate agricultural uses on public lands.

Liaison with realtors and probate lawyers so they can provide potential estate lands for sale and ANR can make them aware of the types of lands they are looking for acquisition. Workshops could also be provided to realtors and lawyers on donations to the state for tax purposes.

Partner with other organizations, such as power companies, to fly over state lands during line checks to monitor state property.

Management partnerships with the private sector are worth exploring for items ranging from forest management to trail maintenance.

Timber industry jobs are declining while timber harvest has increased. Conservation of forest and other open lands via public acquisition can attract and hold businesses and workers to the State-We need to invest in public lands as a base for future jobs.

The Land Conservation Focus Groups have provided another piece of information for the Steering Committee to consider in the development of the Vermont Lands Conservation Plan. The responses of participants provide some new ideas and insight to difficult issues faced by the Steering Committee and can be viewed as a place to begin in developing creative and workable approaches to these issues.

Focus Group Representatives

Conservation/Environmental

Warren King	VT Audubon Society
Susan Morse	Keeping Track
David Jonas	Keeping Track
Bill Sayre	AIV

RPC/Local Officials

Rob Bast	Hinesburg Selectboard
Harvey Smith	Vermont Farm Bureau
Kevin Geiger	NVDA
Ed Larson	UVAC
Kerrick Johnson	AIV
Karen Horn	VLCT
(Write-in/phone)	
Melisa Reichart	Windham RPC
Dean Pierce	Rutland RPC

Recreation Focus Group

Gray Stevens	Adventure Guides of VT
Krister Adams	Tubbs Snowshoe
Kelly Ault	Business for Northern Forests
Rob Center	Mad River Canoe
Bryant Watson	VAST
Rosemary Shea	Catamont Trail Assoc
Lars Botzejorns	GMC
Ed Leary	VT FP&R
(Write-in)	
Jennifer Waite	NPS

Timber Focus Group

Roberta Borland	VFPA
Kelly Ault	Businesses for Northern Forests
Bruce Shields	VT Farm Bureau
Kerrick Johnson	AIV
Bill Sayre	AIV
Ed Leary	VT FP&R
(Write-in)	
Jim Northup	VNRC

Business Focus Group

Bruce Shields	VT Farm Bureau
Dick Andrews	VT Business Magazine
(Write-in)	
Jim Northup	VNRC

Write-In Comments



United States Department of the Interior
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program
Vermont/New Hampshire Field Office
The King Farm, 5 Thomas Hill
Woodstock, VT 05091
Phone 802-457-4323 Fax 802-457-5132

March 17, 1998

MEMO 5895

To: David Boyer
From: Jennifer Waite
Vermont Projects Director
Re: Vermont Land Conservation Plan
Recreation Focus Group

Hello David,

Thank you for inviting me to participate in the Lands Conservation Focus Group for Recreation. I had planned to attend but I've had to make an unanticipated schedule change and will not be able to get to Waterbury on Friday. However, I would like to offer a few comments on the February draft that was sent to me.

First off, kudos to the state for taking on this task - many organizations, from my Hartland Conservation Commission to national conservation groups are struggling with land acquisition issues and priorities, and perhaps this document will be a resource that local groups could look to in helping organize their criteria and policies.

A few specific ideas on some of the issues questions in the February 2 outline:

"What types of recreational resources should be given priority for public protection?"

- Land along major trail corridors of state-wide importance (Long Trail, Catamount Trail, Cross Vermont Trail);
- major rail corridors for rail-trail or rail with trail use (Lamoille Valley Railroad, White River Junction to Wells River line)
- shoreline access;
- acquisitions that preserve an important feature of an existing recreation resources (for example, a scenic view from a major trail corridor);
- acquisitions that provide several benefits beyond recreation; habitat protection, lakeshore buffer, river greenway, farm or forest preservation, etc.;
- acquisitions that provide linkages between recreational resources;
- land abutting existing conserved land.

"What are some less-than-fee approaches that could work for protecting and providing for

TRAIL SYSTEM TEAM

Allocating Trail Use - example options

Options	Equestrian Comments	Hiker Comments	Mountain Bicyclist Comments	Trail Runner Comments
6. Create use zones	No, the park must be viewed holistically.	No.	Yes. Most trails should be shared use. Exceptions would close trails for specific management goals.	
7. Open all trails to bicycles		No. Hikers and equestrians need separation from bikes.	No.	
8. Determine use by width of trail	No, by width, slope, surface material, location, access, etc.	No. Width is one criteria but steepness, sight lines, sharp turns, location and user conflicts are criteria, too.	No, width is one criterion, but not the most important. Bikes are 2" at the tire, 16" at the pedals and 24" at the handlebar. We don't take up much more room than hikers. Mounted cyclists are narrower, lighter, shorter and more maneuverable than mounted equestrians. Width is not the issue.	
9. Mountain Bicycles can use Backbone Trail	No, backcountry experience should not be compromised.	No. Bikes should not be permitted on single-track trails, and some portions of fire roads might need to be closed to bikes. This unique trail must not be compromised.	Absolutely. The major trails should be shared use.	No, bike usage displaces other users
10. Regional trails get special consideration to become multiple use trails	No, trails opened to bikes displace other user groups.	No. Multi-use displaces traditional users.	Absolutely. The major trails should be shared use.	
11. No bicycles on single track trails	Yes, safe, enforceable, communicable, resource protective.	Yes.	No.	Yes, safe, enforceable, communicable, resource protective.
12. Open trails so all can reach core of park	No, park has no core.	No. There is no core in the SMMNRA.	Yes.	
13. No sports recreation allowed		None that threatens or drives off traditional users.		

TRAIL SYSTEM TEAM

Table 4. Potential Criteria

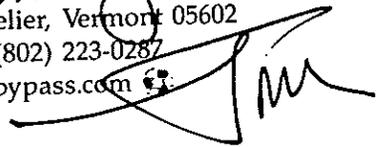
SUGGESTED CRITERIA	SUGGESTED MEASUREMENTS	KEY CRITERIA (# of dots)
1. Minimize new disturbances to natural and cultural areas?	Impact on cultural/archeological sites; Erosion; Water quality; Impact on vegetation; Displacement of wildlife	6
2. Provides safe experience for users?	Minimize hazards; Design for safety; Signage for hazards; Separate incompatible users; Education re safety and risks; Enforcement; Monitoring; Perception of safety; People's reports/opinions expressed; Accident reports; Citations; Physical evidence (skid marks, marks off trail)	6
3. Compatible with park guidelines? (This means both that the option could be consistent across agencies as well as the option could be a recommendation for changes to park guidelines.)	Review park guidelines; General plans; Park enabling; legislation; Park rules and regulations	6
4. Provide enjoyable, quality experience for all trail users?	Survey; Letters/opinions expressed; Use trends over time	5
5. Realistic in terms of the existing trail system?	Can it be implemented immediately (within 5 years?) with the existing trail system?	4
6. Perception of safety?	Education re nature—option?; Education re other users—option?; Survey; Signage; Letters/opinions expressed; Use trends over time	4
7. Fair/proportional/equitable allocation?	Mileage available to different users; Demographics	4
8. Based on (qualitative and quantitative) (subjective and objective data)?	Surveys of users; Accident reports; Letters/opinions expressed Appropriate recreation	4
9. Meets needs and interests of diverse groups	Surveys/public input	3
10. Self-regulating?/Self-policing?	Minimal need for external enforcement	3
11. Maximize interpretation opportunities?	Interesting/educational; Look for opportunities	2
12. Meet Americans with Disability Act requirements?	Review ADA language	2

Vermont Natural Resources Council

Mike Frasier -

Here's another piece I was
going to give you at the focus
group meeting - copy for David.
It helps make points
that ① timber industry jobs are
declining regardless of volumes
harvested and ② conservation of
forest & other open land via
public acquisition can attract & hold
businesses & ~~people~~ workers to state
- We need to invest in public land
as a base for future jobs

VNRC, 9 Bailey Avenue, Montpelier, Vermont 05602
(802) 223-2328 Facsimile: (802) 223-0287
E-Mail: VNRC@plainfield.bypass.com

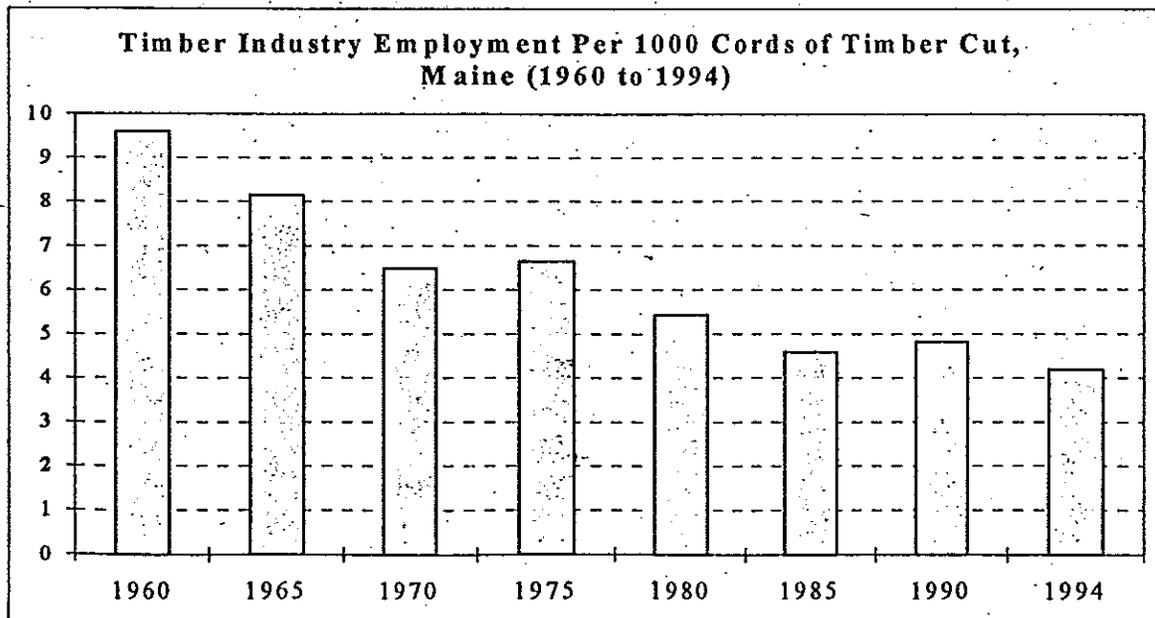
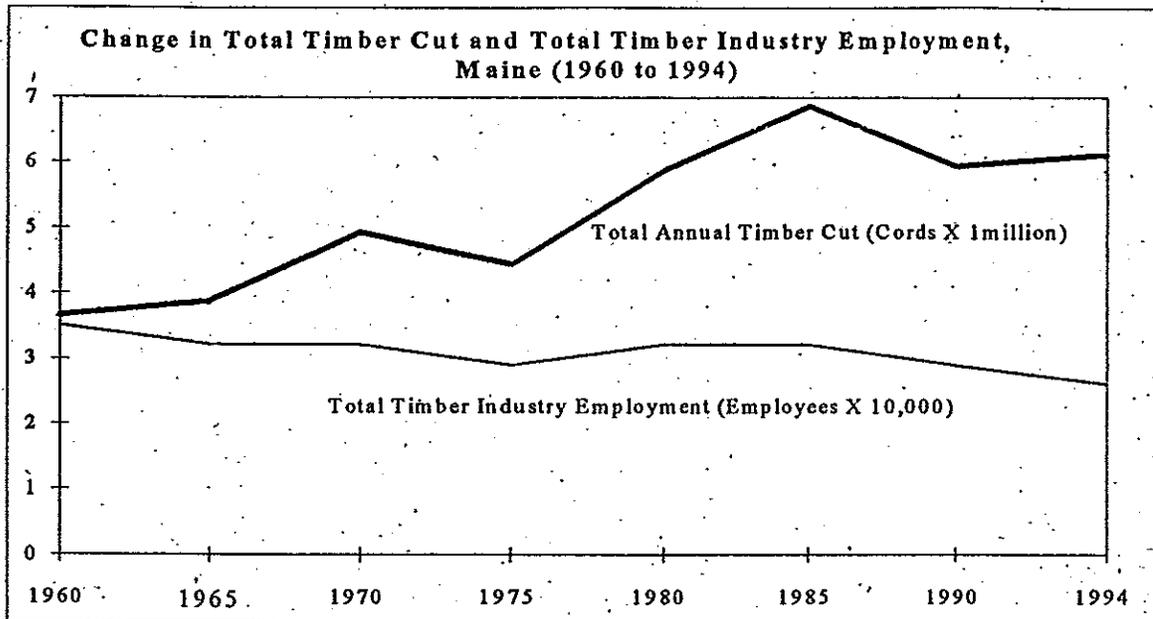


MAR 30 1998

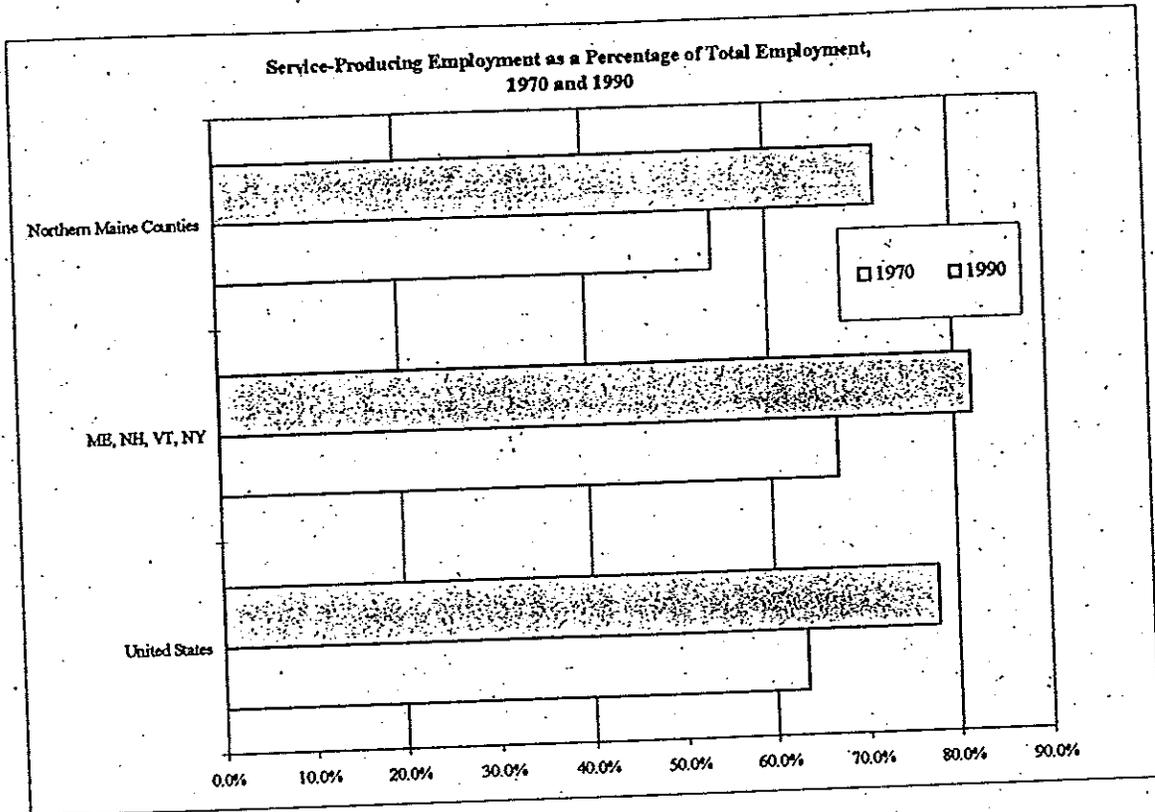
Summary of Trends in Timber-related Employment And the Value of Protecting Non-timber Amenities

Vermont Natural Resources Council

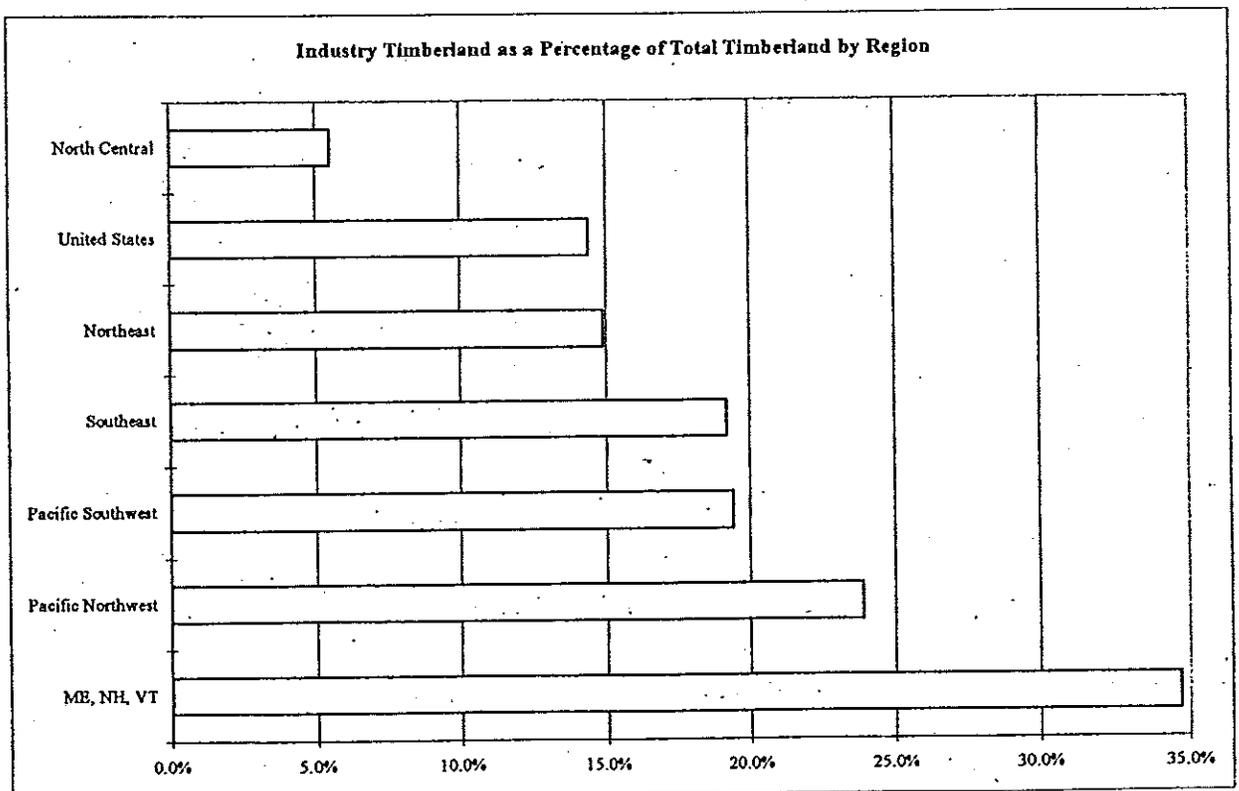
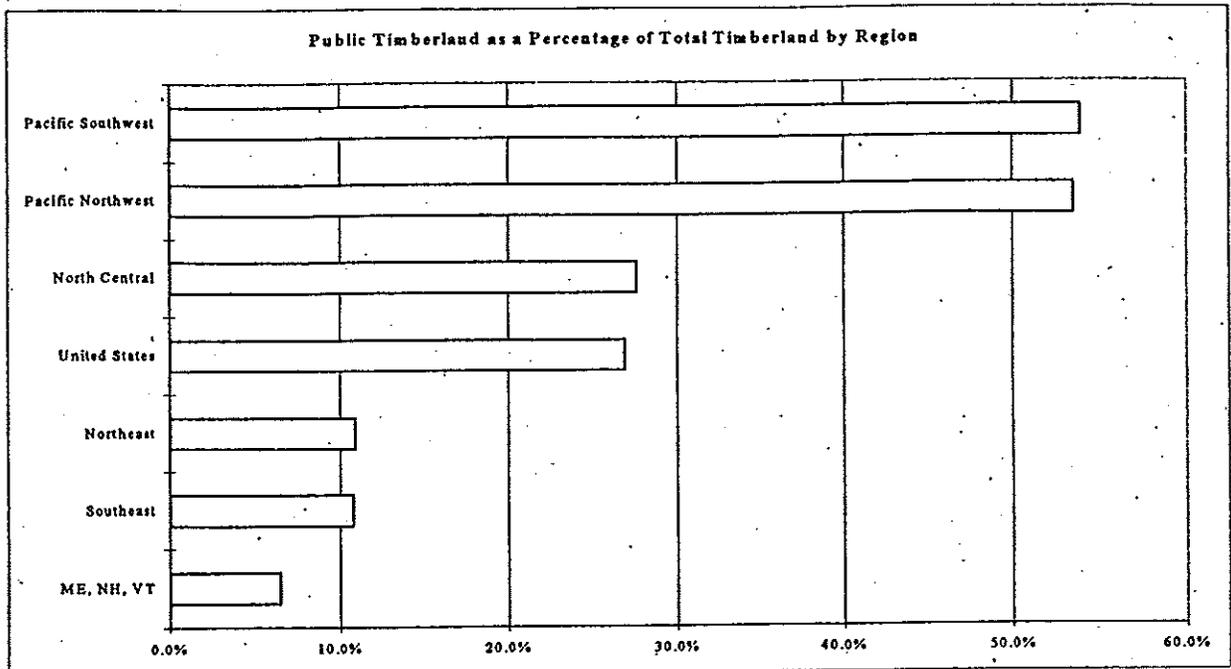
Like other regions of the country, forest products industry jobs and incomes in Maine, the "wood basket" of the Northern Forest region, have declined steadily over the past two decades. Paradoxically, annual timber harvest levels increased during the same period. (Maine Forest Service).



A major structural shift in our nation's economy has been taking place over the past few decades. Employment in the goods-producing sector of the economy (manufacturing; mining; agriculture, forestry and fishing; construction) has been decreasing and employment in the service-producing sector (services; retail trade; wholesale trade; transportation, communication and public utilities; finance, insurance and real estate; and government) has been increasing. Economists believe that the service-producing sector of the economy will continue to increase in importance in the future.



Studies have shown that the service-producing sector of the economy is growing independent of the goods-producing sector in areas with high environmental quality. This indicates that services need not be dependent on the level of resources extracted from the region or man-made goods produced in the region so long as production of the region's natural goods is sustained.





FRIENDS of the WEST RIVER TRAIL
PO Box 25
Jamaica, VT 05343

April 5, 1998

David Boyer
Environmental Collaborative
15 Park St.
Randolph, VT 05060

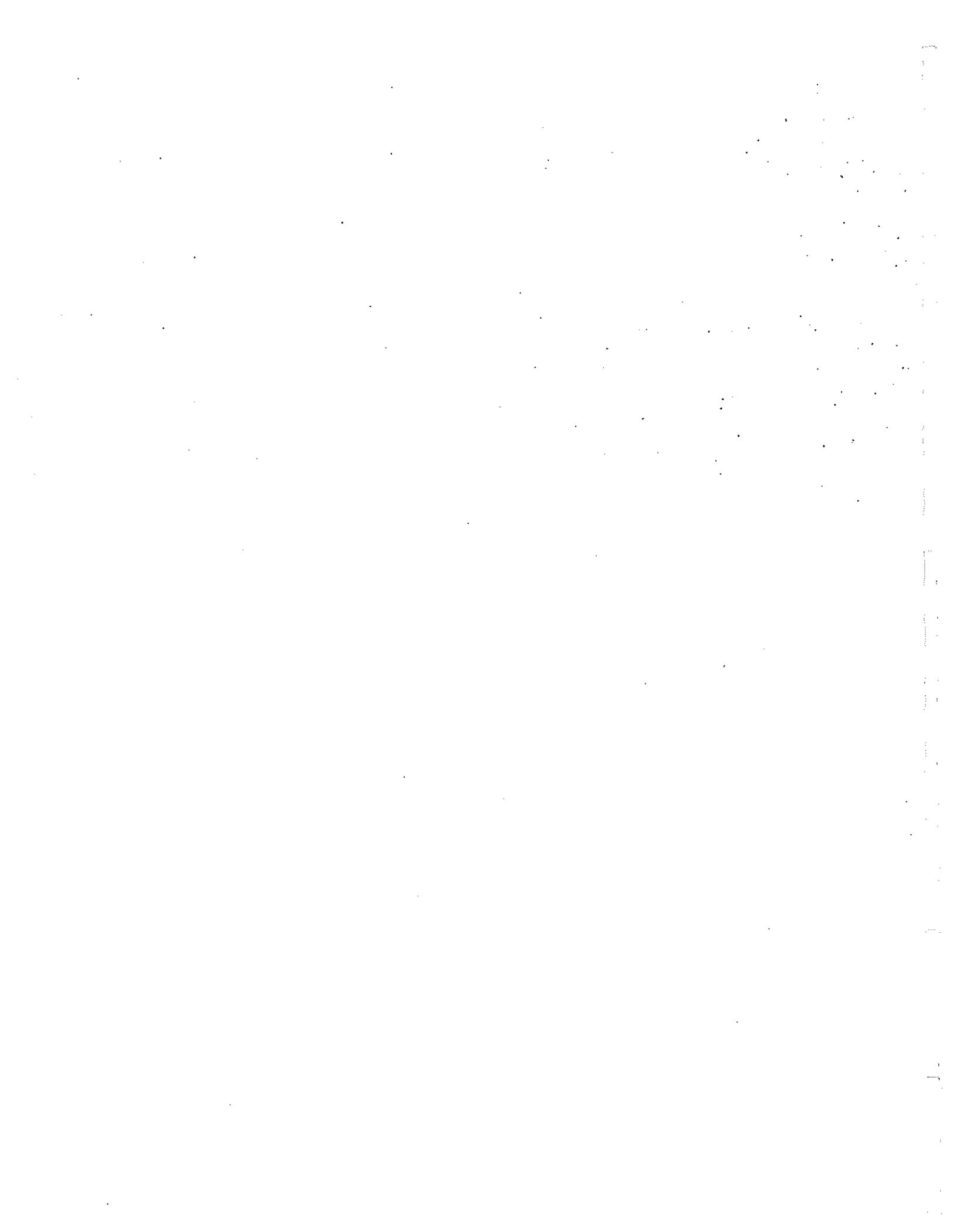
Dear David,

I am Writing on Behalf of the Friends Of the West River Trail (FWRT) to offer comment on recreation issues related to the Vermont Lands Conservation Plan. The FWRT believes that the West River Railroad ROW should not be considered surplus lands and should be retained for future recreational use. The FWRT would like to see the AOT and ANR assert their claim to this and other railroad ROWs, thus fostering the potential use of these ROWs as paths. The ANR should also consider these ROWs a high priority for acquisition and preservation due to their high recreational value as multi use paths.

We hope these comments will be incorporated into the Land Conservation Plan.

Sincerely,

Melissa Reichert



Master List of Issues

POTENTIAL CONFLICT ISSUES FOR FOCUS GROUPS

Master List of Conflict Issues Identified by the Work Groups of the
Lands Conservation Plan Steering Committee
February 2, 1998

Process Work Group

Most people would agree that certain parcels of land, even if offered to the state as a donation, would not meet the basic qualifications for state ownership and should not be accepted. What criteria should the ANR consider in developing minimum standards for state ownership of land?

How can ANR better work with and involve local communities and regional planning commissions in its land conservation activities? (A specific part of this issue that is of particular importance to the Lands Conservation Plan Steering Committee is: How can ANR work to provide advance notification of proposed land conservation projects to communities and local and regional officials while still maintaining a level of confidentiality that is an inherent and necessary part of any real estate transaction?)

State land conservation activities can affect local and regional economies. Should ANR consider the relationship of proposed state land conservation transactions to the economy? How can this best be accomplished?

From your (i.e., the particular focus group) perspective, what are the pressing public education needs in regard to state land conservation activities? Are there specific topics or subjects that stand out in this regard? What role should ANR play in meeting these public educational needs for state land conservation?

What specific conditions should be met and what criteria used in evaluating state land exchange proposal?

In what instances should the state consider leasing (or licensing) state land to the private sector?

What is an appropriate stewardship program and funding mechanism for monitoring and enforcing ANR conservation easements?

Define an appropriate mechanism that ANR can use to recover the costs of administering timber sales on state lands that does not provide an economic incentive to overcut nor serves as a disincentive to sound forest management.

Ecological Work Group

What is an appropriate scale for establishing ecological reserves?

What uses and activities may be appropriate/inappropriate within reserve areas?

What are the specific management needs and issues associated with ecological reserves? How can these needs and issues be incorporated up front as a part of evaluating potential state land acquisition or exchange proposals?

In evaluating potential state land acquisition or exchange proposals, how can ANR identify up front primary and secondary uses that would be compatible with ecological protection objectives for the land? How can flexibility be built into this process so that ANR is capable of considering new uses and activities for the parcel that may be proposed in the future?

What levels of state involvement (i.e., fee ownership, conservation easement, lease, management agreement, etc.) are appropriate for conserving biodiversity and other public resource values?

What are some specific public education needs in regards to biodiversity issues? What role should ANR play in educating the public?

What are some solutions or ideas for creating long-term or permanent incentives for landowners to protect public ecological values into Vermont's landscape?

Forest Resources Work Group

Conservation easements offer a less expensive and often, a more socially acceptable means of conserving large tracts of working forest than fee-simple state acquisition. However, a landowner wishing to sell their land may not always be interested in simply selling a conservation easement. When confronted with such a situation on a large parcel of forestland with important forestry and other resource values, what should ANR do?

Are there different levels of conservation easements that would be appropriate for conserving large tracts of working forestland that should be considered by ANR?

Generally speaking, public sentiment does not support state acquisition in fee of vast tracts of working forestland (unless there are other compelling public values present.) For example, the Northern Forest Land Council has recommended that conservation easements offer a better solution to conserving vast tracts of working forestland than outright fee acquisition by a public entity. In this context, what would you consider to be a vast tract of forestland?

Are there legitimate roles for local communities and regional organizations in regard to working forest easements?

Recreation Work Group

What are specific recreational reasons or uses why (or why not to) acquire state land? What types of recreational resources should be given public protection?

What are current recreational deficiencies in existing state land holdings?

What are good multi-use reasons for acquiring land? Bad reasons?

What are some less-than-fee approaches that could work for protecting and providing for important recreational values?

Are there realistic means ANR could employ to identify key recreation management concerns or issues up front prior to state acquisition?

What role should ANR play in providing opportunities for ATVs on state land?

How can ANR best identify and resolve competing or conflicting resource uses associated with new or proposed state land acquisitions?

Should the state acquire unique natural sites even if they have associated liability concerns and high management costs?

Other Values

To a certain extent, state and federal regulations serve to protect wetlands in Vermont. These regulations do not guarantee public access nor do they necessarily ensure the protection of important wildlife habitat on wetlands. In light of this, should the acquisition of significant wetlands areas in Vermont continue to be a priority for ANR?

All other things equal, should ANR place a greater priority on adding to, consolidating, or providing connections between its existing land holdings than on acquiring new parcels that are not near or adjacent to existing state lands?

Should ANR have a role in acquiring scenic overlooks or does this responsibility rest primarily with the Agency of Transportation?

What is an appropriate role for ANR to play in conserving flood plain areas? Should ANR consider the acquisition (by fee or easement) of floodplain areas? What criteria should ANR consider in this regard?

Recent public input as a part of the Lands Conservation Plan has shown that the following uses are generally considered by the public as inappropriate uses for state lands: electronic communication sites; regional landfill sites; and mineral extraction areas (gravel, etc.). Are there instances in which ANR should consider these uses in future state land conservation transactions?

How can ANR work with different organizations and interests groups to further state land conservation goals? What kind of creative partnerships can be developed towards this end?

V.

**Public Comment and Responsiveness Summary
(on Draft Lands Conservation Plan)
(July 1999)**

Vermont Agency of Natural Resources

Draft Lands Conservation Plan

Public Comment and Responsiveness Summary
July 1999

Lands Conservation Plan Steering Committee

Dick Ackerman	U.S. Forest Service
Susan Bulmer	Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation
David Dolan/Paul Hannan	Vermont Housing and Conservation Board
Larry Garland	Department of Fish & Wildlife
John Hall	St. Johnsbury Town Manager
Gil Livingston	Vermont Land Trust
John Meyer	Bardill Land and Lumber Company
Conrad Motyka, chair	Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation
Steve Parren	Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife, Nongame and Natural Heritage Program
Steve Pitkin/Kevin Geiger	Northeast Vermont Development Association
John Roe	The Nature Conservancy
Dennis Shaffer/Susan Shea	Green Mountain Club
Stephan Syz	Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation
Craig Whipple	Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation
Dave Willard	Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation
Jonathan Wood	Bell-Gates Lumber Company

**Draft Lands Conservation Plan
Public Comment and Responsiveness Summary**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources received nearly 400 comments on the draft Lands Conservation Plan during the fall of 1998. Over the course of two six-hour meetings, in addition to hours of reading written material at home, members of the Lands Conservation Plan Steering Committee discussed and debated scores of suggested changes to the draft plan. The committee's thorough review of the public comment material provided the basis for the Agency's response to comments as outlined in this report and set the stage for making many changes to the draft plan. This document will summarize the comments received and describe the Agency's response to those comments.

Committee members recommended several significant changes to the plan due to the comments received, including a clarification of the plan's goals, stronger language about the role of privately owned conservation lands, and a general effort to make the plan easier to read. Among the specific changes recommended by the Steering Committee and approved by the Agency:

Changing the plan's name to clarify that it is primarily an acquisition plan

Dividing the plan into two volumes, with the first part providing the plan's purpose, goals, priorities, and recommendations, and the second volume providing important background material

Highlighting the importance of private property as part of the Vermont's conservation lands, including land enrolled in Use Value Appraisal or protected by regulatory programs

Adding language clarifying that the Agency encourages towns and regional planning commissions to share their conservation priorities and that the Agency will give great weight to proposed acquisitions brought forward by municipalities and RPCs

After much discussion, committee members also rejected several suggested changes. Among the most important, Steering Committee members agreed not to include a cap on state acquisitions. Although many individuals said the plan should include a specific limit for state acquisition in terms of acreage, committee members and the Agency agreed that such limits were not possible now for at least two reasons. First, the plan is value-driven, not acreage-driven, and the Agency doesn't have enough information yet to fully document what natural resource values it already owns and how much acreage is needed to adequately protect those resource values. Second, social pressures (growth rates, patterns of development, recreation pressures, the impacts of telecommuting, etc.) are always changing, making any cap temporary.

Committee members also felt that a vision statement, as some had suggested, was not necessary because the fundamental assumptions and guiding principles adequately frame the context and environment in which Agency in which Agency land acquisitions must occur.

Agency response: Members agreed that lands protected as part of ecological reserves will provide this type of recreation value. Additionally, portions of existing state lands already provide for this use.

Ecological Resource Values and Priorities, General. Many people felt the wording in this section was vague and undefined. On the other hand, many others praised the Agency for its emphasis on ecological priorities and felt such attention was long overdue. The final plan as a whole, and this section in particular, should strive to be as clear and unambiguous as possible, most agreed. Some also felt this section should provide more of an explanation and provide additional documentation justifying such things as why wildlife corridors are needed, how large they need to be, why ecological reserves are necessary, and how the committee defines terms such as fragmentation and unique natural areas.

Agency response: Members directed staff to include more documentation and scientific justification which would explain the rationale behind this section, and to strive for more precise, less ambiguous language.

Ecological Resource Values and Priorities, Critical Wildlife Habitat. Some suggested that the final plan should better state which species need protection and the amount of habitat needed to protect them.

Agency response: Committee members acknowledged that the Agency has good information on critical wildlife habitat for certain species, which may be useful in evaluating individual parcels of land. They felt, however, that the use of an indicator species approach in determining general ecological land conservation priorities was not as valid as the natural communities approach advocated within the plan.

Ecological Resource Values and Priorities, Ecological Reserves. Several people, particularly members of the forest products industry, were critical of a "limited reserve system." They said the science is not unanimous in regard to the need for ecological reserves and, though worthy of additional study, it is premature for the Agency to endorse such a system at this time. Others said the Steering Committee had not gone far enough in this regard and felt the final plan needed a clear emphasis on acquiring large tracts of "wilderness-type" lands. (Specifically, they argued that large core areas managed primarily for ecological and wilderness values should be identified as a specific ecological land conservation priority).

Agency response: Committee members agreed that the final plan needs clearer language regarding the use of ecological reserves. Specifically, members directed staff to add language explaining that Vermont's working landscape, including existing public lands, are integral components of any ecological reserve design; they also agreed that the final plan will note how other states are establishing ecological reserves as part of their conservation programs.

Ecological Resource Values and Priorities, Unique or Special Natural Areas. A number of individuals felt this term was vague and should be more narrowly and specifically defined.

Agency response: Committee members agreed to provide specific examples of unique and natural areas in the final plan.

Ecological Resource Values and Priorities, Corridors. Many wrote to praise the Agency for including wildlife corridors as a priority for future land conservation. Others felt corridors needed to be better defined and justified.

Agency response: Members agreed to add clarifying language to explain the difference between "corridors" and "connectivity" and to emphasize that this can be a means of protecting working forests.

Ecological Resource Values and Priorities, Tools for Evaluating Ecological Lands. Some suggested that the Vermont Biodiversity Project (VBP) should be included within this section of the final plan as a future resource for the Agency in identifying priority conservation areas for lands with ecological resource values. Other, similar suggestions included mentioning the Agency's "Elements of Biodiversity," the Nongame and Natural Heritage Program, and the Vermont Ecomapping Project as resources in evaluating such lands.

Agency response: Committee members agreed it would be appropriate to mention the Nongame and Natural Heritage Program and other established Agency programs that help identify ecological conservation priorities. They declined to mention every entity involved in ecological research as the organizations will change over the years and new organizations will develop.

Ecological Resource Values and Priorities, Special Areas. Some stated that the plan should make specific mention of sandplain and clayplain forests as land conservation priorities. Others suggested old growth forests as a priority.

Agency response: While committee members did not agree that these areas should be identified as specific land conservation priorities in the plan, they concurred that such areas could be used as examples of Unique or Special Natural Areas.

Ecological Resource Values and Priorities, Relationship to Vermont Ecomapping Project. A few said there should be a stronger connection between these two sections of the plan. For example, if the Vermont Ecomapping Project were to identify a lack of public conservation lands in certain biophysical regions at certain elevations, then the Ecological Resource Values section should identify these areas as future ecological protection priorities.

Agency response: Members said the final plan should note that this is one inventory project which will allow the Agency to be more proactive, and that there will be other initiatives to help the Agency better identify Vermont's ecological land conservation needs.

Forest Resource Values and Priorities, General. Several noted that the shift away from purchasing large tracts of forest land in fee marks a dramatic shift from the historical direction the state has taken and, therefore, should be highlighted or emphasized. Others indicated that the tone of this section implies that unless private forest land is encumbered by a conservation easement, it is "unprotected" and therefore at risk. Others have suggested that documentation on why forest resource values are important should be included in this section.

Agency response: Committee members agreed to highlight this shift in the Executive Summary of the final plan and, where appropriate, in the final plan itself. As for documenting the importance of forest resources values, committee members agreed that the Forest Resources Plan should be the place for such information.

Forest Resource Values, Conservation Easements. Although a number of people indicated strong support for the use of conservation easements, it was clear that the timber industry is not unanimous in its support of this tool for conserving working forests. The use of simple easements (purchase of development rights only) was readily accepted by most respondents within timber industry; many of these same individuals, however, voiced reservations about the more restrictive conservation easements used by the Vermont Land Trust and others.

Agency response: Members agreed the plan should acknowledge this concern and state that conservation easements are relatively new tools and assessment of how well they're working will continue. The final plan will also include language declaring that the Agency will strive to use the minimal amount of restriction necessary to protect the public's interest.

Forest Resource Values, Cut-Over Lands. Several individuals pointed out that some mention of the state's role in purchasing heavily cut-over lands should be made in this section. Most said the state should not acquire such lands as it rewards poor management..

Agency response: The committee directed staff to address this concern by including language within the Project Evaluation Criteria to ensure that state acquisition policy discourages unsound forest practices.

Forest Resource Values, Acquisition of Timber Rights on State Lands. A few respondents recommended that the final plan identify the acquisition of timber rights on existing state lands with split rights as a priority.

Agency response: Steering Committee members agreed that this is a concern in a few isolated locations and should not be identified as a statewide priority.

Rather, for a lesser amount of money, the Agency should negotiate to purchase the management rights on how logging will take place on these properties.

Additions to Agency Lands. Some felt the language needs to be tightened up some here so the final plan clearly states what is meant by additions to Agency lands (for example, “lands necessary for maintaining or enhancing the integrity of existing ownership”). Others recommended that the phrase “lands that connect to other state lands” should be more narrowly defined.

Agency response: Committee members directed staff to tighten and clarify the language in this section and, where appropriate, to use examples to illustrate the intent.

Additional Land Conservation Priorities. One individual called on the Agency to include the protection of public water supplies as a land conservation priority.

Agency response: Steering Committee members disagreed and instead concurred that this is a conservation responsibility for municipalities, not the state.

Project Evaluation Process, Minimum Standards Screen. Some suggested this screen is not restrictive enough and, as written, would allow nearly any property to be formally reviewed by the Agency. Several said the general policy of not paying more than appraised value is too restrictive and the final plan should provide flexibility in exceptional circumstances.

Agency response: Members understood this concern and suggested revising the Purposes section of the Minimum Standards Screen to read, “The parcel must meaningfully serve at least one of the Agency’s purposes for ownership.” As for the policy of not paying more than appraised value, committee members said the plan should not change that policy.

Project Evaluation Process, Evaluation Criteria. A couple people recommended giving greater weight to projects that demonstrate a high degree of vulnerability or threat.

Agency response: Members agreed that the draft plan’s Project Evaluation Criteria already accomplished this.

Chapter VI (Plan Implementation Strategy):

A. Suggested Additional Recommendations and Related Actions

Place More Emphasis on Developing a Concerted Agency Public Education Program. The role of the state to foster a greater public understanding of the timber industry was stressed by many individuals.

Agency response: Committee members agreed that the state should play a greater role, but said the Forest Resource Plan should address this.

Maintaining Private Forest Land. Some individuals said the final plan should call on the Agency to work with other parties to identify and resolve issues that pose barriers to maintaining privately owned forest land.

Agency response: Committee members said the Forest Resource Plan should address this.

Relationship of Lands Conservation Plan to Rural Economic Development Plans. A few people commented that the plan should support with rural economic development plans.

Agency response: Members recommended adding an action to this effect under Relationships with Regional Planning Commissions.

Link Between State Lands and Tourism. A small number of people suggested that the final plan highlight the positive relationship that state lands have on tourism.

Agency response: Members felt the draft plan adequately addressed this issue, but added that the final Lands Conservation Plan should reference the Forest Resources Plan, which contains additional information on this subject.

Payment In Lieu Of Taxes. A few individuals recommended adding an action under "Relationship with Communities" regarding the need to identify and develop proposals for ensuring full PILOT funding.

Agency response: Committee members felt Action 3C already addressed this need.

B. Suggested Revisions to Draft Recommendations/Actions

Surplus Lands. Several individuals said the identification and disposition of surplus lands needs to be more seriously considered and addressed in the final plan.

Agency response: Members agreed that there is not much public support for selling state-owned land and recalled how previous efforts to sell Agency lands ran into strong local opposition. They therefore felt the existing language under Identification, Exchange and Disposition of Surplus Lands was sufficient.

Relationship with Communities. A few respondents said Action 3(f) (local support) should be strengthened and made absolute. More felt that a local veto would not be appropriate and should be broadened beyond simply requiring select board approval to include town planning commissions, conservation commissions, etc. Others felt compliance with local plans would be more appropriate than select board approval.

Agency response: Committee members felt the recommendations in the draft plan under the section on Relationship with Communities struck the right balance as written.

C. Miscellaneous

Difficult Projects. Many said the state has a legitimate and appropriate role in conserving “tough” properties (such as popular swimming holes, dangerous gorges and caves, and other properties with unique management problems), and the final plan should address the state’s responsibility.

Agency response: Members agreed that the Agency should not shirk its responsibilities in difficult situations, but felt such properties should be considered on a case-by-case basis without the need for a new statewide policy.

Working with Farmers and the Agricultural Community. At least one individual said the Agency’s land conservation activities have the potential to negatively impact farmland and that the Agency should encourage a dialogue that reconciles ANR land conservation with local/regional/state efforts to protect farmland and identifies farmland properties with important conservation values.

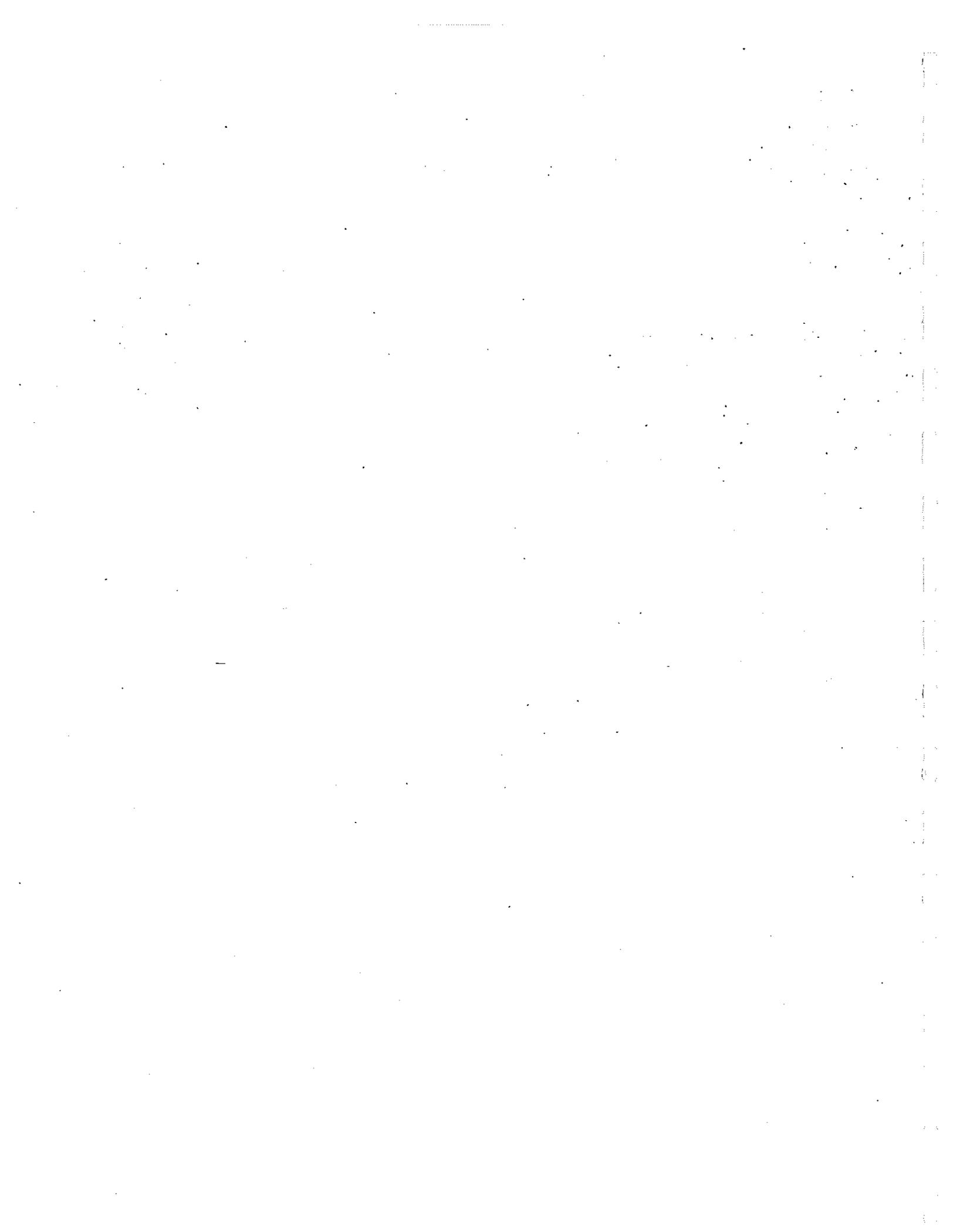
Agency response: Committee members acknowledged that such conflicts do arise occasionally, and the Agency will seek to resolve such matter amicably. Members suggested adding another bullet under the Other Considerations section of the Project Evaluation Criteria to address this concern.

The White Papers. Several said although the White Papers are a useful reference source, their inclusion in the draft plan was confusing.

Agency response: Committee members agreed and directed staff to place the White Papers in the final plan’s second volume, which will contain supporting documents.

Appendix A

Summary of PAI Meetings



**Windham County RPC Lands Conservation Plan PAI Meeting
September 16, 1998**

In attendance:

Windham RPC Rural Lands Committee

Harriet Chatfield- Halifax, VT, RPC Commissioner
David Clarkson- Newfane, VT-Landowner-WHIG
Melissa Reichart- Windham Regional Commission
Bill Schmidt- Brattleboro- VT Land Trust, Commissioner
Bill Uptegrove- West Townshend - Landowner
Andrew Toëpfar- Saxtons River- Commissioner

General Comments

Most comprehensive and new plan yet, it has a good setting out of priorities and implementation steps.

Makes good sense for state not to buy land for forest management.

State should be on the alert to recognize opportunities to acquire land for new state parks- consider lands with a variety of landscape features that can be developed into State Parks in 50 years (think long term) especially in areas where there currently not many State Parks.

Unprotected private lands are critical-private landowners who show good stewardship will help keep the State's forests productive-Private partnerships are critical to managing large tracts of forest-helps allow landowners to hold on to land for the long term-In the future the expenses to monitor easements will become prohibitive-another reason to encourage private stewardship.

Many Landowners don't think of long term management but can be educated. State could take a more active role on educating private landowners on sustainable management. Green certification for private landowners should at least be mentioned in the plan.

Plan is till somewhat reactive rather than proactive-surface water is set as a priority but there is no mention of watershed planning and protection.

The plan does not adequately address fragmentation and connectivity of habitat-there is a need for corridor protection in lower elevations.

Regionalization of land planning is a problem-need to look across state and regional boundaries for ecosystem/habitat continuity.

Keep moving the plan towards being more proactive.

Wants to push for having AOT be responsible for conservation or rail corridors and abandoned rail corridors.

GIS-discussion on GIS states that the Agency does not have sufficient capacity but does not mention use of RPC's for this function-RPC's have a common GIS system and could digitize data and provide to State for use in projects and planning.

Specific comments

Page 12- The plan mentions Conte Refuge and land protection-you list one or two areas in the north but none of the ones in the southern part of State-if you are going to list 1 or 2 list them all, or don't put any.

Page 25-Chart does not have Catamount Trail mileage.

State should take responsibility for acquiring and managing unusual parcels-management/liability concerns should not stop State from purchasing these. Halifax gorge is an example of an unusual landscape feature that deserved protect but is hard to manage-it has ended in subdivided private ownership that excludes access to the gorge.

Page 45-State needs to beef-up community section-State should communicate before purchase-more detail to communities on types of things Agency is going to do with the purchase. Highlight 3E-clearly outline how it fits into conservation plan. Selectboards need to be approached tactfully. WRC should support acquisition of parcels that would support Regional Plan over Selectboard opposition.

3F of the above section should have the addition of, 'or is in conflict with local and/or regional plans.' More effort needs to be put into considering the feelings of local communities but Selectboards should not have veto power of acquisitions. Look at Town Plans.

Page 40-Criteria- linkages and provide access should be defined-should not have to go backwards on the plan to clarify meaning-linkages and corridors are import for trails in the State.

The plan does not state that it will be the policy for LARC to use and apply the acquisition evaluation criteria. Will LARC use these?

Section on donated lands-if State can not accept parcel they should work with or direct donor to other organizations-there should be some attention given to alternatives-it say this in the flow chart but should be brought into the plan in text.

There is no discussion in the plan on types of land that will not be purchased by the Agency or things that will not be provided.

Upper Valley RPC Lands Conservation Plan PAI Meeting
September 29, 1998

In Attendance:

Annette Lorraine- Hanover, NH- Upper Valley Land Trust
Vicki Smith- Upper Valley RPC

General Comments

The Plan does not make any links with tourism in the State. Trails and greenways should be prioritized for those that intersect with scenic byways and bike routes.

The plan only makes a priority of looking at lands for acquisition that are adjacent to other State lands-it should also include lands adjacent to conservation lands held by non-profit organizations.

Priorities in the plan are consistent with Upper Valley Regional Plan and with towns in region. State priorities meet regions general priorities-its good to see canoe camping included since it is a priority of our region.

State could be more proactive working with nonprofit conservation groups.

Payment to towns in lieu of taxes is still an issue since payments were not fully funded for many years. Are there ways that towns can be guaranteed they will be paid? Can money be put aside at time of purchase or an endowment set-up?

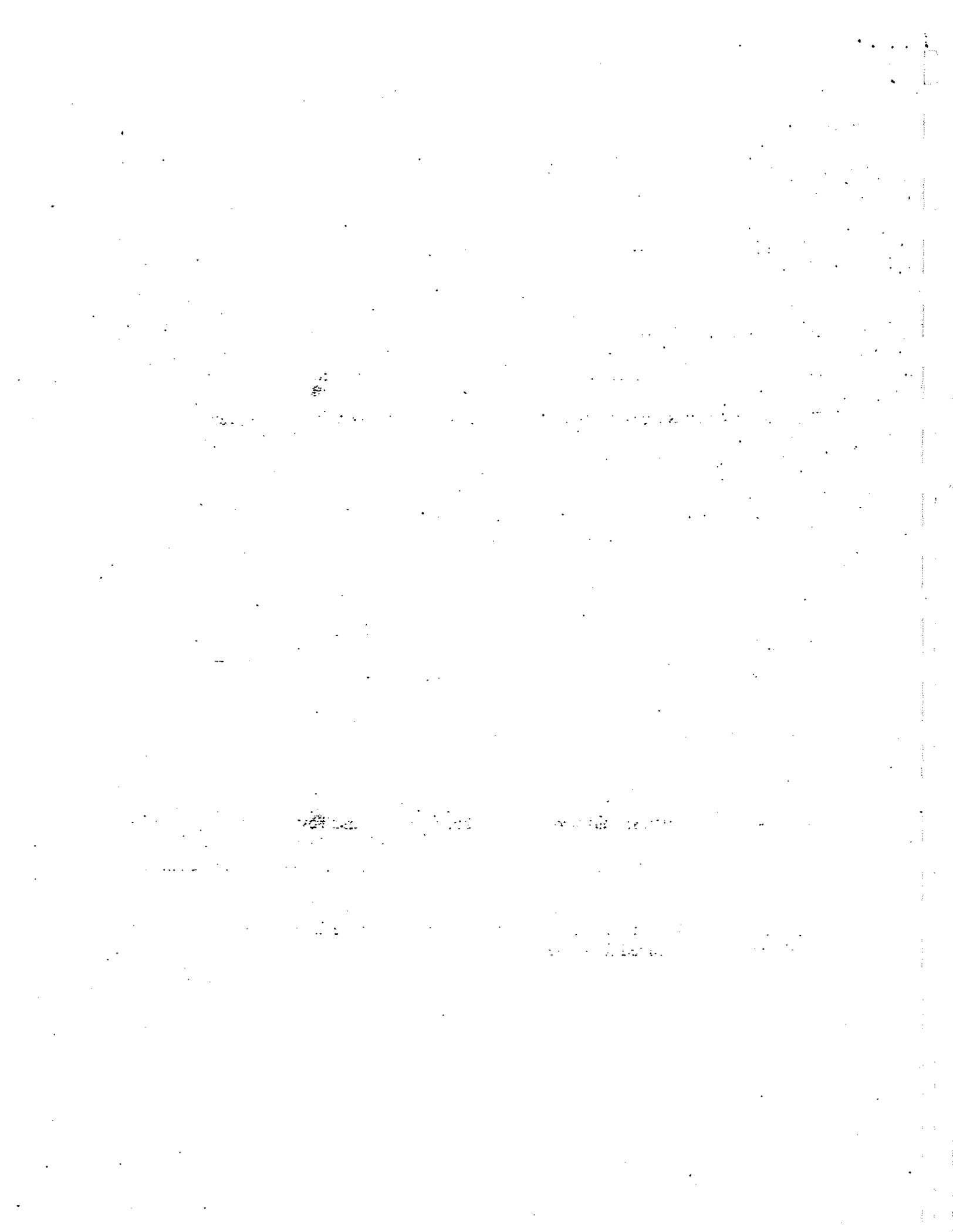
Can land that the State already owns have conservation easements put on them-so communication towers can not be built on State land.

Specific Comment

Page 52-Town approval should also include Planning Boards and Town Meeting.

There is a priority on working forests but not so much on unique natural areas-these lands seem more important.

Page 47-Donations- should consider adding trade lands i.e., those lands that can be sold to private owners or traded for bigger or better parcels.



**Lamoille RPC Lands Conservation Plan PAI Meeting
September 30, 1998**

In attendance:

Doug Molde- Johnson
Jonathon Wood- Jeffersonville
John St. Onge- Morrisville- USDA/Lamoille Fish and Game
Bill Bartlett-Hyde Park-LCPC Board
Steve Bushey- Stowe- Map Adventures
Bill Rossmassler- LCPC
Ted Barnet- Stowe- Landowner
Chuck Mitchell- Morrisville Selectboard
Munro Brook- Jeffersonville
Bruce Shields- Wolcott
David Marin- Morrisville- Butternut Mt. Farm
John Brodhead- Craftsbury Common- Craftsbury Outdoor
Bruce Butler- Johnson

General Comments

Impressed of the plan as an acquisition plan rather than a conservation plan-it sets good priorities.

Compliment to ANR for doing plan and bringing people together to give input.

There does not seem to be much weight on recommendations of ecological study group. Like the partnership approach expressed in the plan.

Historically we have benefited from lands acquired for nature's sake-the State should show leadership on this issue.

Biodiversity is a divisive word to define, there is disagreement between level of biodiversity needed-it is not workable to have a definition that is all encompassing of all organisms.

How does the plan address more efficient use and management of existing State lands? We do not necessarily need to spend more money to acquire land but need to look at what we have, what those parcels provide and parcel is being used efficiently.

To raise the public's expectations of use of State lands without a management budget is not well throughout-perhaps an endowment for management for each purchase would help this-ANR is now under budgeted to meet management responsibilities. Privatization of management may be an option worth exploring.

Not comfortable with full private management-What's the measure of how effective ANR management is, and when do you know management limits have been reached-should be a sliding scale as ability to manage decreases acquisition on new land should decrease.

Competing beliefs and values make it hard to have management plans that work.

Some of the costs of managing public lands such as trails are done by volunteers-this should be added and acknowledged.

There needs to be a plan on not only acquiring land but what to do once you get it-must integrate management with acquisition and forest resource plan.
In regard to how much State land is enough-No net gain is too simplistic-its dangerous to assume we have the right mix of lands now-need a regional inventory done throughout the state to see what needs and use are met by existing lands and those that are not.

State should take a more active role in promoting timber products and in the benefit the industry provides for economy, open space and wildlife.

Tax impacts to towns when State acquires land are still not clear.

Pilot provision of Act 60-unsure if will be fully funded-so tax issue not resolved also need way too deal with town approval.

Plan should illustrate how long term conservation can save a town money as compared to development and need to provide services.

How does the State how land purchased will be used and what interests and values are conserved when the land is purchased-Plan should state what types of interest and uses the Agency purchases lands for or acquires easements or rights on.

There was general support that the plan/acquisition process should examine economic impacts and benefits of purchase.

Economic analysis should be wholelistic and examines costs and benefits. How do you value a unique singular resource?

The pattern and perception exists that the state of Vermont purchases cutover timber land-this promotes timber liquidation and is not a good policy.

Specific Comments

Traditional recreation values have been left out of the introduction, such as hunting and fishing. They are further back in the plan but should be in the introduction since they have been practiced for centuries in Vermont. Need to include hunting and fishing as an important value for which to acquire land.

Critical wildlife habitat and corridors has little discussion in the plan-this includes Deer yards-less deer habitat and smaller herds impact the economics community receive from deer hunting. Other traditional uses such as timber products have not been given adequate consideration-New uses should not have superiority over traditional uses.

Page 31-"Agency recognizes it must become proactive"-suggest-Agency wants to take initiative to buy land.

Page 6-Add-Lands readily available to all segments of society.

Page 66, 3rd paragraph-Need mention of aging population-more focus on baby boomers.

Trails and Greenways section-Long distance trail systems-Large parcels are associated with the long trail-these should be disposed of except for trail corridor and buffer-unless it can be shown the parcels are needed.

Item 3-Trails and Greenways – Does this mean if the State buys land at Green Mt Reservoir it will try to be connected with the next closest parcel of State land?-needs more clarification-links/corridor is too broad needs better definition and tightening.

Plan should address what restrictions in use come with land the State buys.

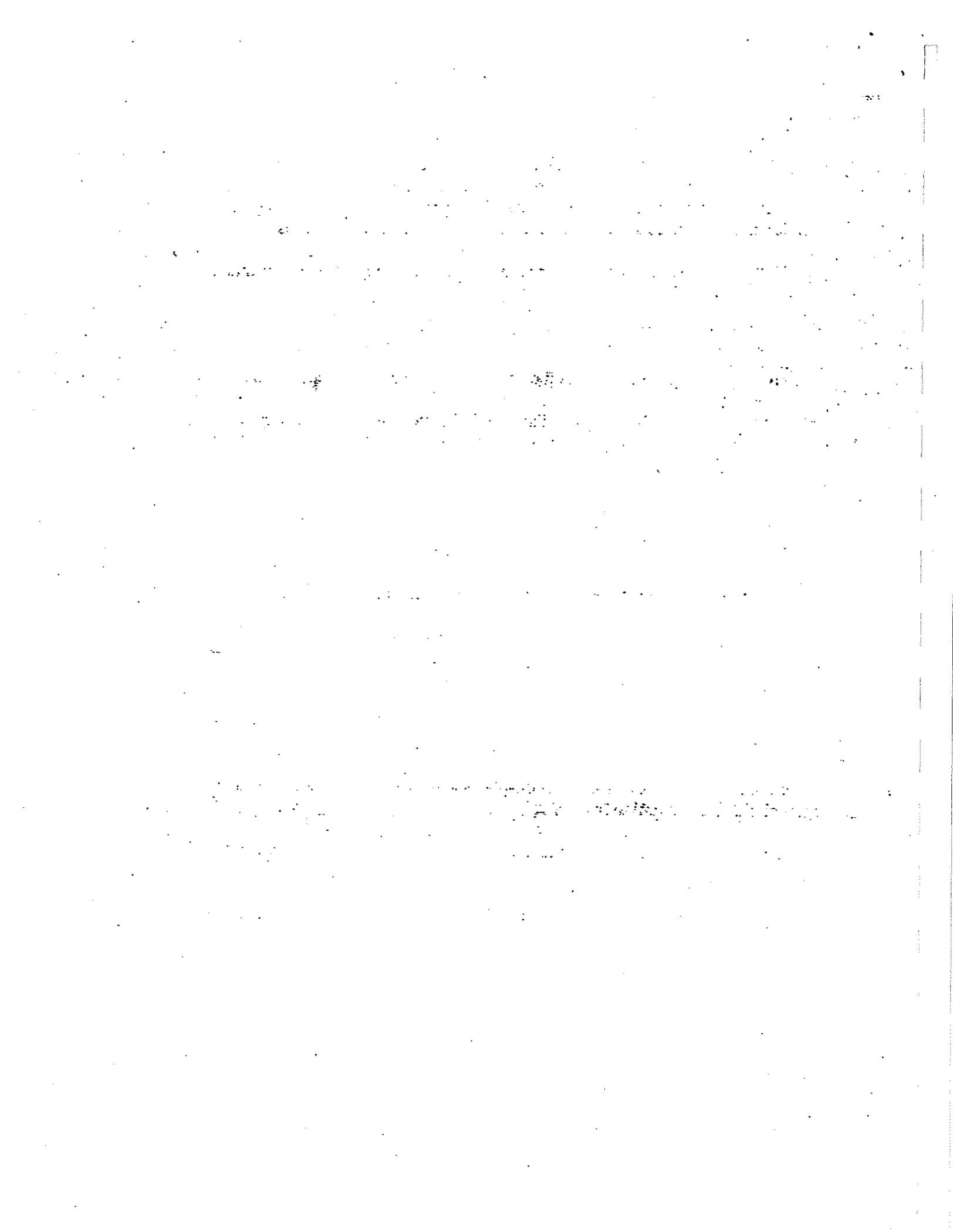
Page 39-Minimum Standards-Believes there is coordination, and screening criteria reflect cooperation between state and outside parties so state can make deals that restrict uses outside parties want restricted.

Schematic- (flow chart)-Does not have a piece that identifies why the land is being bought-ether uses it provides or reason it should be acquired.

Town and Regional involvement section-plan should state importance of local and regional planning commissions.

Past experience has made person dubious about town involvement recommendations in plan.

#3E and #3F in Matrix-exceptions stated dilute the policy and makes just about anything fit.



VNRC Lands Conservation Plan PAI Meeting October 10, 1998

In attendance:

Lars Botzogerns-Green Mountain Club
Seward Weber-VT Audubon Council
Steve Holmes-VNRC
Barbara Alexander-VCFR, VLG
Jim Shallow-VT Audubon
Christine Mitchell-The Wilderness Society
Kelly Alt-Businesses for Northern Forests
Jan Fren

General Comments

This seems more like a guidance document than a plan-could use more specificity on types of land.

Get to the meat of the plan sooner-too much up-front information-move priorities forward and back this up with justification of priorities and background information.

Put vision up-front as to where State would like to be in 50 years-strong infrastructure of public lands.

Arrangement of text-needs good copy editor-it is wordy and need tightening, better word choice-make it clearer and simple to read.

What is the overall priority given to the four priority types which is highest-need clarity that either criteria hold equal standing or which criteria are ranked higher.

Money for management should not guide acquisition-management should be separate

Long-term management partnerships are the key to management of public lands.

There seems to be a defensive posture to concern over local and regional concerns-could change tone on local and regional issues-document should have a more positive tone. Local sections should include other players beside Selectboards such as Planning and Conservation Commissions-Broaden statement to include community support rather than just Selectboard support.

What steps are in place for community education?-Many of the concerns can be overcome through education.

There is need for a good resource inventory-ecological, forest etc. Database of information that evolves with time and includes work being done outside Agency-These sources of information can be valuable to the Agency for ongoing inventory of resources-may need to rely on volunteers and other groups to get info and data for management decisions.

Inventory-look at existing parcels for values and look to see what adjacent parcels will enhance those parcels-these adjacent parcels with complementing values should be a high priority for acquisition.

Special and unique areas, as well as wildlife corridors-need a gap analysis of where Vermont is under represented for biological communities-What natural systems are missing, under represented or need restoration-Identify which lands are moving towards old growth forest.

Low elevation lands-how to connect these? They are key but controversial since most are developed.

Teach logging and good forestry by example-demonstrations of low impact forestry is appropriate for State owned lands-give credit to those loggers who do a good job.

Timber section is good-but buying forestland for other values are important-State is surely under represented in old growth forests.

Rail to Trail priorities need to be coordinated with AOT.

Specific comments

Pg. 35-Prioritizing forest resources-watershed protection should be first priority, 2) fragmentation, 3) wildlife, 4) fisheries, 5) recreation, 6) aesthetics. All of these fall under working forests.

Pg. 35-1st sentence of 2nd paragraph-Truncate to wildlife habitat as well as timber production-delete while still providing timber resources-make a forward thinking statement.

Pg. 80-Forest White Paper-timber values and ecological values are not mutually exclusive-use language carefully and get information out that timber harvest can leave behind an ecologically sound forest.

There is no discussion on cost share programs such as WHIP/ Partners for Wildlife, others-include programs that exist to help connectivity.

Given the limited amount of money- easements on forestland should be a lower priority than other types-use education to forest product community as a means to conserve forest values.

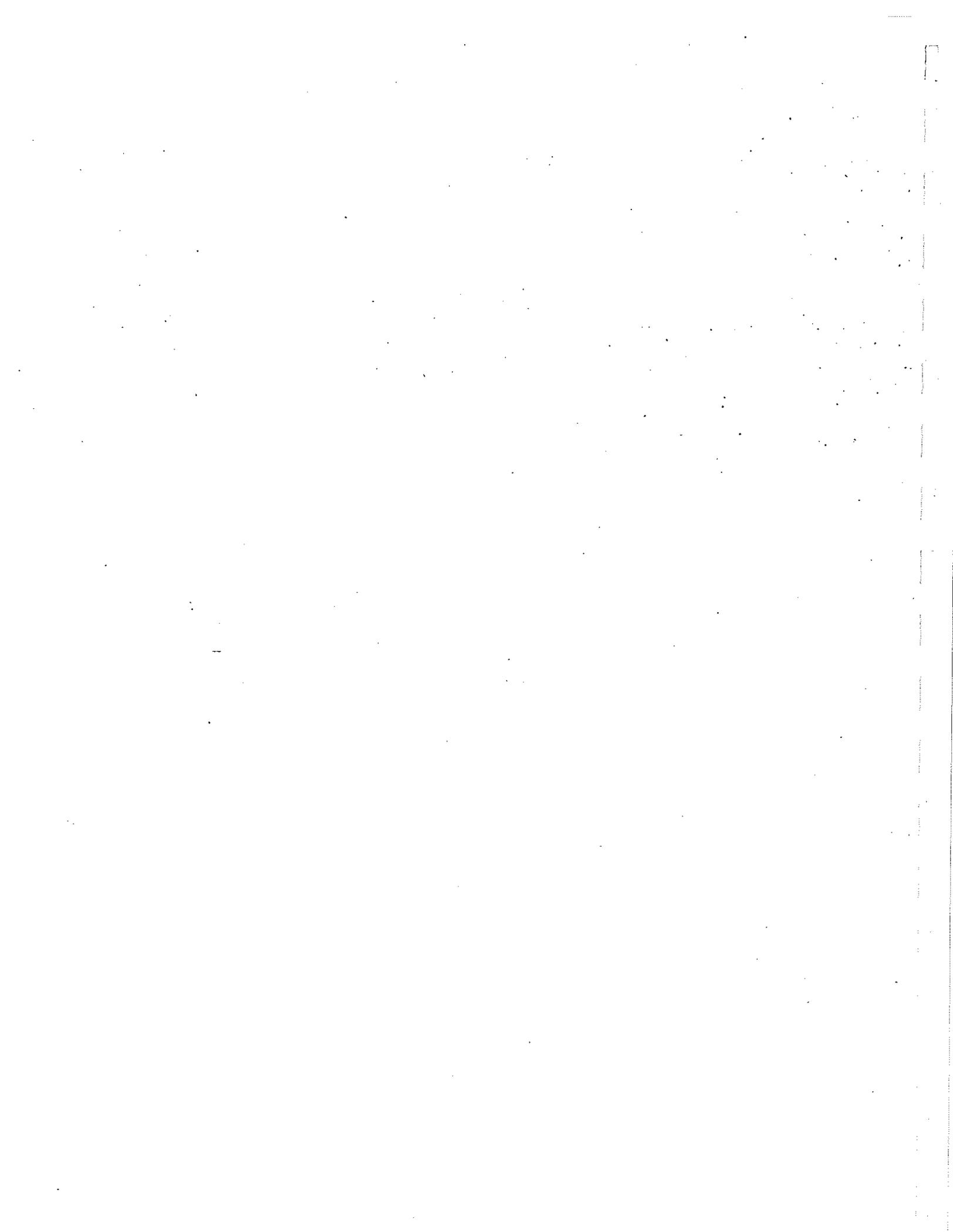
Is there a time frame for public education implementation?

Section on conservation easement does not include standards for working forest-need guarantee that land will not be managed in an unsustainable way.

There is a fundamental disagreement between easements and purchase of development rights-should be made clear that easements have other conditions beyond no building.

Recreation section-developing trails and linkages-Is this intended to be proactive or rather happenstance?

Disposition of State lands-need clear public benefit to sell or swap land.



**CVRPC Lands Conservation Plan PAI Meeting
October 13, 1998**

In attendance:

Dennis Darrah-Middlesex
Peter Comart-Worcester
Ed Blackwell-East Montpelier
Dick Payne-Cabot
George Malchek-Orange
Christopher Walsh-CVRPC
Tom Frazier-Roxbury
Susan Sinclair-CVRPC
Laurie Emery-CVRPC
Anthony Spector-Plainfield

Robert Arkely-Moretown
Steve Hatch-Northfield
Harrison Snapp-Waitsfield
George Flinn-Barre
Ed Larson-Montpelier
Gunner McLain-Waterbury
Carol Davis-Washington
Chris Flinn-City of Barre
Larry Herbert-Williamstown

General Comments

Have meetings been held with groups other than environmental?

Quality of life issues important to this region have been identified-fears that State-wide plan does not necessarily identify those issues important to region-feels State should get regional priorities and take those into consideration when purchase is being considered in that region.

Need to identify areas in Central Vermont that meets local open space needs and the jewels of the region.

Plan should have more on purchasing lands close to population centers-need acquisition in these areas rather than in Northeast Kingdom.

If this plan is approved, how easy will it be to make amendments-such as including Regional proprieties.

Concern that identifying a parcel of statewide significance usually means to support recreation usage from outside of region and state-needs purchases that support local community needs.

Public Lands Acquisition Plan is a better name for this document. Seems like a process or guidelines for acquisition.

Besides what land is owned by the State-What percent of land is regulated?-What mechanisms are there for tax relief is the state is imposing regulations of private land.

Need information on how land is managed and who pays for it.

Should consider selling land useful for timber production and using the proceeds to buy important State jewels.

Specific comments

Page 52-RPC section-should include better coordination on GIS.

Pg. 39-minimum standards-Critical habitat missing-needs a bullet dealing directly with animal habitat.

Pg. 52 4A-would like to see a draft of formal operating agreements with RPC-would like tentative date for entering into such agreements-This section should also include "reading Regional Plan for priorities and consultation with Conservation Commissions.

**Green Mountain Club Lands Conservation Plan PAI Meeting
October 14, 1998**

In attendance:

Susan Shea-Green Mountain Club
Brian Fitzgerald-Moretown
Paul L Kendall-Randolph
Matt Moore-Burlington
John Page-Montpelier
Ben Rose-GMC
Kim Simpson-GMC

General Comments

Good plan-well written.

Need clarity on the name-How is this a plan rather than guidelines?

Plan says it should be proactive but does not layout how it will be proactive. Need to identify what a proactive process is.

Agency can play the roll of taking a Statewide view-and Coordinate with organizations with individual interests in acquisition-Sate should take lead in identifying those areas of statewide importance.

Specific areas of the State are not included.

Is there a section of the plan that distinguishes between vehicular and non- vehicular trails? Plan is silent on motorized trails. This is a management issue but perhaps motorized trails users need a place to go-so to direct them away from other trails.

Rail to trail-makes long-term sense to preserve rail corridors.

Trails and Greenway Council does not have Agency staffing-this limits its effectiveness at meeting federal mandate that helps allow access for federal recreation trail money-plan needs a better appreciation and emphasis of the Trail and Greenways Council.

Specific comments

Recreation priorities should be arranged based on most important priority first.

In criteria section-should not forgo an important conservation purpose just because of a structure or dam-these can be removed.

Support trails section but would like to see more specifics on Long Trail.

Trail section should also include water trails; canoe trails and is expanded to include sites for portages and water-based camping.

There is a shortage of loop trails in the state-we need parcels that help create loop trails-we have major linear trails but few loop trails good for one or more days of hiking.

Resources and values section-aesthetic resources are not as prominent as they could be-this could be listed under trails and greenways section-perhaps refer to Forest Service scenery management system-beyond view sheds, this section should include gorges, rock faces, waterfalls.

Needed Additions to State Parks and Lands-important to emphasize acquisition of outstanding rights on current public lands-such as timber, mineral or others that inhibit management. Need the ability to keep incompatible uses out of lands purchased-such as buffers.

Plan needs better justification for what and why to buy buffer lands-this section needs more specificity as to buffers and interconnects between parcels. If there is a reason to buy public land there is good reason to do it right-look to the future and ensure these lands have adequate buffers to protect them from long term encroachment.

Filling out state parks is important-Lake Willoby, Groton State Forest and trails that take pressure off the Long Trail.

Eminent Domain is a right given to the State in Vermont Constitution-it may need to be used in the future-so the current statement in the plan should note that this is a voluntary avoidance of Eminent Domain-give flexibility in case it is needed in future.

Need more flexibility in the statement regarding purchase over fair-market value-may need flexibility in order to purchase an outstanding resource-leave an out in the statement-some properties are strategically important to state and may be worth more than fair-market value-must be considered case by case.

Pg. 25-96 miles of unprotected private land for Appalachian/Long Trail is incorrect. Only eleven miles on private land left for Long Trail-17 for Appalachian-Don King NPS should have correct numbers. Do not want language that precludes protecting lands along the AT corridor.

Pg. 19-Inventory-ANR jurisdiction only-also need state lands managed by other Agencies, if those lands have conservation value.

Exchange of land-Is acre for acre exchange appropriate, or equal appraised value?-State should get significant public benefits if land is going to be exchanged or sold.

Addison County Regional Planning Commission

Summary of Public Meeting on Draft Land Conservation Plan

October 27, 1998, 7:00 – 9:00 PM

Ilsley Library, Middlebury, VT

Persons Attending: Kevin Behm, Chris Loomis, John Lonew (sp?), Mike Fraysier, James Bressor

Summary of Comments/Discussion:

- P. 39 of draft plan under Minimum Standards for State Ownership: strict and absolute compliance with local plans may unduly tie state's hands in acquiring a property with conservation values.
- Concern over Ecological White paper, which implies-25% - 50% of landscape, must be conserved through some means. This concept should be clarified or deleted from plan.
- Plan should have a clear goal regarding how much land state intends to acquire over the term of the planning document.
- Too many priorities – too much of a laundry list of priorities under which virtually any piece of land could be considered for acquisition.
- Terms like “wildlife corridor” are vague. What do we mean by this term? How large (wide) do these corridors have to be. Some parameters should be spelled out in plan.
- Don't get too carried away with doing public involvement or you will never accomplish anything. Sometimes, professionals need to be able to use their professional judgment to follow through on decisions without trying to build public consensus (an almost impossible task).
- Draft plan's language assumes public acquisition (state land acquisition) is a good thing. Justify or qualify this statement, or drop.
- Draft plan creates a sense of urgency but has not demonstrated that such an urgency or crisis situation exists that warrants state acquisition. Either document the urgency/need for such action or stop implying that there is a crisis situation.
- Conservation easements are ok but should be very general and basic to allow landowner flexibility in forest management activities.
- P. 41, bottom paragraph states that certain land management practices could threaten integrity of parcel. Need to be more specific because as written, nearly any practice could be perceived as threat.
- P. 33, first paragraph, is vague, confusing – what does this mean?
- Plan document should be more readable and priorities should be more focused.

**Rutland County RPC Lands Conservation Plan PAI Meeting
October 28, 1998**

In attendance:

Mark Blutcher-RCRPC
Mary Jeane Packer-Poultney
Sally Greene-Shrewsbury
Phil Stannard Jr.-Fairhaven

General Comments

Good plan-thoughtful document-pretty clear for size of document-but does not really reflect much of ecological group white paper.

Need clarity on the name-How is this a plan rather than guidelines? Should be called Guidelines for Land Acquisition by the Agency of Natural Resources.

Is there a prioritization?-State should have a list of high priority parcels for acquisition-list key resources to acquire.

Priorities should be flexible and revisited regularly

Statewide values are important to look at for each parcel-State should finance purchase of these areas of statewide importance. Focus should be on priorities that given tremendous public good.

Inventory of public lands should be a priority.-Having RPCs help with regional inventories could be a good partnership, so inventory can be refined to a regional level.

Is there a way to state a range or priorities?

Adding citizens to LARC would be a good idea-adhoc citizens and RPC reps statewide that would be brought in to review parcels in their region.

Easement section should be better defined-benefit of easements versus fee simple.

Oversight is oversight rather on an easement or acquisition. Volunteer groups such as high school students or, welfare to work, others. Could do easement monitoring.

Agree State should not purchase land for sake of timber production.

Land exchanges-need to be done very thoughtfully-need a good process before land is exchanged to ensure we do not give away important values for the public.

It may be appropriate to divest some lands to get better.

Holding protective covenants on lands exchanged may be a good idea in public relied on these lands for a benefit.

Need to educate citizens and public officials on the value and benefits of public lands. Upfront public input is a chance to educate people on the cost of development versus conservation.

It is important to consider linkages to land held by other conservation groups.

Concerned about process for acquisition-need more public input upfront. Need to make local people feel listened to in the process.

Disconnect needs to be removed between acquisition and management.

Does plan say anything about leasing public land for commercial use?

Specific comments

Pg. 25-What is a special community-define.

Add an Appendix for page 22-Table 2-should list all state lands over a certain amount of acreage.

Pg. 38-Criteria for acquisition-does not seem to have a component for habitat assessment.

**Two Rivers-Ottawa RPC Lands Conservation Plan PAI Meeting
October 28, 1998**

In attendance:

Peter Gregory-TRORC
Tom Kennedy-Southern Windsor RPC
Jim Condict-South Stanford
Paula Sprague Buzzell-TRORC
Bill Harvey-Rochester
Don Bourdon-TRORC

Charlotte Cleveland-Woodstock
William Emmons-Woodstock
CD Young-Randolph
Lucy Gibson-TRORC
Arnold Castagner-Tunbridge
Frank Reed-Randolph Ctr .

General Comments

Priorities should be flexible-ranking them may not be a good idea-committee should have some flexibility.

Priorities meet those that are in Regional Plan.-It would be good to have inventory of what Regions have and what they need for conservation.

Statement on purchase at or below fair market value is too strong-should have more flexibility this may be needed to get the prime parcels.

Do not completely forgo the use of condemnation it may be needed in the future.

Towns lose tax money with public lands-how can this be rectified?

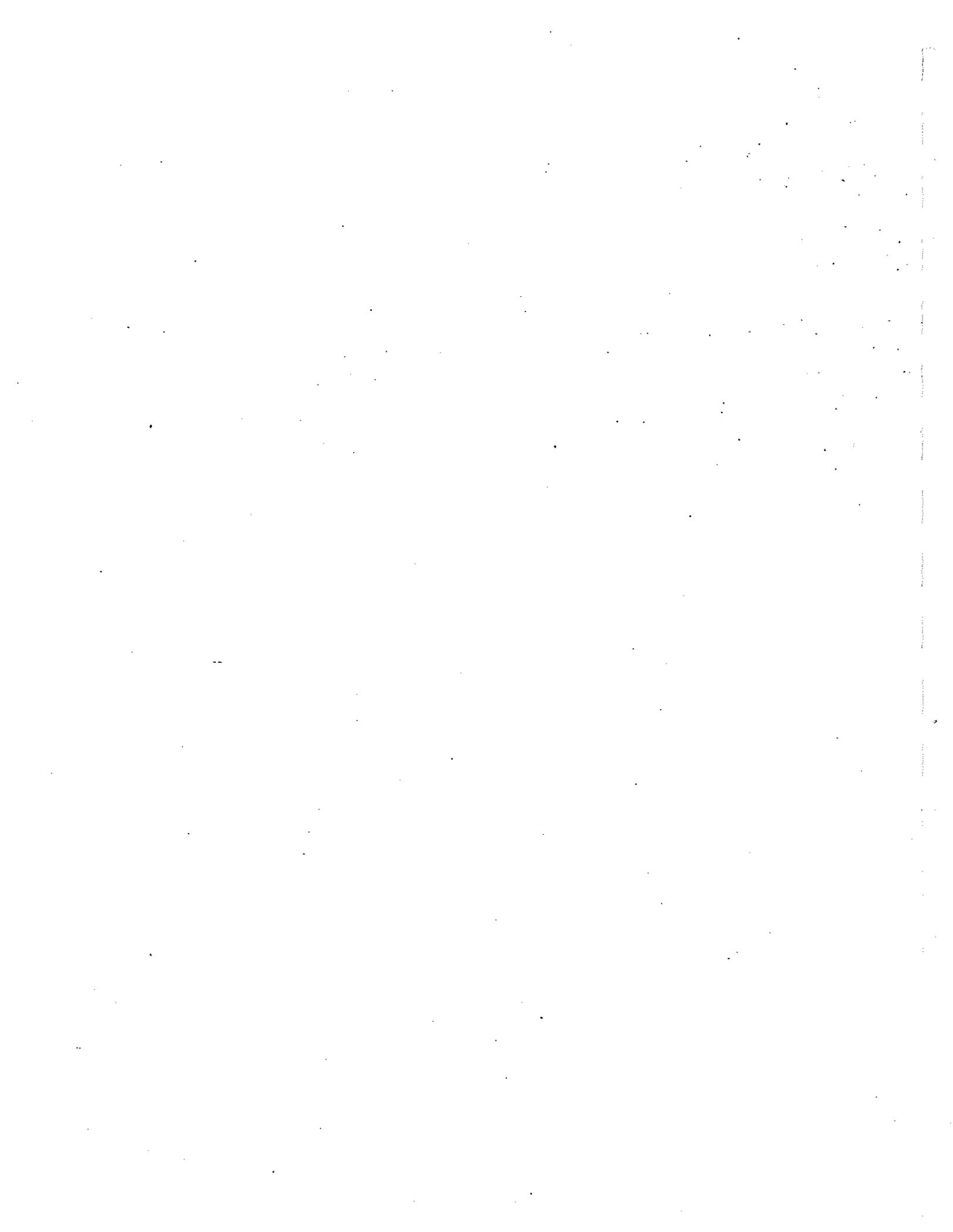
Impacts to towns needed to be lessened if you want their support.

Region should find out how much land in each town is under public ownership so impact of future purchases can be evaluated. A better inventory of public lands and their tax impacts is needed in order to make future decisions.

Recreation often causes more problems with traffic, overuse etc-need to find balance.

Specific comments

Pg. 33-Unique Geologic areas-this section does not recognize those that may not be of state significance but are of regional significance-State should consider regional priorities.



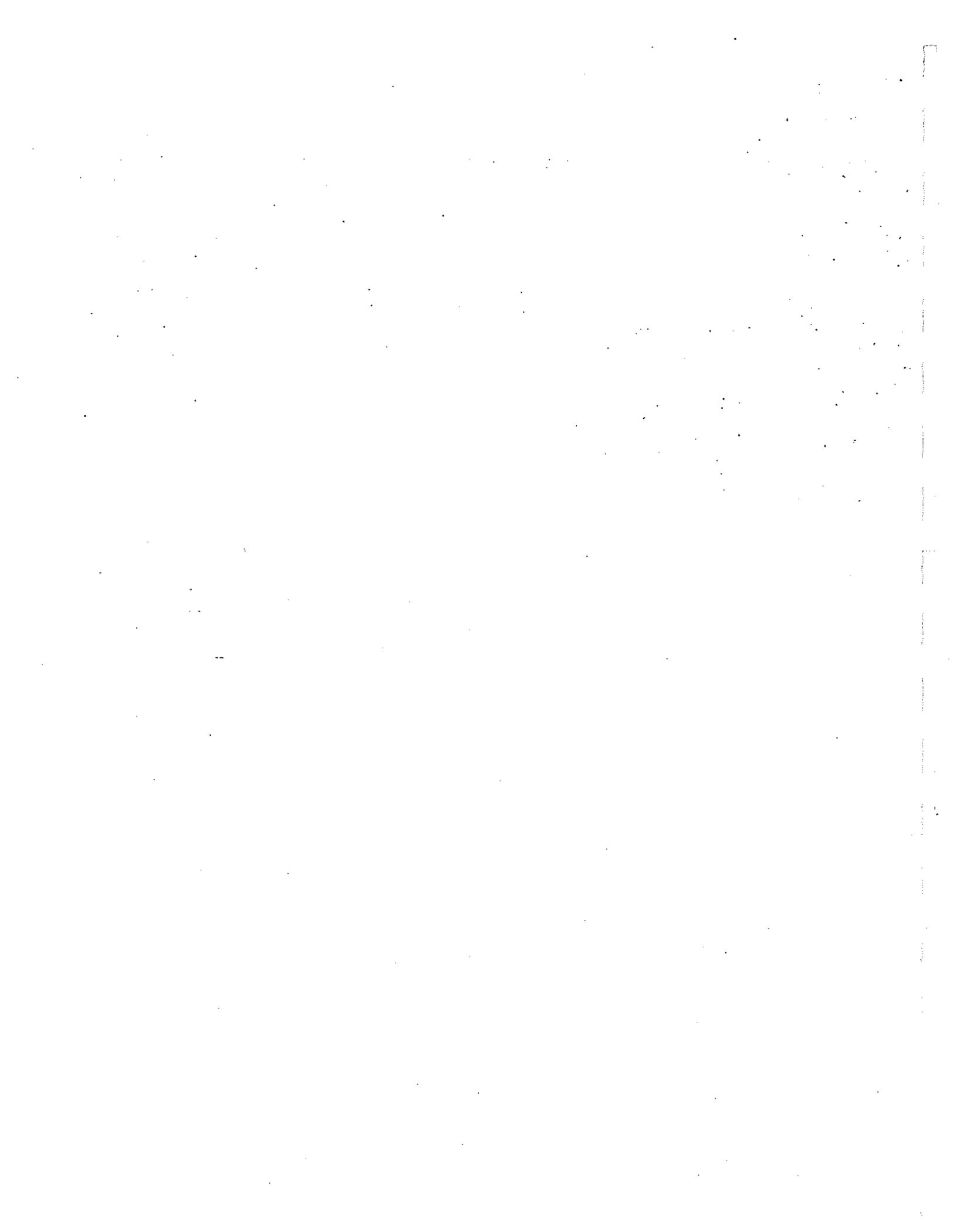
Vermont Forest Products Association
October 28, 1998, 6:30 PM
VT Chamber of Commerce Offices, Berlin VT

Summary of Discussion on Draft Lands Conservation Plan

Persons Attending: Cindy Fuller, Pat Young, Bob Burt, Shawn Poczobut, Joe Gagnon, Robbo Holleran, Alan Plumb, Bill Coross, Roberta Borland, Colleen Goodridge, Walter Malmquist, David Bessette, Ward Malmquist, Bill Sayre, Robin Reed, Dave Willard, Mike Fraysier

Summary of Comments/Discussion:

- There should be an accurate inventory or "catalogue" of all state lands available (not just ANR lands, but AOT, Corrections, State Buildings, etc.). The inventory should identify all these lands, describe where they are, what they are used for, how they are managed, etc. This should be done prior to acquiring additional state properties.
- State lands should pay the same to the town in taxes as if the property were in private ownership.
- The carrying costs associated with lands should be determined prior to new acquisitions. ANR should identify management costs up front and demonstrate that these costs can be met before acquiring additional properties.
- Language in draft plan is much too vague – could reasonable interpret the language to mean that virtually any piece of land might be considered a priority for state acquisition. Language needs to be much more focused with a stronger emphasis on only acquiring those few "special" areas that are clearly outstanding.
- Random telephone survey was biased and should not be used as basis for developing plan.
- Communities need to be more directly and openly involved in future ANR land conservation activities. Don't continue to conduct these activities behind closed doors without actively involving towns.
- ANR should provide towns with full and accurate information regarding the tax – related impacts of proposed land acquisitions.
- Don't own or acquire any new property that cannot be managed responsibly.
- Plan needs to devote more attention/emphasis on identifying and disposing of surplus ANR lands.
- VFPA wants to be more actively involved in this and other related planning efforts such as the long-range management planning process. Ambiguity and lack of involvement or awareness of these efforts leads to a lack of trust.
- Concern over language in Ecological White Paper regarding "25% - 50% of landscape needs to be managed with native landscape and natural communities in mind" (p.75 of draft plan). What does this mean? Where do these figures come from? Does this imply that 25% –50 % of landscape should be owned or conserved by public agencies and non-profit organizations?



**Associated Industries of Vermont Land Conservation Plan PAI Meeting
October 29, 1998**

In attendance:

Kerrick Johnson-AIV

Bill Sawyer-AIV

Sean McKean-Northeast Regional Forest
Foundation

Frank Stanley-AGVT

John Danielski-Rutland Plywood

Bill Samal-Belvidere

Bruce Shields-VT Farm Bureau

William Emmons-Woodstock

Denny Allyn-Stanley Tools

General Comments

Still need inventory of State lands-State should show intentions for management.

We are being asked to move the process along without having fundamental questions answered-Inventory must be paramount.

Does 15.5% of protected land include land in current use. Land in use value are protected to a degree-need more in plan of conservation done on private lands. Besides use value this include lands over 2500' and land controlled by Act 250.

Conservation easement are just as hostile and adverse due to restrictions and the language is always being reinterpreted.

Need to address the costs of acquisition in the plan-long term economic costs are not addressed. What are costs and benefits for citizens of the state? Purchasing more land builds long term overhead for management-long term management costs must be addressed in plan.

There is a perception by recreation community that state recreation is free.

No where in plan is there a reference to the wilderness benefits of Adirondak Park-if political boundaries are meaningless than 2.1 million acres of wilderness adjacent to VT should not be ignored.

Specific comments

Pg. 7-Private property rights-as stated further in the plan should be moved into fundamental assumptions.

Pg. 20/21-include lands under use value-show private contributions to conservation.

Pg. 25-Table 3-Take out unprotected private lands.

In easement section-show drawbacks and concerns with easements.

Add-Barriers to private land conservation/ownership-property tax issues, capital gains.

Forest Resources-Add importance of forest products to the economy from FRAC Report.

Term rural culture should also include value of private ownership and pride of ownership.

Pg. 32 Trails and Greenways-it should be made clear that working forests/farms are not incompatible with trails.

Provide for sustainable recreation opportunities-plan should note that recreation also has negative impacts.

Term eco-reserve in confusing should be omitted. Plan should at a minimum state that not enough is known about this and the need-don't we already have Eco-reserves in VT and the Adirondaks (this huge park is not even mentioned) if ecological communities know no political boundaries than so should use of public land by people.

Fragmentation-term is undefined-we would agree to it being defined as long term permanent fragmentation-such as building houses but not forest roads.

Page 34-1st paragraph" fragmentation eats away at VT ecological resources" There is no documentation of how much land is being lost in Vermont due to fragmentation (development) how much has been converted? Is it really the big threat it is stated to be? What is the ratio between amount of land purchased for preservation and that being developed? Need an accurate document based on fact-qualify statements that can not be factually documented.

If white papers are not intended to be part of plan-take them out and put in separate unconnected appendices.

Terms-Ecological integrity; biological integrity and biodiversity, lack scientific credibility. Do not use term unless defined or commonly accepted.

Pg. 34-paragraph 3 & 4-Remove ecological reserve reference-term is not defined or well accepted-this paragraph references the White Paper thus making this part of the plan.

If eco-reserves are left it must identify areas of controversy and conflict where it exists.

Pg. 35-2nd to last line-Replace timber extraction with harvest (do same throughout) extraction is a negative term.

**Bennington County RPC Lands Conservation Plan PAI Meeting
October 30, 1998**

In attendance:

Mike -add list I faxed please

Also see attached written comments from RPC

General Comments

Conservation easements entered into should require best management practices.

Need better definition of terms throughout plan-should be defined in text when term is used and in glossary.

Need to add-Watershed protection-plan is silent on this.

ORVs are not mentioned in plan-they need a place to go to help alleviate conflicts.

Act 200-prevention of sprawl" should be added as criteria for acquisition.

Reference to rail trails may be a problem in near future as we try to revitalize rail travel in the State.

Plan has no mention of recreation hunting or other more traditional recreation.

Camping is important to the State and seems to get lost in plan.

There is need for a Technical Team from the Agency to help communities with conservation easements and other issues-need a contact for communities that can clear information.

Specific comments

Fair market only purchase statement is too strong-need to soften it to give flexibility when needed for very important parcels.

In Executive Summary-should add parcels along rivers and streams in rural and urban areas-plan does not give enough attention to developing areas near population centers.

Trails and Greenways- need parcels that link major trails and existing urban trails to trails in urban populated areas.

Interstate trails are not emphasized-such as Teutonic Crest Trail.

#2 Ridge lines/Mt tops-also should include access to the high country-in the Dorsett area about 1/2 the access to high country has been lost.

Historic and cultural sites are missing from plan.

Exec Summary-could use a bullet that includes restoration of 1&2. Under ecological resources.

Pg. 14-Green Mt Club is mentioned for trail maintenance but not US Forest Service who does the bulk in the Southern Part of State-need to add Forest service and there role in conservation.

VAST should also be included as a player for trails in Vermont.

Pg. 16-should be reference to open space for active recreation in towns-recognize significance of providing recreation in populated areas.

Table on page 21-other local category should include those such as Mt Anthony Preservation Trust, MERCK others-RPC could generate data for this region.

Pg. 32.-need reference to revitalizing impaired waters-we should not write these off-restoration is possible.

Pg. 33.-Eco-reserve-"There are many opportunities to restore and ecological landscape"-the slant in this section is somewhat pop ecology and overactive-setting a stage that VT is crisis-which it is not set a more positive tone.

Pg. 36-There is not a good connection between values and priorities stated on page 32.

Pg. 38-Chart should become an appendix.

Pg. 38-Need municipal input and public input earlier in chart-when application comes up for a region there should be the municipality and rep from RPC brought in to review possible purchase.

Pg. 44-Step four should be Step 5-step 5 should be step 6.

Pg. 57-Define Urban forestry.

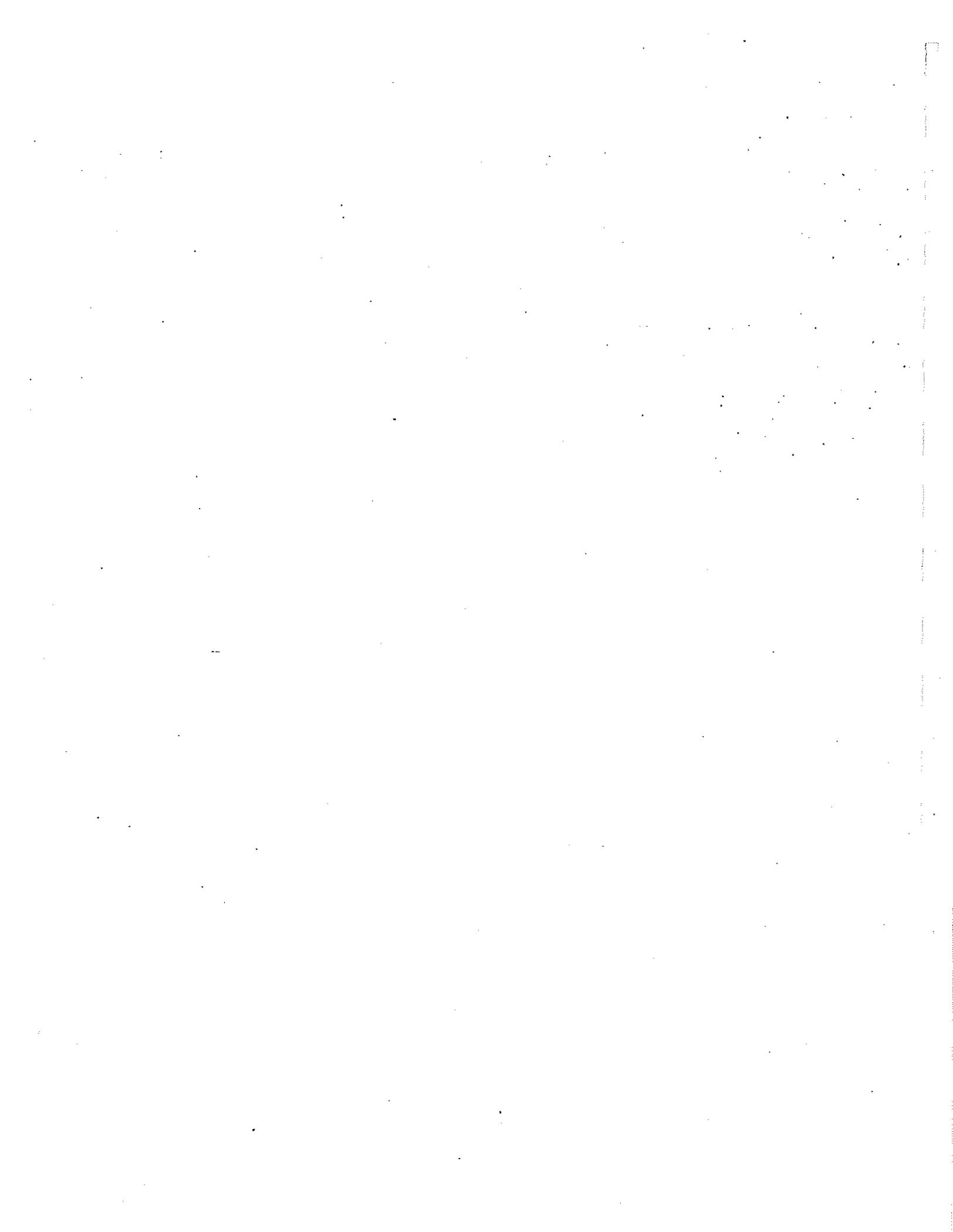
Expand glossary based on the many undefined terms in plan. Have someone without a natural resource background read the plan to identify terms that should be better defined.

Working Session to Review the
VT. ANR "Draft Lands Conservation Plan"

1:30-3:30 PM
Friday, October 30, 1998
West Mountain Inn - Arlington, VT.

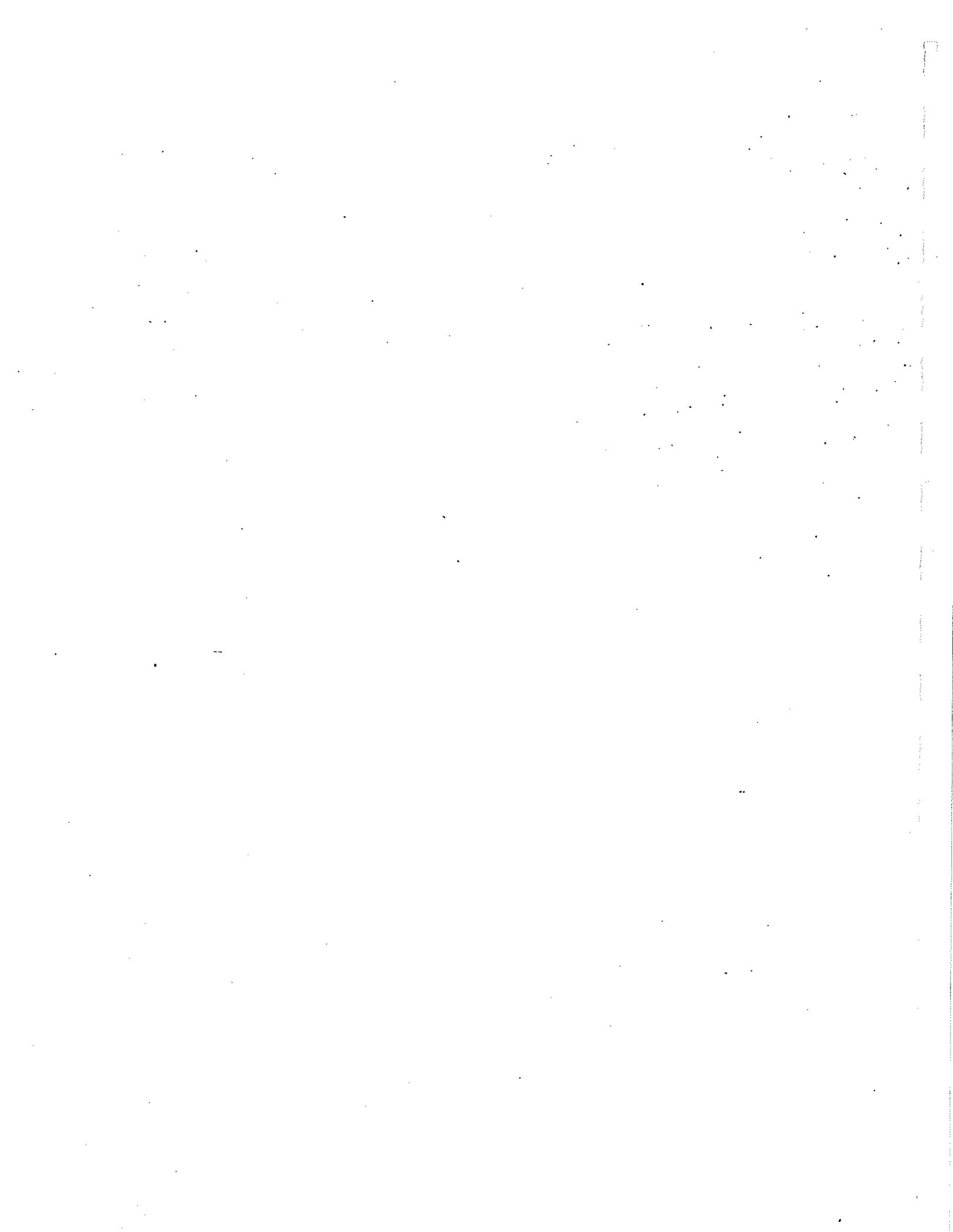
PARTICIPANTS

✓ David Boyer	Consultant, Vt. Agency of Natural Resources
✓ Gregory Burke	Executive Director, BCRC
✓ Suzanne dePeyster	BCRC Commissioner - Sandgate
✓ Thomas Foster	Mt. Anthony Preservation Society
Mike Frayzier	Vt. Agency of Natural Resources
Ann Gatling	Mt. Anthony Preservation Society
✓ Arthur Gilbert	Dorset Conservation Commission
✓ Robert Hartwell	BCRC Commissioner - Dorset
Lee Krohn	Manchester Planning Director
✓ Richard Lacy	BCRC Commissioner - Arlington
David Mance	Shaftsbury Planning Commission, Forester
✓ Robert McWaters	BCRC Commissioner - North Bennington
✓ Philip Pugliese	BCRC Commissioner - Arlington
✓ Julian Sheres	BCRC Commissioner - Sandgate
✓ Ed Toth	Sunderland Planning Commission, Forester
✓ James White	Bennington County Forester



Appendix B

Summary of Comments from Listening Session



Draft Lands Conservation Plan

PUBLIC LISTENING SESSION

Vermont Interactive T.V.

September 25, 1998

Summary of Comments

Nearly 40 individuals spoke and offered comments on the draft Lands Conservation Plan at the public listening session. Most individuals speaking were highly critical of the draft plan. A tape of the entire listening session is on file at the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation in Waterbury. The following is a brief summary of comments from the listening session:

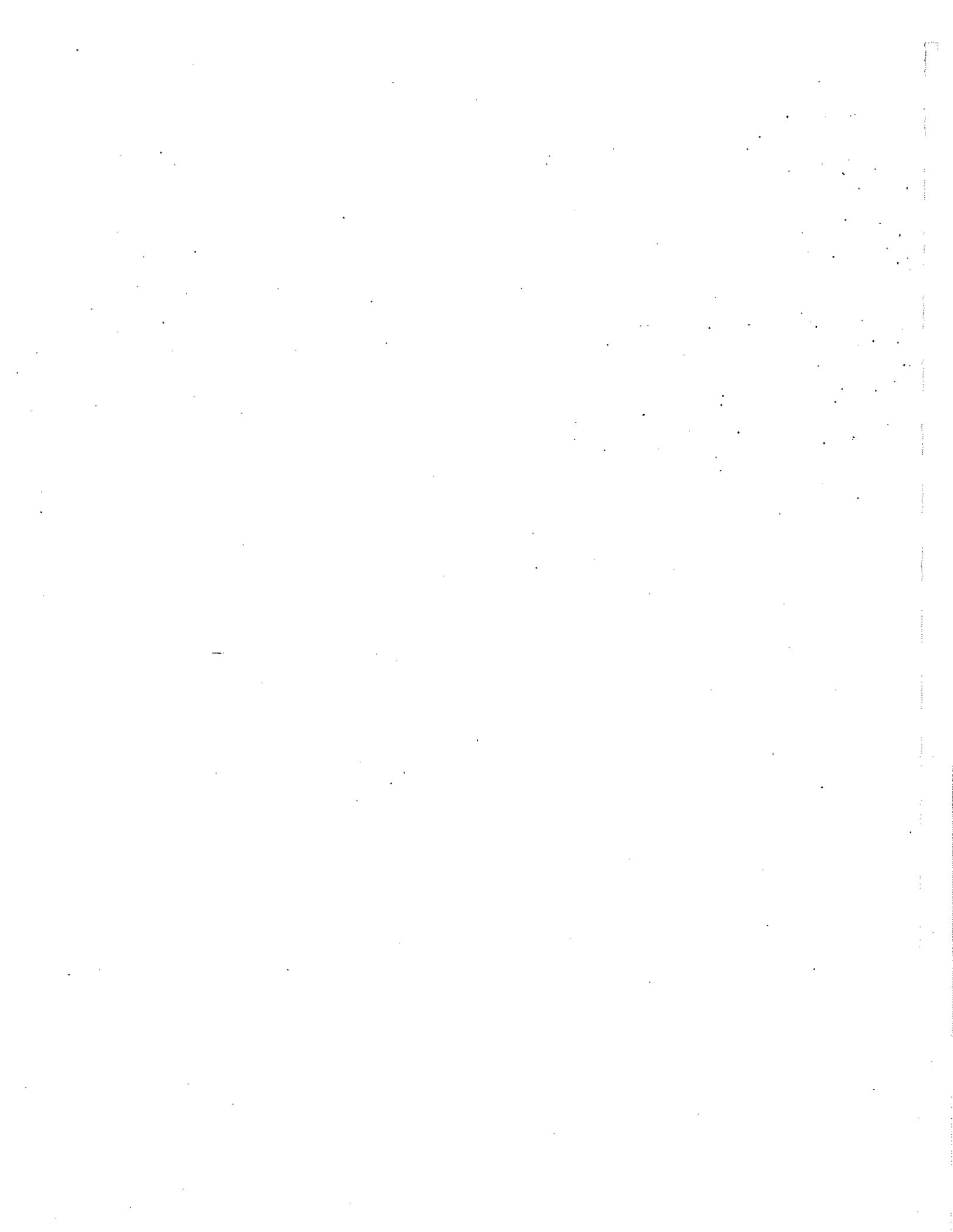
- Several people said the draft plan relies too heavily on the results of the Lands Conservation Plan phone survey which they felt was biased.
- A number of people (many from the forest products industry) felt the plan was too vague and needed clearer definitions. Definitions should be consistent between the Forests Resources Plan and Lands Conservation Plan.
- Concern was expressed over the amount of land to be acquired by the state, the state's inability to manage additional lands, and the state's purchase of restrictive conservation easements.
- The VT Forests Products Association expressed concern over the makeup of the Steering Committee (too many environmental interests, not enough forestry interests). They also advocated for "no net loss of private lands" in VT and shared the concern regarding the phone survey and vague language in the draft plan. VFPA also stressed the need for better inventory of state lands and urged the state to more carefully consider the on-going cost of land management in considering new purchases.
- A couple people were concerned about the local tax consequences of state land acquisition and felt the draft plan should address this issue.
- Many people criticized the draft plan for a failure to adequately acknowledge the important role private landowners play in conserving natural resources and felt more attention should be given to education and working with private landowners to achieve conservation goals.
- Several people were concerned that state acquisition takes productive forestland out of production.
- Some felt state land acquisition should be limited to only those lands that contain some especially unique or outstanding resource.
- VT Farm Bureau felt that the plan should include an additional "fundamental assumption" that clearly says the state is not out to acquire vast tracts of land. They

were also concerned about acquisition of "buffers" around state parks and felt this action, if not qualified, could be interpreted to provide for nearly unlimited acquisition.

- Many pointed out the draft plan is an "acquisition" plan and not a "conservation" plan.
- Several felt the draft plan poses a threat to private property rights and that this concept deserved more attention in the plan. Some felt the plan conflicts with VT's private landowner ethic.
- Some felt state lands should be more actively managed for timber production and that the state should dispose of lands instead of acquiring additional lands.
- Some said that the state should not acquire heavily cut-over lands.
- AIV said the plan is too vague and needs to be more precise so that it clearly focuses future state purchases. Terms like "buffers", "lands that enhance integrity", and others need to be more clearly defined. AIV also expressed concern over ecoreserves, felt the plan needs to provide more than "lip service" to the role of private landowners, were concerned over the increasing use of restrictive forest easements, felt long-term management costs need to be addressed better in the plan, and felt the plan should address how much state land is enough.
- Some felt that the state could do more to ensure that private property owners do not become "willing sellers" to the state.
- Sierra Club representative felt public lands provide important resource values that shouldn't be expected of private property owners and that lands should be prioritized according to unique ecological resources.
- Several expressed a general mistrust of state government.
- Some said the state should dispose of land it cannot manage and should only purchase land that has "overwhelming" public purposes.
- Concern was expressed by some over the contents of the "Ecological White Paper".
- One individual said the draft plan assumes private lands won't be conserved, that the state can conserve lands better than private owners, and that development is always bad. Conservation, protection, and state ownership are not synonymous terms.
- One person complimented the draft plan's organization but felt there needs to be more coordination with other conservation groups to determine how much lands needs to be conserved.
- Several felt the state should conduct a thorough inventory of its lands before identifying new acquisition priorities. State should focus new acquisitions on

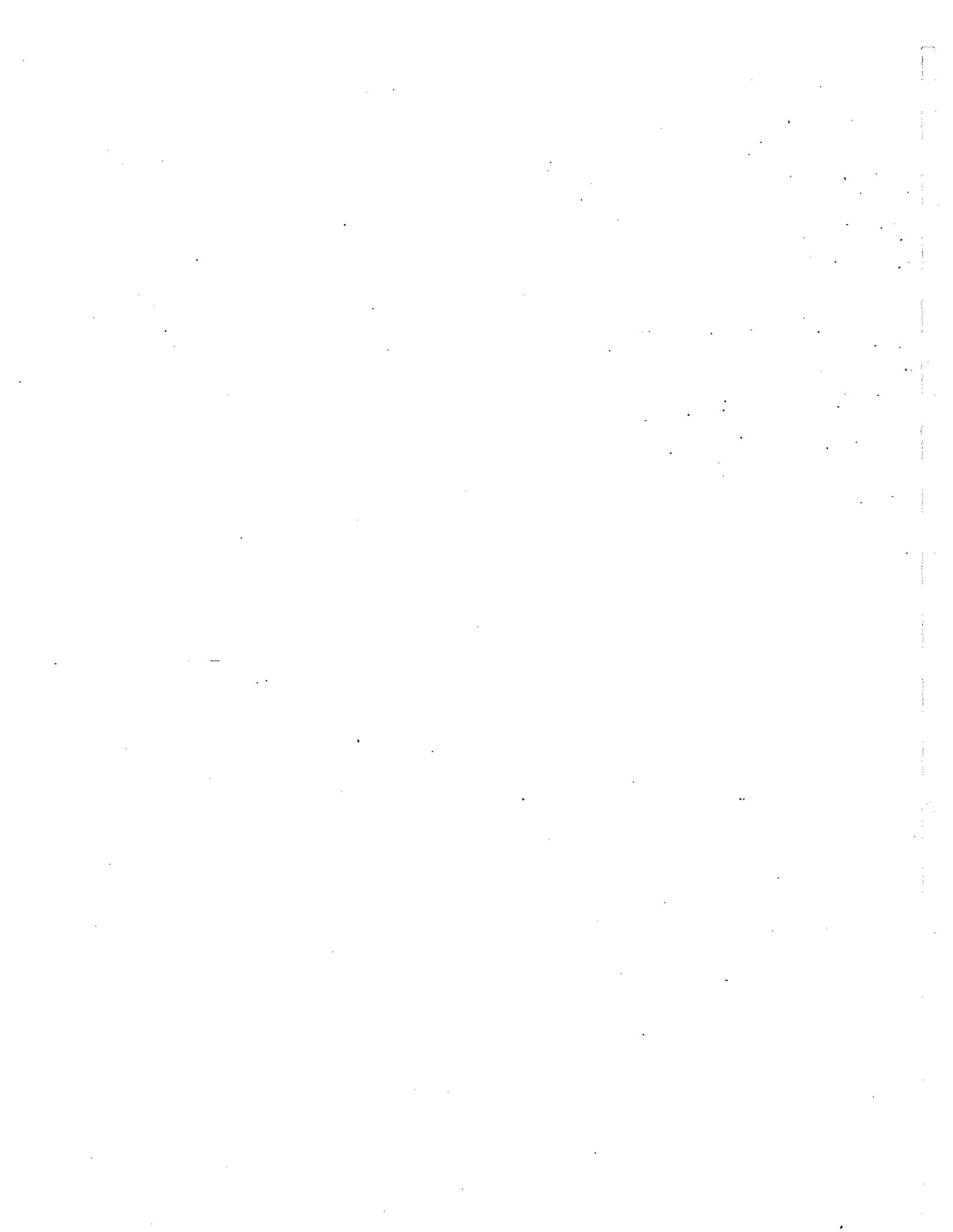
recreation lands and lands with special/unique resource values but should not buy more forestland.

- At least one person complained that the Friday night listening session was a poor time to conduct a public meeting.
- One person felt the draft plan potentially conflicts with rural economic development goals.
- One person was concerned that many towns hurt by Act 60 may be targeted for state land acquisition.
- A couple people felt state land acquisition was unconstitutional.
- The draft plan should mention the important role existing public ownership in the region can play in providing ecoreserves.
- Some felt the draft plan poses a threat to VT's rural working landscape.
- One person expressed concern over the potential for unfair competition between state parks and private parks.
- One person stated that the draft plan fails to make a case for state land acquisition and felt that there is no justification for additional state land purchases.



Appendix C

Public Comment Summary (Matrix)



CATEGORY	NAME	CITY	SPECIFIC COMMENT
Full Support	Pelton	Perkinsville	Please continue efforts
	Schneider	Bristol	
	Joslin	Jericho	Support plan as written
	Towns	Springfield	Excellent, forward-looking plan
	Wagner	Arlington	
	Vrana	Burlington	Draft sounds good
	Lindsay	St. Johnsbury	
	Hill	Bennington	
	Robbins	Manchester	Support land acquisition
	Brill	Poultney	Continued investment in public lands important to VT's green infrastructure
	Gibson	Woodstock	We need more public lands to protect wildlife & beauty of VT
	Westinghouse	East Burke	Believe in public access & acquisition of lands
	Walsh	Weathersfield	Proposes what we should have been doing all along
	Warren	Rutland	Commend your thoroughness
	DesMeules	N. Pomfret	Support concept of public ownership
	Shedd	East Calais	Establishes intelligent & reasonable principles
	Wood	Underhill	
	Merrick	Craftsbury	Support State acquisition of more land
	Erickson	Huntington	
	Whittaker	Brunswick	Encourage Plan adoption as state policy
	Walsh	Springfield	Land conservation should be a priority
	Ellis	Weathersfield	Excellent document establishing a rational system for deciding what land to invest in
	MacGillwray		Public lands are vital for future as well as present generations
	Smith	Middlesex	Essential piece for continuing VT's heritage of protecting natural & wild landscapes
	St. John	Waterbury	Well thought out, well developed, & appropriate for future of VT
	Shepard	Woodstock	Seemed well thought out
	Hoover	Middlebury	Plan looks good, make sure it is implemented
	Cheney	Montpelier	it is cheering that ANR has drafted a strong plan for acquisition & conservation
	Rothman	Danville	
	Handy	Huntington	
	Dimitruck	Northwest RPC	Plan very compatible with our draft regional plan
	Brodhead	Craftsbury	
	Coulter	Weybridge	Continue to think big & go for it

CATEGORY	NAME	CITY	SPECIFIC COMMENT
Full Support	Chapman	Burlington	Hope good planning & common sense protection will prevail
	Pelton	Perkinsville	Thank you for your efforts
	Mackenzie	Weathersfield	Public land acquisition very important
	Sloan	Worcester	Establishes rational system for deciding types of land to invest in
	Gilbert	Dorset	Favor plan as drawn
	Shipley	Ripton	
	MackKillap	Shoreham	
	Elton	Springfield	
	Smith	Wolcott	
	King	Ripton	I believe you have an excellent plan
	Unknown		Applaud ANR's foresight in preparing Plan
	Savlov	N. Bennington	Clearly allows for interests pertaining to a broad spectrum of public good
	Lane	S. Royalton	
	Willis	Wells	Important to acquire & preserve as much as possible
	Yates	Proctor	Applaud Plan & system for investing in additional public lands
	Gray/O'Neil	Shelburne	Plan is an investment we cannot afford not to make
	Lee	S. Royalton	Please adopt plan with as few changes as possible
	Young	Moretown	We need an aggressive, bold vision for future & Plan establishes a good foundation
	Gearly	Arlington	
	Alper	Hardwick	Support plan because it makes sense
	Chapman	Winooski	A thoughtful plan is necessary to have a reasonable system for making decision about lands
	Hoffman	Montpelier	Guidelines set forth in plan will provide VT with direction needed to move ahead with purchases
	Low	Richmond	
	Dee		
	Wetmore	Brandon	Plan important because it keeps both economic & environmental interests at heart
	Kowlaczyk	Middlebury	Need a tool in place to determine types of lands to be acquired
	Fellows	Williston	Important time now to create public land acquisition goals
	Gail	Morristown	Urge you to go forward with plan intact, as written
	DesRoches	S. Ryegate	
	Keillogg	Stowe	Vote to buy more land for public use
	Wood	Underhill	State should own more land near Moss Glenn/Brownsville
	Upper Valley Land Trust	Hanover NH	On the whole very clear, thorough, realistic.
	Nuquist	Montpelier	Overall very good, long overdue in VT
Ewerts	Huntington	Be firm, adopt & implement the Plan	

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CATEGORY	NAME	CITY	SPECIFIC COMMENT
Full Support	Peabody	St. Johnsbury	Guiding document for conservation & acquisition
	Straus		
	Walker	Groton	
	Noble	Lunenburg	
	Esser	Richmond	
	Curtis	Woodstock	
	Norman	Burlington	
	Miller	Burlington	
	Lawson	UVM/Burlington	
	Hadley	White River	
	McDermet		
	Coello	Barre	
	Wood	Weathersfield	
	Peterson	Panton	
	Davis	N. Bennington	
	?	Brattleboro	
	Barton	E. Brookfield	
	Henry	St. Johnsbury	
	Davis	N. Bennington	

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CATEGORY	NAME	CITY	SPECIFIC COMMENT
Trails and Greenways	Kevin	VAST	Specifically mention VAST trails as state land conservation priorities
	Sands	Burlington	Strongly support Long and Catamount trail protection
	Fitzgerald	DEC	Appalachian Trail corridor lands, referenced on pg. 12 & in table 21, are listed under National Park Service; suggest listing AT corridor lands in with GMNF, thus reducing NPS acreage
	Leadbetter	Cambridge	Should be more plans for mountain bike trails with access
	Syz/Cueto	Water Quality	No mention of portages in trails & greenways section
	Goodhue	Stowe	Add Lake Champlain Coastal Trail to list of trails & greenways
	Gall	Morristown	Agree that Catamount, Long, & Champlain trails should be protected along with loop trails
	Beverly	Stamford	Trails & Greenways provisions in Plan especially important, should be hunting restrictions along trails & greenways
	Virginia Farley	VLT	Need more nonmotorized winter trails for skiing, snowshoeing on state lands without having to encounter snowmobiles.
	Hill	Bennington	Hiking trails most important priority.
	Jenner	Elvira NY	Trails & Greenways most important priorities
	Unknown		Wildlife corridors&large tracts of undisturbed forest should be considered desirable greenway
	Smith	Middlesex	Work diligently to protect portions of Long Trail not currently protected.
	Ewerts	Huntington	Flat land trails for hiking, skiing, possibly also biking.
Sessions	Cornwall	Augment existing holdings in mtn trails & greenways as much as possible.	
Botzjorns	Green Mtn Club	Protection of Long Trail & associated lands should continue to be to priority.	
VNRC	Montpelier	Rail to trail, urge ANR to work closely with AOT to avoid future conflict between rail-to-trails program & revitalization of VT's rail system.	
Water Rec Values	Virginia Farley	VLT	Support efforts to provide nonmotorized boating, more are needed on large lakes & ponds
	Sessions	Cornwall	Feel that jet skis should be banned in VT
	Quinlan	Bairre	More access to public waters for nonmotorized boating.
	Babbott	Burlington	Prohibit commercial use of public water without fair market compensation & mitigation for environmental impact
	Desautels	Sharon	Strong opposition to loud, disruptive noise of cigarette boats & personal water craft, they should be banned
	Boyce	St. Johnsbury	Especially interested in protecting waterways
	Eisenhart	Arlington	Might reprioritize items under "Water Recreation" & put swimming access last of the five.
	Gall	Morristown	Interested in creating public-owned buffer on Passumpsic River, plan enhances efforts Waterways top priority
			Priorities to include access to Lake Champlain & CT River, protect against motorized boating

CATEGORY	NAME	CITY	SPECIFIC COMMENT
Recreation Values	Stiles	Bennington CCD	In IA1, add "Batten Kill River" with Champlain & CT River In IA2, add "Batten Kill River" In B5, add "Batten Kill canoe trail"
	Unknown King	Ripton	Value of land for education alone should be a recognized value
	Shea/Catamount Trail Assoc.	Trail Assoc.	More emphasis should be put on recreation values Happy with consistency of recreation goals, support emphasis on rec. goals.
State Parks	Farley	VLT	Provide more primitive canoe-camping, primitive tent camping opportunities. Also suggest more primitive cabins in parks with excellent skiing & snowshoeing opportunities Establish "peace" parks (quiet parks) where maintaining a peaceful environment is the goal Outline discusses needed additions to State Parks but does not mention new parks. Parcels dedicated exclusively to public shooting ranges
	Quinlan	Barre	More handicap access to parks, particularly Camels Hump & Mt. Mansfield
	Schneider Elliott	Bristol East Burke	Regulate vehicular traffic in parks & emphasize quiet use, without ATVs, snowmobiles, jet skis, and other watercraft
	Fitzgerald	Burlington	Expand all parks & limit the amount of resource extraction within their boundaries. Parks should be expanded.
	Frank	S. Burlington	Have omitted as a priority the conduct of a study to ascertain what new state parks, if any, should be established.
	Shambough	Montpelier	Agree with goal of acquiring land around state parks & wildlife management areas.
Format	Henzel	F&W	List principal recommendation headings alphabetically.
	Dupont/Lewis Weber	Creek Assoc. Plainfield	"" "" (unless they are currently listed in priority, if so, that should be stated) Tone of plan should be more positive & less plodding. Reorder rept so conservation priorities and implementing strategy come first; leave context, assumptions; & inventory to bring up the rear. Give final plan to good copy editor skilled in writing so final product is inviting to read
	Smith	Middlebury	Have an intro paragraph to set a tone for any policy statement
	Stiles	Middlebury	Numbering on exec summary should be IV A, B, C, not IV 1, 2, 3.
	Darling	F&W	Table 7 - should conservation percentage be similar to their availability?

CATEGORY	NAME	CITY	SPECIFIC COMMENT
Format	Krohn	Manchester	Thanks for including white papers-helpful & informative. Pg 97, #8 "... efficient ANR process..." is valuable for all ANR activities, let's put up front, not bury in the back.
	Rasch	Adamant	Table 5 pg 26-Revise to be consistent with new federal law passed enhancing tax advantages to estates donating conservation easements on land within 25 miles of metro areas.
	Shambaugh	Montpelier	Glossary includes term "old growth" but the work is not in text or ecology white paper??
	Condaxis	E. Calais	Change name to Land Acquisition Plan
	Berkey	Randolph	"" "" ""
	Borland	Greensboro	"" "" ""
	Plumb	Plumb Lumber	Draft language too vague
	Peckham	Stamford	"" "" ""
	VNRC	Montpelier	Diagram, pg 38 should be changed from "consistency" with local/regional... to "conformance" Pg 43, change A. Local and Regional Reaction to Local and Regional Concerns.
			Pg 45, Relationship with Communities, change word "improve" to "nurture" or "cultivate"
			Pg 46, Land Conservation & Economy, change tone, sounds too apologetic.
			Pg 52, Table Summary of Related Actions, should be more positive. Change wording.
	Shields	Morristown	Change "conservation" to "acquisition". Pg 35 part III paragraph 3 should be move to head of list as a fundamental assumption.
	VNRC PAI Mtg	Comments	Get to meat of plan sooner, too much upfront info, move priorities forward. Put vision up front. Need good copy editor, it is too wordy & needs tightening, better word choice, make it simpler to read.

CATEGORY	NAME	CITY	SPECIFIC COMMENT
Priorities	Darling	F&W	Plan ignores loss of species/systems. On pg. 33, D, question caves & cliffs - are we to provide spelunking & rock climbing? May conflict with ecological resources. Pg. 39 - "Minimum Standards..."; where would deer yards & wildlife habitat come in, as ecological values? These should be prioritized.
	Wood	Underhill	Consider growing hemp in the plan to preserve forest lands.
	Gall	Morristown	Excellent job setting priorities
	Nuquist	Montpelier	Make no significant changes to priorities, goals, or policies.
	Conte/Stevens	Barnard	Keep as is, protect habitat, purchase land for recreation & forest management, & enlarge existing public holdings
	Quinlan	Barre	Plan is biased towards select user groups & does not address significant populations of hunters, trappers, & fishermen
	Blodget	F&W	Disappointed, though not entirely surprised, at priorities outlined. List is similar to list we have now; currently, we aren't sure how to prioritize lands we are given. Would prefer to place acquisition priority on parcels of higher ecological value (ie section II parcels).
	MJM	Burlington	Priorities are balanced and fair, very comprehensive & inclusive
	Phillips	Bellows Falls	Like to see land between N & S sections of GMNF conserved. Also region in NE VT between White & Green Mtns and southern end of Lake Champlain between NY border & GMNF
	Anderson	F&W	Why is preserving land for hunting not included? Section IA1 should include streambank ownership on all streams that receive high fishing pressure. Include wetlands, particularly those adjacent to ones already managed.
	Syz/Cueto	WQ	Put emphasis on waterfalls & gorges degraded now that will have social value once hydro licenses are renewed & flows restored. Waterfalls & gorges may support natural communities that have value for biodiversity or education. Dam ownership should be reconsidered since it may be high priority for State to acquire a dam where fish passage, boating, or other aspects of public interest would be furthered by removal.
	Brosnan	Weybridge	Add language to consider impact on entire ecosystems; need an inventory of all species, not just endangered or threatened; and we need to monitor biological health of these areas. Don't prioritize land only because of rare or endangered species.
	Lyon	Worcester	Top priority to provide environments for VT's unique species (plant & animal) & focus on cleanup and preservation of existing environments rather than focusing on human rights/access conservation. Plan should include as priority old forest land, which should be purchased and preserved for future generations.
	Wagner	Arlington	Add farmland/working farms to list of priorities.
	Murray	AOT	""
	Budell	Colchester	""
	Northwest RPC	St. Albans	""

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CATEGORY	NAME	CITY	SPECIFIC COMMENT
Priorities	Hill	Bennington	Give some priority to "dangerous swimming holes"
	Neilson	Dorset	Priorities in Plan very important. Land should be open for walkers to roam free
	Cawood	Salisbury	Forest land & trails should be high priority
	Unknown		List very comprehensive. Maybe add wetlands & bogs. Important to protect unique areas as they become available without state owning too much of VT's land.
	Brill	Poultney	Priority should be to acquire a major portion of Champion lands in NE Kingdom
	Erickson	Huntington	Support concept of land acquisition & the priorities outlined in Plan. More land should be added to Camels Hump
	Coleman	Springfield	Need more bike paths (and/or mountain bike trails)
	Unknown		"" ""
	Unknown		Appears to neglect importance of wilderness. Don't neglect nonhuman priorities.
	Budell	Colchester	Agree with priorities in Plan, emphasis should be preservation of environmentally friendly practices that keep grasslands & open vistas available for public viewing.
	Cummin	Huntington	Put highest priority on access to land & water on which there are no motorsports
	Goodhue	Stowe	Add under "Forest Resource Values & Priorities" - Preserve some stands of trees to become the primeval forests of the next millenium.
	Unknown	Burlington	Protect mountain/hill tops from cellular & telecommunications towers.
	Fitzgerald	Elvira NY	"" ""
	Jenner	Morristown	"" "" (access to above only by foot)
	Gall		"" ""
	Unknown		Agree with priorities in Plan
	Warren	Rutland	"" ""
	Cheney	Montpelier	"" ""
	Eisenhart	Arlington	"" ""
	Ross	Arlington	"" ""
	Ferry	Montpelier	"" ""
	Krause	Waterville	"" ""
	Sairs	Calais	"" ""
	Unknown		"" ""
	Plumb	Washington	"" ""
	Marr	Bennington	"" ""
	Gardner/Morse	Calais	"" ""
	Nuquist	Montpelier	"" ""
	Blanchard	Essex Jct.	"" ""
	Willis	E. Middlebury	"" ""

CATEGORY	NAME	CITY	SPECIFIC COMMENT
Priorities	Peabody	St. Johnsberry	Agree with Priorities listed in Plan
	Fiff	Middlebury	"" ""
	Riley	Rochester	"" ""
	Owen	Charlotte	"" ""
	Beverly	Stamford	"" ""
	Hoffman	Montpelier	"" ""
	Rogers	Bradford	"" "" (plan is very reasonable & logical)
	Lawrence	Huntington	"" "" (like content & tone, it is positive, hopeful, & practical)
	Babbott	Burlington	"" ""
	Schneider	Bristol	"" ""
	Joslin	Jericho	"" ""
	Hill	Bennington	"" ""
	Robbins	Manchester	"" ""
	Warren	Rutland	"" ""
	Erikson	Huntington	"" ""
	Handy	Huntington	Agree with Priorities listed in Plan
	Broadhead	Craftsbury	"" ""
	Smith	Wolcott	"" ""
	Unknown		"" ""
	Geary	Arlington	"" ""
	Sharp	Burlington	"" "" (particularly trails, state parks, wetlands)
	Hamilton	Charlotte	"" "" (especially concepts for critical wildlife habitat, corridors, connections)
	Davis Contracting	Hardwick	Disagree with Priorities.
	Rothman	Danville	Include Steam Mill Brook WMA, Barton River in priorities
	Brodhead	Craftsbury	Important to acquire interest in lands connecting major state owned parcels.
	Coulter	Weybridge	Encourage buying of inholdings & expanding area owned by State
	Brande	Cornwall	Special effort to support home/community gardens & backyard composting, no landfills
	ANR Biodiversity	Group	Should not make recreation lands higher priority over ecological lands, would like more prioritization within categories of ecological, recreational, etc.
	Northwest RPC	St Albans	Support connectivity between wildlife habitats & discourage habitat fragmentation. Compatible with NRPC Regional Plan. Should support identification of most sensitive habitat as part of cooperative working agreement with landowner seeking conservation & protection of important habitat while maintaining farming on lands most suitable for crops & livestock
	Breslaw	W. Corinth	Recommend 2 changes: Less exclusive concentration on main wildlife areas; especially
	Tharinger	W. Corinth	Green Mtn/Long Trail region, & more smaller holdings close to populated areas. Also high priority on land that can sustain local timber economics through production management
	Gray/O'Neil	Shelburne	Concerned with Worcester Range & NE Kingdom

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CATEGORY	NAME	CITY	SPECIFIC COMMENT
Priorities	Andrews	Middlebury	Some rare, threatened & endangered nongame wildlife may be in altered habitats (mines, water towers), as long as there are ways to address this, my priorities are covered.
	Albuerne	Bondville	Plan appropriately addresses need to acquire lands important for public recreation & wildlife habitat. All recreation activities, particularly hunting & fishing, should be equally permitted on acquired land & easements.
	Osgood	Northfield	Interest to see unique lands like mtntops, ridgelines, watercourses made available for public use
	Smith	Middlebury	Agree overall; suggest moving I-B to I-A and move I-A to I-B. Incorporate section IV with I-C; either move I-C to IV or IV to I-C. Add boat and kayak primitive camping to I-A
Priorities	Plumb	Washington	State forests often should have buffers just as proposed for parks.
	Gruber	Groton	Any paper company holdings in VT should be identified & considered for purchase
	Ward	Brandon	Ecological Values & Priorities listed in plan should be prioritized: Recreation Values & Priorities should pay special attention to trails & greenways. West Rutland Marsh should be added to priorities. Insist that ANR do its utmost to grant permanent wilderness status to Lamb Brook Area.
	Whelan	Montpelier	Continue to monitor open lands for possible future acquisition. In particular, areas around Big and Little Averill, Lewis, and Berlin ponds.
	Hoffman	Montpelier	More land should be acquired in GMNF area. Priority for providing recreation opportunities, protecting wildlife habitat, providing corridors between blocks of land, buying easements to protect working forests, & making additions to ANR lands to maintain ecological health.
	S. Windsor RPC	Ascutney	First priority given to inholdings & parcels that can improve access to existing properties. Local interests must be considered very carefully when deciding how the state as a whole can realize biggest benefit from a management unit.
	Windham RPC	Brattleboro	Be more proactive, particularly with fragmentation & connectivity of wildlife corridors. This is addressed in Appendix E but not carried through plan.
	Stiles	Middlebury	First priority should be to take care of what we have. Second would be to buy land that is critical to conservation values & may be purchased by others who propose development.
	Unknown		Don't agree with focus on public access, especially to lakes, ponds, & rivers. I don't see any prioritization, looks like a laundry list. Gives LARC (or any other body) no guidelines on how to make hard choices among different types of land. Is there intent to use VT Biodiversity or Natural Heritage Program recommendations? Why is recreation first in Fundamental Assumptions? Final plan should have a more refined list of priority types of acquisition and provide more priorities, not a laundry list.
	Willis	E. Middlebury	Plan must take into account the needs of animal species to accommodate changes brought on by climate change and provide land & corridors for movement & mobility.

CATEGORY	NAME	CITY	SPECIFIC COMMENT
Priorities	Mainer	Hinesburg	Priorities should be lake, pond, stream, & river shorelines; access areas to public lands, scenic or unique areas; and critical wildlife habitat.
	Tennett	St. Johnsbury	Priorities should include Long & Catamount trails, creation of more wilderness areas, and acquisition of northern forest lands as they come on the market.
	Macleod		Greenbelts around towns, fragile areas, & water protection should be priorities
	Lincoln	Montpelier	Priority should be ecology & conservation
	Murrow	Putney	Priority should be placed on land with major environmental significance
	McGrath	St. Johnsbury	Priorities should include wild lands in northern forests, forestland in general, protected wildlife passages, and loon nesting areas.
	Hoffman	Montpelier	Need more land bordering Lake Champlain. Also more critical lands bordering landlocked lakes & tracts of land adjacent to CT River.
	Collier	Burlington	Impressed with (executive summary) listings I-B & C-II to C-IV-1, 2, & 3.
	Lawrence	Huntington	What about waste lands, lands no one else wants, could the state receive & restore?
	Morgan	Sheffield	Would prioritize guiding principles as: 1. Ecological Values & Priorities; 2. Additions to Agency Lands; 3. Recreation Values & Priorities; and 4. Forest Resource Values & Priorities
	Richardson	Norwich	Priorities should include healthy, working forests; wildlife habitat including corridors; water quality through protection of rivers & streams with buffers; recreation, especially through trails
	Elliott	East Burke	Especially appealing is the inclusion of priority to provide corridors for wildlife between preserved core habitat. Plan must insure that increased human activity does not defeat the purpose of protecting wildlife habitat.
	Fitzgerald	Burlington	Grew weary of counting the number of times "access" is used. Access should not be the main priority of ANR. Does not make sense to buy small plots of isolated land
	Kowalczyk	Middlebury	Must create corridors connecting core habitats
	Buckley	Springfield	Support continued acquisition & protection of significant wildlife habitat & nature-based outdoor recreation. Especially support need to connect blocks of public land.
	Pelton	Perkinsville	Support efforts to acquire unique & scenic areas for future generations.
	Low	Richmond	Support land acquisition to enhance recreation, ecological & forest resource value, or to expand ANR lands
	Davis	E. Hardwick	Agree with priorities. Highest priority should be watersheds & parcels which if unprotected would result in significant forest fragmentation.
	Esser	Richmond	Important to focus on ecological and recreational values
	Lawson	UVM/Burlington	Agree with priorities. Greater emphasis on Ecological Values & wildlife habitat. Plan lacks an adequate address of critical wildlife habitat & connections and corridors between blocks of public land. More detail on what constitutes critical habitat. Make core areas bigger & connect core areas.

CATEGORY	NAME	CITY	SPECIFIC COMMENT
Priorities	Shepard	Middlesex	Priorities seem to be sensible & well thought out. Agree with goal of maintaining working forest and supporting good forestry practices through purchase of conservation easements.
	Unknown		Agree recreation priorities should have nothing to do with motorized recreation. Ecological priorities should focus on wildlife habitat & corridors. Conservation easements should be used for forever wild status as opposed to working forest. No new roads!
	Ferguson	Montpelier	Inventory all species on land already owned; preservation of sandplain & clayplain forests top priority; focus on threatened & endangered species; use biodiversity as a gauge in deciding what land to acquire.
	Schultz	Montpelier	Top priority should be protection of rare & endangered species & conservation of natural communities. High-elevation lands desirable but more important to immediate future is acquisition of low elevation land targeted for development. Important not to mix scientific recommendations with political ones.
	Botzojorns	Green Mtn Club	Connectors are very important for recreation & wildlife. Under "Addition to Existing Blocks", ANR should study existing units of land & determine what optimal size & shape should be. Specific priorities: currently degraded areas that will improve over time, certain low elevation lands that are currently under-represented, other trail systems that will help deflect some use away from busiest trails, ridgelines to protect viewsheds. LAR process should attempt to establish priorities within the four main conservation priorities.
	Dupont/Lewis	Creek Assoc.	Would prefer to see a balanced approach to land conservation purchases throughout the 4 categories & perhaps greater emphasis on ecological values. Lands providing multiple values should be given higher priority. Under ecological values category, "critical" in "critical wildlife habitat..." could be open to interpretation or limited to the legal arena. Suggest defining this term better or changing to "significant".
	Quackenbush	Duxbury	Ecologically significant lands threatened with permanent alteration should be #1 priority. More emphasis placed on development of an ecological reserve system in conjunction with Agency Biodiversity Project. Focused "proactive" priorities of Long Trail, Lake Champlain wetlands, & Wildlife corridor project should include CT River watershed (Nulhegan basin yellow bog area) & ecological reserve system. Working forest land needs to be maintained as high priority. Easement & working with VLT is the way to go. Need a full, thorough, on-the-ground inventory of what we have to determine gaps. Too much emphasis is given to recreational use, but agree that access areas are needed to state water bodies.
	Burcroff	Montpelier	Critical to acquire & protect land containing rare & endangered species. Evaluation must be done & prioritization of land to be acquired based on scientific data; not those lands easiest to acquire because of least development pressure.

CATEGORY	NAME	CITY	SPECIFIC COMMENT
Priorities	Butler	Huntington	Highest priority protection of large blocks of unfragmented, interior forest habitat. Active timber production on state lands should be eliminated. Emphasis placed on maintaining ecological values, biodiversity, & watershed protection & primitive recreation. Low emphasis should be placed on subsidizing managed or "working" forests. VT needs wild forests.
	Rasch	Adamant	Like ideas & values included in ecological resource values & priorities section. Age of protected community types not mentioned. Would like to see addition of old growth stands.
	VT Law School	S. Royalton	Generally agree, suggest prominent & pristine roadless areas be added to Unique Natural Lands list. State acquisition of high priority private lands is imperative.
	Shields	Morristown	Set of priorities is so broad it is impossible to imagine a parcel that could be disqualified from state ownership.
	Condaxis	E. Calais	Agree with much of the priorities section. However, "Minimum Standards" lists four purposes that could apply to almost any forest parcel in the state.
	Tetreault	Worcester	Yellow Bog & Nulhegan Deer Yard in Essex should be priority
	Kroka Expedition	Putney	Top priorities should be protection of all shorelines from further development & purchase of floodplain & headwater properties.
	?	Berlin	Looks good, priority should be given to sandplain & clayplain forest.
	Petrie	Burlington	Agree with priorities. Critical area is Champion lands, Nulhegan basin.
	Gregory	Woodstock	ANR Must do inventory of resources that exist before acquiring more land. Plan should
	(2 River/Ottaug.	Reg. Commiss)	prioritize resources for acquisition, perhaps list as presented in Plan could serve as order for priority.
	Barton	E. Brookfield	Like to see VT develop an overall economic development plan that supports family farms & nonindustrial agriculture.
	Kahn/Stephens	Montpelier	Need to clarify III. Place Item IV higher on the list of priorities, prioritize wetlands.
	Lamoille Cty PRC	Morrisville	Plan does address priorities important to LCPC; however, these priorities will become less clear when they begin competing with each other. More emphasis should be placed on nonregulated extremely unique resources that have the greatest threat of impact.
	VNRC PAI Mtg	Comments	What is highest of four priority types? How do you connect low elevation lands? Rail to trail priorities need to be coordinated with AOT. Easements on forestland should be lower priority than other types. Prioritize forest resources (pg 35) as watershed protection, fragmentation, wildlife, fisheries, recreation, and aesthetics.
	Upper Valley/Lake	Lebanon NH	Agree with priorities. On pg I and 32, why isn't fishing access a water recreation priority? Why
	Sunapee RPC		doesn't water supply protection, a top priority for public per pg 61, translate to priority policy?
	Trombulak	Middlebury College	Part II, Ecological Resource Values & Priorities, drop the word "Resource". Goal ought to be maintaining ecological health. Why is it stated that any reserve system would be "limited"?
			Why is it clear that existing lands form much of the framework for conservation in VT? What is justification for the statement that the target should be smaller core reserves? What is the justification that ecological connectivity can be maintained by working forests? Aquatic

CATEGORY	NAME	CITY	SPECIFIC COMMENT
Priorities	Trombulak	Middlebury College	(cont'd from above) communities should be added to low elevation land as being a focus of acquisition. Part III, Forest Resource Values & Priorities. Why is the State involved in this at all? Any subsidized support for an economic product undercuts the portion of the market that does not benefit from subsidies. Third paragraph says essentially that working forests have a greater priority than maintenance & restoration of ecological values. This is not a defensible statement. Recommend changing this section so that it explicitly states that only the minimum necessary will be left in timber production to preserve "rural working landscape".
Policy Recommend.	Quinlan	Barre	Agency to establish model projects for private duplication Agency to allow commercial use of public resources for less than appraised fair market value Agency to manage public property to exemplary standards. Feel policies are incomplete and inadequate
	Boyce	St. Johnsbury	Concept of land conservation should be primary goal. Conservation should mean preservation of habitat, historic sites, buffers, and public greenways, not just recreation.
	MJM	Burlington	Emphasize possibility of combining recreational activities & working forests. Protect high elevation, nonvaluable timber land for recreational, scenic, & economic values.
	Anderson Parks&Rec Dept	F&W Burlington	Is ANR going to be proactive in acquisition or only consider lands that are for sale? Statement "The Agency will not seek to preserve property by eminent domain" should be deleted.
	Ross	Arlington	Agency should not have a blanket policy ruling out eminent domain proceedings. Agree that eminent domain should be avoided except as a last resort in extreme cases.
	Frank	S. Burlington	Steering Committee erred by stating a firm commitment against seeking authority to conserve property by eminent domain.
	Syz/Cueto	WQ Division	Document does not give impression of being proactive.
	Butler	Huntington	Concern about the absolute prohibition of purchasing land above market value. Generally agree with policy recommendations; however, ANR should not be prevented by law or regulation to never pay more than market value.
	Brosnan	Weybridge	Maintain and enforce strong restrictions over working forests and do not allow carte blanche in return for development easements.
	Lyon	Worcester	Policy recommendation not to pay more than appraised fair market value for property is too rigid. Conservation does not equal fair market value. When Agency identifies land with it considers surplus and decides to exchange or liquidate, should offer right of first refusal to VT Land Trust or other VT land conservation organization. More emphasis on public participation in the decision making process associated with land acquisition.
	Murray	AOT	

CATEGORY	NAME	CITY	SPECIFIC COMMENT
Policy Recommend.	DesMeules	North Pomfret	Once public lands are acquired, State should manage them first & foremost to maximize suitability as fish & wildlife habitat & for hunting, fishing, outdoor recreation, and lastly forestry related purposes.
	Unknown		Seek conservation easements on land in addition to working forests.
	Neilson	Dorset	Policy recommendations are fair and honorable.
	Cummin	Huntington	Policy recommendations seem suitable & appropriate, except in the case of an extraordinary parcel of land which could be made available by exercising eminent domain to obtain right of first refusal to purchase land.
	Hoover	Middlebury	Policy recommendations are very suitable & most appropriate.
	Goodhue	Stowe	Recommend 1) clear advocacy of balance of nonmotorized, motorized, & multiple use trails & winter sport areas; 2) matching grants to towns for acquisitions of local significance.
	Eisenhart	Arlington	Policy recommendations are suitable, pressure on the land is increasing & the State should acquire high priority lands as soon as possible.
	Davis Contracting	Hardwick	Protection for private property should be included in policy.
	Brodhead	Craftsbury	Frustrated by slow movement of ANR in evaluation of newly acquired state lands.
	Brande	Cornwall	Hazardous to cause of state land conservation for the State of purchase lands currently productive and take them out of production for years without significant progress towards a use plan. Major cost of maintaining state conservation lands should be born by the users.
	Baker, Franklin/	Grand Isle RPC:	Agree with policy recommendations, but would add "We all must work for the policy that there is no such thing as waste in nature, there should be none among humans".
	ANR Biodiversity	Committee:	ANR should work with Ag Dept when there is a project that has farmland & land with ecological and/or recreation value. Add language on pg 28 that says ANR will work with Dept of Ag & agricultural organizations to identify such conservation projects.
	Elton	Springfield	Plan should state that ANR will eventually need to develop a biodiversity land acquisition plan which would be part of the larger lands conservation plan.
	Northwest RPC	St. Albans	Steering Committee should add language (possibly in Inventory section) that says that while ANR will not emphasize conservation of high-elevation lands, ANR may seek to conserve high-elevation lands of outstanding value.
			Page 45, Cost of Land Management - The first bulleted policy, which says ANR must have a strategy for meeting management needs in place before acquiring a land parcel, seems more restrictive than necessary.
			Plan does not support fee simple acquisition of working forests, preferring instead to purchase conservation easements on working forests. Compatible with draft NRPC Regional Plan.
			Should support conservation partnership between ANR & groups working towards sustainable agriculture in VT.

DRAFT PLAN COMMENTS

CATEGORY	NAME	CITY	SPECIFIC COMMENT
Policy Recommend.	Andrews	Middlebury	Language seems overly sensitive to the forest products industry. Uncomfortable with language which restricts purchases to the minimum area required to protect rare species or habitats. Support inclusion of goals to protect large blocks of nongame habitat. Public participation is important but this Plan should not appear to react or respond to any segment of public opinion.
	Weber:	Plainfield	Draft is biased toward government acquisition. No sound scientific data to support ecoreserves. Language is unequal-speaks to "protect ecological values" but states property rights only be "respected". Language too vague. Must show direction of working with private landowners. Paradox in using the word "recreation" conspicuously. Since there is no dollar funding for recreation in ANR budget, we misrepresent an emphasis on recreation. Add dollars to budget. Inventory State land to identify any which are truly surplus & not potentially useful; sell extra parcels.
	Peckham (Eagle Lumber)	Stamford	Nothing in summary about protection of land for aesthetic purposes - viewsheds, etc. Wood chip burning generating plants should be required to store wood chip inventories under cover.
	Smith	Middlebury	State should work together with US Forest Service to draft a plan to protect GMNF lands. More cooperation with Regional Planning Commissions. Without ignoring the option of fee-simple ownership, ANR should always be looking for additional or alternative methods of conserving land.
	Plumb, Gruber	Washington Groton	Plan should serve as a model for the State, towns, RPCs & NGOs should be encouraged to develop compatible plans. Plan should recommend ANR assist other conservation groups to develop policies & approaches, especially on working forest lands. Support recommendation to use easements not acquisition to protect working forests. Plan should call for long-term sustainability as management practice for private woodlot owners. Stronger policy recommendations on State's relationship with towns & how they will work with towns in the acquisition process. Should be policy statement that LARC will consistently utilize the evaluation process outlined in Plan.
	Hoffman S. Windsor Cty	Montpelier RPC	Do not support expansion of State land acquisition without consideration given to selling of equal acres back into private sector. Criteria should be before any acquisition could be considered, State should first sell or trade a parcel of equal or greater size into the private sector. Should get town approval prior to all purchases with full disclosure of tax impact. Would like to see State look into implementing perpetual conservation easements/restrictions on all lands under its jurisdiction. Prefer the State work with most local/applicable land trust with each holding. Would encourage State to commit to and perpetually fund adequate payments to municipalities in lieu of taxes. State will be limiting itself unnecessarily if accepting donations of lands only that serve an identified Agency purpose (pg 47). As long as land is given with no strings attached, State should acquire and use for trade for lands that are ANR priorities.
	Windham Reg.	Commission	
	Fuller Granville Mfg. Co	Granville	
	Upper Valley Land Trust	Hanover	

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CATEGORY	NAME	CITY	SPECIFIC COMMENT
Policy Recommend.	Gardner-Morse Unknown:	Calais	Policy recommendations are suitable & draft seems okay as written. Policy recommendations seem reasonable, although not very interesting. More about administrative and PR concerns than actual land conservation policies. Section VI is entitled Plan Implementation Strategy; I see no implementation strategy stated. No implementation concerns expressed in the document.
Policy Recommend.	Riley Owen Everts Collier	Rochester Charlotte Huntington Burlington	Policy recommendations are suitable & appropriate. Policies are sound. Acquisition policies are fair and balanced. Delighted with policy recommendation "The committee also emphasizes that this plan will serve as the guiding document..."
	Lawrence	Huntington	Policy recommendations appear win/win right down the line. Everything seems logical & reasonable. Impressed with organization & clear, effective writing.
	Desautels	Sharon	Have reviewed the criteria & think it is great to have standard guidelines for acquisition of state land.
	Dehner:		Plan is a proper, governmental response to legislative mandate, and I support your efforts and forward thinking. Conservation & development must be kept in balance; Plan presents a rational approach to decision making around that balance point.
	Blanchette	Simpson Paper	Plan is unacceptable because: (1) entire effort is heavily biased toward government acquisition and control. (2) Name should be changed to Land Acquisition Plan. (3) Should call for a halt to additional state acquisition or control of lands until certain conditions are met. (4) All support for ecoreserves should be deleted. (5) It is filled with undefined terms that won't be defined until after the Plan is in place. (6) Should explicitly advocate protection of private property rights. (7) Plan promotes the use of easements that will be used to control land without having to buy it. (8) Plan fails to acknowledge that there can never be too much government ownership & control of land.
	Unknown:		Not clear to me what you mean by conservation easements on working forests. The State has a responsibility to be a good steward of all the lands under its jurisdiction.
	Hill	St. Albans	Agree with the recommendation that land be purchased only from willing sellers at fair market value.
	Whittaker	Brunswick	Continue the purchase by fee & easement of critical forest & other wild lands.
	Hoover	Middlebury	Agree with recommendations outlined on Fact Sheet 4
	Cheney	Montpelier	Very sensible recommendations, make sure it is implemented
	Towns	Springfield	Very good recommendations
	Schneider	Bristol	"" ""
	Wagner	Arlington	"" ""
	Hill	Bennington	"" ""
	Davis Contracting	Hardwick	How much land should State own? Should State own land except roadways?

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CATEGORY	NAME	CITY	SPECIFIC COMMENT
Policy Recommend.	ANR Biodiversity Committee	Committee	Charge LARC with soliciting recommendations from various divisions & programs across the Agency for priority conservation areas in VT. Should use "The Elements of Biodiversity" as a tool when reviewing property for possible acquisition.
	Syz/Cueto	WQ Division	Identify specific areas & proactively negotiate purchase, easement, or at the minimum right of first refusal (in particular, utility owned lands/hydro dams). Inventory state-owned lands & indicate to owning agency which lands we are interested in eventually owning (Corrections lands)
	Neilson	Dorset	Agree with no acquiring by eminent domain
	Phillips	Bellows Falls	Emphasize easements & other mechanisms that lessen burden of cost of protection
	Darling	F&W	Spell out what parcels are designated for acquisition vs easement. Are we comfortable using elevation to determine ecological resources? Pg 44, under Other Considerations, A. the first bullet - putting this in the Plan begs Legislature to press ANR to violate plan. Pg 44, under Step 4, District staff should contribute to evaluation process, not be a second process.
	Peabody	St Johnsbury	Concept of willing buyer/willing seller is a key part of the Plan
	Nelson		Stree education as to what can happen if conservation is not regulated.
	Mullen	Bolton	Plan fine for present, would like to see something in future where ANR could cooperate with towns in acquiring property of natural value
	Lawson	UVM/Burlington	Emphasize recommendation which says that land conservation should be carried in coordination with local & regional planning commissions.
	Davis	E. Hardwick	Recommendations suitable & appropriate. More emphasis on conservation easements for working forests & protection of hiking trails.
	Sharp	Burlington	Recommendations are suitable.
	Hadley	White River	Suggest agency partner on a bioregional level.
	Shea/Catamount	Trail Assoc.	Support development & use of GIS to inventory & manage lands. Feel longterm costs of managing more land for recreation not adequately addressed. Will be need for more ANR staff.
	Shepard	Middlesex	Suggest Plan recommend hiring of land management staff with training in recreation and greenways planning, trail design, trail management.
	Krohn	Manchester	Don't believe it should be carved in stone that ANR will never pay more than appraised value. Agree that money should be provided for management of lands purchased.
	VT Law School	S. Royalton	Place greater emphasis on proactive approach to conservation, especially regarding linkages between existing parcels (pg I, B3 and last paragraph pg 74). Statements about having an orderly yet flexible approach are important. Consider extending recommendations & policies so absolute statements may be avoided (pg iii, "The Agency will not pay more... than...fair market value.." is better stated on Pg 100, "...ARN should not pay more...").
	Weber	Weybridge	Agree with policies. Suggest only that a general policy of acquiring high priority lands be pursued beyond lands designated in IV. Additions To Agency Lands. Concerned Plan is focused too much on more land acquisition. Need to maintain strong land base in "working forest" land. Concerned with inclusion of ecoreserve concept. Would like assurance that private property rights are protected.

CATEGORY	NAME	CITY	SPECIFIC COMMENT
Policy Recommend.	Goodrich Shambaugh	Craftsbury Montpelier	Opposed to further public ownership. More thought to what happen to land after purchase. Need inventories done, monitoring programs set up. ANR should create management plans to ensure values are preserved, all with public input.
	Smith	Burlington	Want to know long term management & funding strategies for caring for existing lands.
	Price	Fair Haven	Wildlife benefits by wise use, for profit, of private property. Troubled with ecoreserve concept. Best interest of future generations to keep as much land as possible in private ownership.
	Burridge	Ripton	Urge reconsideration of plan.
	Shields	Morristown	Public hasn't had sufficient input to proposal. Impact of plan needs further debate. Compensation for easements should be included. Terms lack clear definition.
	Choquette (VT Petroleum Assoc)	Montpelier	Policy needs to be added stating that suitability for maple tapping disqualifies a tract from public ownership & that existing tappable stands should be disposed of forthwith.
	Condaxis	E. Calais	Plan assumes government acquisition & control of land is the only effective strategy for assuring environmentally sound management of forestland & conservation of resources. Economic consequences must be considered. Government should do only things its citizens cannot do on their own.
	VT Farm Bureau		What guarantees does the public have that criteria outlined in plan will be adhered to? The issue of what happens after land is acquired is not addressed adequately. How much is enough?
	Edson	Underhill Ctr	No land should be obtained without first gaining community approval. State should first adopt an acquisition policy addressing the question of how much is enough.
	Plumb	Plumb Lumber	Opposed to state increasing acquisition of land unless there are clearly stated limits to its objectives. Should include clear indication of importance of property rights.
	Simpson Paper	Gilman	When enough is enough should be identified in plan. State should sell equal amounts to what is purchased. State can't manage what it has already. Committee was biased.
	Trucott Malinquist	Barton Lebanon NH	Plan appears to take productive land off tax rolls & put under government control. The state cannot manage the land it already has. Put more effort into leaving private lands private Concerned with "willing sellers" wording.
	Paradis	UVM/Burlington	Plan is too broad in scope & does not define its cost to the people of VT. Plan is more interested in acquisition of new lands instead of management of current assets. Plan adequately describes context & presents justification for state land conservation in VT. Many recreation opportunities can best be provided by public lands. Ecological Work Group white paper (Appendix E) is an excellent start to describing challenges & possible solutions. Should be better presented in plan.

CATEGORY	NAME	CITY	SPECIFIC COMMENT
Policy Recommend.	Kroka Exped.	Putney	ANR has responsibility to future generations to protect natural resources. ANR is responsible for all animals, plants & other natural resources & must treat them with respect. ANR should acquire lands by eminent domain when appropriate. ANR should have an enforcement plan for people violating land use on public land.
	Burch (Meffowee Lumber Gregory (2 Riv/Ottauque.	Granville NY Woodstock Reg Commiss)	Nothing wrong with VT land policy that this plan is going to improve on. Problem with "ecoreserves". Why create something with a word? Concern with strong statement that state will never pay above fair market value for lands. Suggest you soften statement to leave open the possibility to pay above fair market in extraordinary circumstances. Tax implications unknown & cause for discomfort. Delete third bullet (disposition of surplus land), retain the land you have. Support State fee or conservation easement ownership of larger, unique lands & critical wildlife habitats. Support statement that acquiring land or rights is only part of the process of conserving land. Plan should indicate the number of trusts in VT besides VLT. Disagree with statement that new lands will not be acquired unless funding is secured for maintenance. ANR should develop a fund to help pay costs associated with donating land.
	Kahn/Stephens Bouton (Norwich Conserv Commission)	Montpelier Norwich Commission)	Money for management should not guide acquisition, management should be separate. What steps are in place for community education? Need an inventory of existing parcels. Policies suitable & appropriate. Specific policy of involving local government with purchase of conservation lands discussed, should towns be able to veto a state purchase. Plan should clarify if it is policy of State to own more land & accept increased cost or find alternatives such as ways to increase income for State lands or reduce unit cost in order to afford increased management responsibilities. Pg 5 Para 6 and Pg 36 Para 1, easements to protect working landscapes should allow for future changes in resource values, technology, & the economy. Pg 28 Para 2 & 3, should mention that land in each elevation zone has different values & a different level of fragility. Pg 37, step 2, needs to be clarified, says "must be demonstrated that parcel meets or exceeds Minimum Standards for State Ownership" in first paragraph, then in 2nd paragraph, process backs off to "standards are intended as general guidelines". Goal of Plan as stated is to become more proactive, but taken as a whole, Plan is a set of policies on how to be reactive.
	VNRC PAI Mtg Upper Valley/Lake Lebanon NH Sunapee RPC	Comments	Comment on Fundamental Assumptions: Bullet 1, reference is made to "working landscape". This term is problematic. Should note "the diversity of organisms in the state, including plants, animals, fungi, & microbes." Bullet 3, importance of both public & natural benefits should be part of ANR fundamental assumptions. Bullet 4, agree that people have an inherent right to participate but believe that they also have inherent responsibility to do so in a responsible manner. Re Guiding Principles: Bullet 3, public benefits noted should be listed to some extent. Bullet 6, ought to be stated that maintenance of "charm & beauty" must be done in a context that does not jeopardize or degrade ecological health. Bullet 8, Why are timber industry reps
	Trombulak	Middlebury College	

DRAFT PLAN COMMENTS

CATEGORY	NAME	CITY	SPECIFIC COMMENT
Policy Recommend.	Trombulak	Middlebury College	

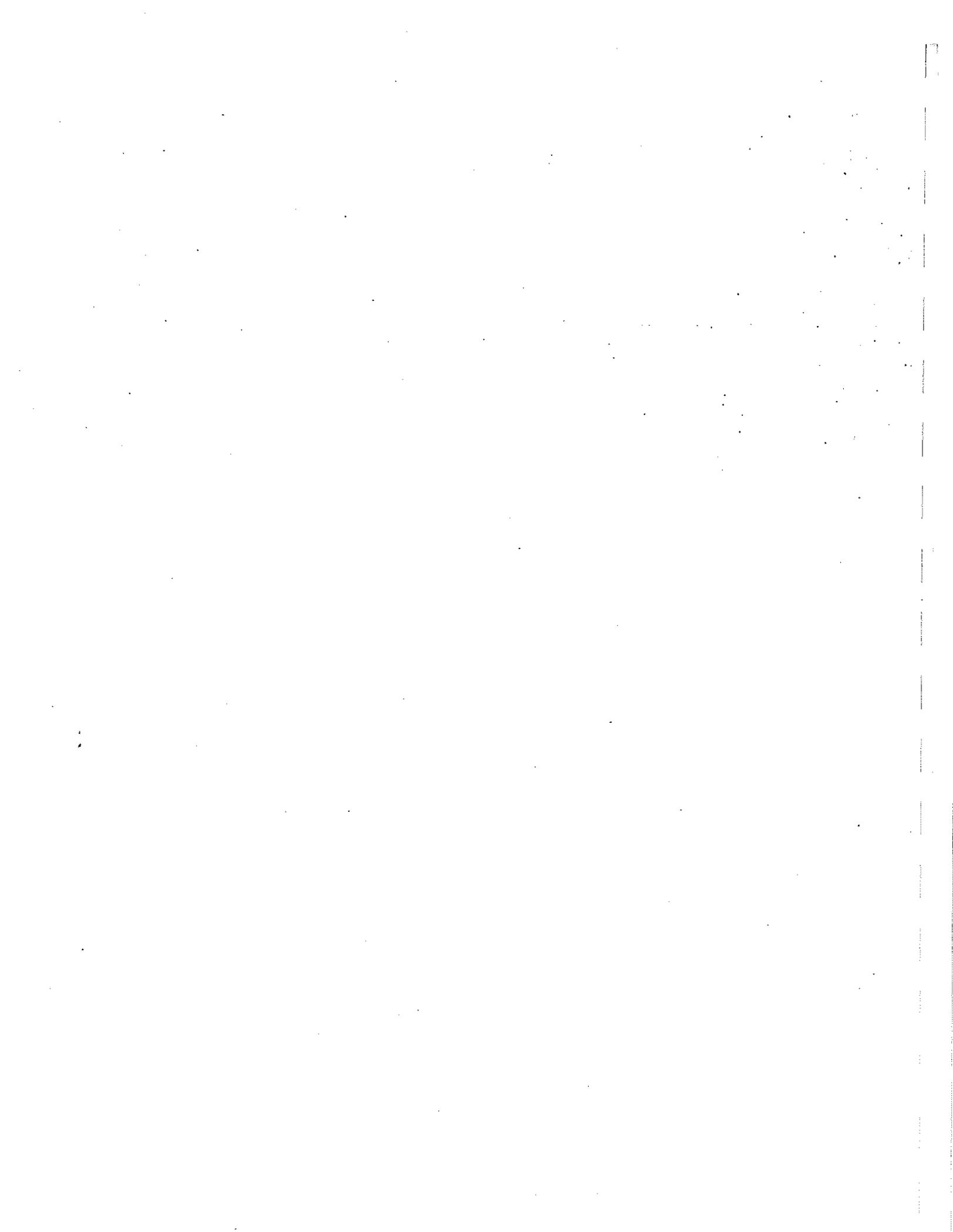
and sporting groups specifically mentioned but other people who have interests in these issues listed as "others"? Should specifically list "tourist industry reps and conservation groups." Bullet 9, This principle must not be used as an excuse to ignore or devalue "remote" lands. Better statement would be "The Agency must work to ensure that all members of the public, regardless of their economic means or mobility, have opportunities to visit public lands. The Agency has a responsibility to educate people about the benefits they receive from all state lands. General Comments to both Assumptions & Principles: Clearer statement needs to be made somewhere that ANR recognizes that not all goals can be met on all lands at the same time. Clearer statement needs to be made that wild nature has intrinsic value as well as utilitarian value. Clearer statement needs to be made that ANR has responsibility to educate the public about the importance of conservation. Clearer statement needs to be made that ANR represents the public for conservation. Comment on Purposes: Should be an emphasis in Plan on those goals that cannot be provided by the private, free-market economic sector, and there should be no emphasis at all on those things that should be. State ought to play no role in owning forestland on which timber is extracted for economic gain. That is for the private sector. Comment on Process: Lead paragraph of this section states "The Agency directs its activities toward the protection of public values and benefits that are not readily available or permanently protected on private lands." This is good, but why does recreation rank higher than ecological values and why does timber production show up at all?

Opposition	Davis Contracting	Hardwick	Complete document should be scrapped
	Spring	Jay	"" ""
	Pouthe	?	"" ""
	Berkey	Randolph	"" "" (or undergo major revisions to include private property rights)
	Borland	Greensboro	Survey biased. State should have town approval prior to purchase.
	Campbell	Newport	State should stop buying up private property. For the State to even consider acquiring more land is nothing short of ludicrous
	Rep. Richardson	Windsor 4	Strenuously object to this effort & will go against ANR. If reelected, will introduce & support legislation to end this intrusion into rights of private ownership.
	Prindle	Charlotte	Plan is not about conservation but acquisition & control. Private property rights should be foremost

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CATEGORY	NAME	CITY	SPECIFIC COMMENT
Opposition	Holleran	Chester	Survey biased; language vague; concept of ecoreserves & connecting corridors unacceptable.
	Fuller	Granville Mfg	Concern that committee was biased. Draft language is vague. State should have town approval prior to all purchases. More "acquisition plan" than conservation plan. Do not support plan as drafted.
	Pocobut		" "
	Drown	Underhill	" "
	Humphrey	Lowell	" "
	Hammer	Whitingham	" "
	Dodd		" "
	Wood	Hancock	" "
	Cross	S. Royalton	" "
	Labounty		" "
	Moore	Brownington	" "
	Chadburn	Concord	" "
	Perron	Barton	" "
	Colton		" "
	McAllister		" "
	Plante		" "
	Fortunati		" "
	Preseault	Burlington	" "
	Griswold		" "
	Fowler	Plainfield	" "
	Phillips		" "
	Greaves	Hardwick	" "
	Goodridge		" "
	Trucott	Barton	" "
	Moffatt	W. Burke	" "
	Sutzmann	Craftsbury	" "
	Goodridge		" "
	Gonyaw	St. Johnsbury	" "
	Goodridge	Irasburg	" "
	Stevens		" "
	Steiner		" "
	Edwards	Cambridge	" "

CATEGORY	NAME	CITY	SPECIFIC COMMENT
Opposition	Cantin	Guilddhall	""
	Tatro	Lunenburg	""
	Gage		""
	Lathrop	Bristol	""
	Goodridge	Irasburg	""
	Morin		""
	Rowell	Walden	""
	Wikil	Walden	""
	Davis	Hardwick	""
	Lambert	Hardwick	""
	Gosselin		""
	Doyon	W. Burke	""
	Morse	Underhill	""
	Norris		""
	Kroeger		""
	Boudreau		""
	Shove		""
	Lapierre	Newport	""
	Saldi	Williamstown	""
	Amalixsen	Newport	""
	Gilcris	Proctorsville	""
	Currier	Barton	""
	Emerson	Corinth	""
	Hudson	Corinth	""
	Dafour	Corinth	""
	Batten	Corinth	""
	Miller	Corinth	""
	Lamotte	E. St. Johnsbury	""
	Hathaway	Orleans	""
	Fortunati	Corinth	""
	Larabee	Bradford	""
	Chaiffee		""
	Moore	Corinth	""
	Dilts	Corinth	""
Gagnon	Pittsford	""	
Frost	Sandgate	""	
Gross	Sharon	""	



VI.

Work Group White Papers (March 1998)

VERMONT AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Lands Conservation Plan

Work Group White Papers
*A Discussion of Strategic Issues Relating to
State Land Conservation Activities*

March, 1998

VERMONT AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Lands Conservation Plan

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John Hall, Vermont League of Cities and Towns
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VERMONT AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Lands Conservation Plan

WORK GROUP WHITE PAPERS

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2. Information on Other Conservation Agencies/Organizations in Vermont - The Lands Conservation Plan must also be established within the larger context of what other land conservation agencies and organizations are accomplishing in Vermont. Currently, about 15.5% of Vermont's land base (over 950,000 acres) is conserved in some fashion by public agencies or non-profit organizations and can be considered public open space.

While all federal, state, local and non-profit conservation organizations maintain extensive files on individual projects and many maintain computerized data bases for selected information on lands under their jurisdiction, there is no centralized, single data base that exists for all of Vermont's conserved lands. For the most part, data maintained by these organizations are not mutually compatible since information is usually portrayed differently from organization to organization. Data are sometimes based on different fiscal years, often lack historical perspective, financial detail, or other useful information and are generally inconsistent across organizational boundaries. This makes it difficult to get a complete understanding of land conservation activity in Vermont. There is a clear need for consistency, completeness and compatibility in the specific information collected by the various land conservation organizations in Vermont.

Recommendation:

1. In cooperation with other land conservation agencies and organizations in Vermont, the Agency should investigate the feasibility of developing a central electronic registry and information clearinghouse for all land conservation transaction activities in the state. The registry would utilize common data sets and consistent reporting requirements for all participating land conservation organizations. An annual schedule and an electronic means for collecting, reporting and maintaining this information should be developed. Additional funding and resources would likely need to be committed to fully implement this recommendation.

Background Information on Vermont's Conserved Lands:

Federal Lands: All told, federally-owned lands account for about 6% of Vermont's landbase. The vast majority of this land is managed by the U.S. Forest Service and is contained within the Green Mountain National Forest (approximately 390,000 acres). Other federal lands in Vermont include about 12,000+ acres of land and conservation easements owned by the National Park Service (primarily along the Appalachian Trail), the roughly 6300 acre Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge managed by the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife, and close to 6900 acres of flood control lands controlled by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

State Lands: State-owned lands and conservation easements comprise about 340,000 acres or close to 6% of Vermont's landbase.

Municipal Lands: Less than 1% of Vermont's land is owned by municipalities. The bulk of this acreage (40,000+ acres) is contained within town forests.

Private Non-Profit Organizations: Nearly 3% of Vermont's landbase or about 180,000 acres of land have been conserved by various non-profit conservation organizations in Vermont. The bulk of this acreage (approximately 145,000 acres) has been conserved by the Vermont Land Trust. Most of these lands have been conserved by conservation easement as opposed to fee simple

ownership and are primarily (though not exclusively) farmland. In addition to the Vermont Land Trust, there are close to 40 other non-profit conservation organizations operating in Vermont, many of which own and manage land or interests in land. These include large, national organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, The Conservation Fund and the Trust for Public Lands; statewide organizations such as The Green Mountain Club, and the Preservation Trust for Vermont; and regional and local land trusts such as the Upper Valley Land Trust, Lake Champlain Land Trust, and Stowe Land Trust. The Agency has developed partnerships and works cooperatively with many of these organizations on land conservation projects.

Trends and Observations: While it's difficult to generalize, one obvious trend is the increasing role non-profits are playing in conserving Vermont's landscape. During the 60's and 70's, state land acquisitions were at an all-time high and accounted for virtually all the land conservation activity in the state. Over the last 15 years, both the number of non-profit land conservation groups operating in Vermont and the amount of acreage conserved by these groups has increased dramatically. Today, land is being conserved in Vermont at roughly the same rate as 20-30 years ago. The difference is that much of this acreage is now being conserved by land trusts using conservation easements rather than the state acquiring lands in fee simple.

STRATEGIC ISSUES:

1. **What is the Agency's Capacity to Manage Additional Lands?** - We have heard repeatedly through numerous public involvement efforts that the costs of land management need to be more fully considered in future state land acquisitions. The costs of land ownership just begins with the acquisition itself. After a parcel is acquired, the Agency must then assume the on-going costs of managing the land in a manner that is consistent with public expectations and the purposes for which the parcel was acquired.

Recommendations:

1. **Lands Administration Section:** One of the most staff-intensive function in this area is license/lease/permit administration. These activities consume 0.5 FTE each year, primarily with regard to ski area lease management, and power and communications facility licenses (with towers being a major time consumer). The lack of clear state policy in the latter area exacerbates this administrative burden. Future land acquisitions that do not contemplate (or by their structure prohibit) commercial ski area and utility uses will have a limited impact. To the extent that is feasible, the Agency should seek to more fully recover the costs of administering its leases, licenses and special use permits up front as a condition of entering into these agreements.

2. **Stewardship of Conservation Easements:** Within ANR there is no effective "stewardship program" charged with management of ANR-held (or co-held) conservation easements. Such a program should include, at a minimum: (1) A current, accurate, multi-value database of eased lands; (2) "Baseline Documentation Reports" for each eased parcel, specifically documenting the conditions that prevailed at the time the easement was acquired; (3) a filing system to maintain all legal documents, and to track and record all events with regard to each property; (4) a systematized, annual ground and/or aerial monitoring program; and (5) a series of protocols for responding to approval requests, violation reports, and enforcement needs. This program should comply with

than \$900,000 in FY' 97 and will increase under the new PILOT provisions of Act 60. Funding for these payments are dependent on legislative appropriations.

With regard to state forest lands, currently about 28% of the Forestry Division's budget is allocated to state land management activities. Of that amount, 49% (or 14% of the total forestry effort) is consumed in planning and administration of state forest lands. The Fish and Wildlife Department provides some funding to the Forestry Division to help offset the Forestry staff's costs associated with managing Fish and Wildlife lands (i.e., Wildlife Management Areas).

The single largest land management cost for the Forestry Division is the maintenance of forest roads. The Department of Forests, parks and Recreation receives an appropriation from the State Transportation Fund to help cover these costs. Other major land management costs include trail maintenance and construction, resource inventory, marking and maintaining boundary lines, recreation and wildlife management activities, cruising and marking timber and timber sale administration.

Depending on the land, total land management costs for state forest land generally range from \$1/acre/year to \$5/acre/year with the average being about \$3.83/acre/year. The ratio of the amount of state forest land to Agency land management staff (expressed in *Full Time Equivalents*) is currently 22,700 acres/FTE. This compares with about 5000 acres/FTE for the Green Mountain National Forest and roughly 15,000 acres/FTE for neighboring states.

There are also costs associated with monitoring the Agency's increasing number of conservation easements it holds on forest land. Given that most of these easements are relatively new, the full costs of monitoring and, if necessary, enforcing the easement provisions are largely unknown. However, most land trust organizations cover these costs through a stewardship endowment that is provided for as a part of the original acquisition of the conservation easement.

The costs of managing state lands with developed public facilities are substantially greater than for undeveloped woodland. The state park system's annual operation and maintenance budget is currently about \$4.7 million. The state park system receives no general fund support and relies entirely on lease revenues from state lands (primarily from ski areas) and park user fees. The Parks Division has 32 full-time staff, only five of whom perform central office functions in Waterbury. The Parks Division has been successful in discharging management functions within the financial constraints of lease and user fee receipts.

The Fish and Wildlife Department currently spends between \$100,000 - \$150,000 annually to maintain its more than 150 boating access areas. Fish and Wildlife presently contracts with the Corrections Department for trash removal. Other costs include rental of port-a-lets, snowplowing, gravel and grading, etc. These costs, as well as the costs of construction and new land acquisition are funded through the state's Access Area program (a dedicated funding source comprised of both state and federal funds).

There are also significant costs associated with new construction, renovation and major repair at state parks and other developed sites including Agency-owned dam sites and boating access areas. With the exception of boating access areas, funding for these projects depends almost entirely upon capital budget appropriations and is extremely limited.

In general, the recent political climate has not supported either short or long-term investments in ANR land management capacity – it has been far easier to secure capital for land acquisition than to encourage investment in land management staff, despite the fact that land acquisition remains publicly popular.

Since 1989, the acres of land (or interests in land) owned and managed by the Agency has increased by approximately 70,000 acres (from about 270,000 acres in 1989 to nearly 340,000 acres in 1997). This equates to roughly a 20% increase in acreage. During the same time, the number of both full-time and part-time staff devoted to lands management has steadily decreased. This is true for both the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation and the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Over the last ten years, FPR has experienced a 10% reduction in full-time staff and a seasonal staff reduction of 50%. Most of these reductions have been in the Parks Division in making the transition from the loss of general fund support. However, budget cuts have also severely hampered the Forestry Division resulting a further retreat from basic land maintenance and forestry management programs. As a result, the Department has fallen behind on many land management functions such as boundary line maintenance, trail construction and maintenance, inventorying and marking timber, land management planning and other activities.

The same general trends hold true for the Department of Fish and Wildlife as well. In 1982, F&W devoted 7.5 FTE's towards state and private lands management. By 1989, the number of FTE's devoted to this activity dropped to about 2.5 FTE's and has been holding relatively constant since then. This represents a drop of about 68% in activity level. (While F&W did experience some downsizing during this period, most of this drop in activity level on land management functions can be attributed to F&W lands staff being reassigned to permit reviews and other activities.)

2. What are the Local Tax Impacts of State Lands? - More than any other issue, the impact of state land acquisition on local tax revenues has been and continues to be a primary concern of municipalities in Vermont. In the past, state acquisitions have generally resulted in a net loss of revenue for towns. However, the new Equal Educational Opportunity Act (Act 60) substantially revises the formula for making these payments to towns and dramatically alters the affect state lands will have on local revenues.

Recommendations:

1. The Agency should immediately send a notice to all Vermont municipalities which summarizes the changes made in the state's PILOT program as a result of Act 60. Communities should also be made aware of any changes to the PILOT program that may subsequently be made by the Legislative Oversight Committee or the legislature itself. The Agency should coordinate with the Vermont League of Cities and Towns in getting this information to communities by the most effective means possible.

2. In notifying local officials of any proposed or pending state acquisition project, the Agency should provide as accurate an estimate as is feasibly possible regarding the specific impact the acquisition will have on local revenues and offer to meet with the municipality to provide additional information and answer questions, if so requested.

for possible exchange on a case-by-case basis through the Land Acquisition Review Committee.

3. To insure that important resource values are maintained on state lands that are proposed for exchange, the Agency should consider restricting such lands by retaining (or conveying to another eligible party) a conservation easement on the property.

4. To maintain flexibility, the Agency should make careful and judicious use of public and private funding sources for land acquisitions that contain outright prohibition on future transfers to another party. Where feasible and desirable, incidental portions of larger acquisitions that would otherwise meet the criteria of surplus property should be excluded from the restrictions on conveyances contained within conservation easements held by a third party.

Recommendations (Sale of State Lands):

1. Given that public sentiment by and large does not support the outright sale of ANR lands, the Agency should be extremely cautious before disposing of any of the lands under its jurisdiction in this manner. As a rule, the exchange of ANR lands is preferable to the sale of these lands. However, there may be instances where the sale of Agency lands is warranted and appropriate. Generally, only state properties that have formally been identified through the above process as being surplus should be considered for sale. It must be clearly demonstrated that proposals to sell state property are supported by the local community as well as the public at large. As required by statute, the Agency will continue to seek legislative and/or Governor's approval before selling any land or interests in land.

2. The Agency should offer surplus lands to public agencies (federal, state, local), non-profit organizations, and the general public, as may be appropriate.

3. As a general rule, the Agency should seek to sell surplus properties (or interests in property) at their fair market value. (In some instances, however, it may make sense to convey the property to another public entity such as a town at no cost). Proceeds from the sale of surplus lands should be credited to the Agency's capital account and made available for future state land acquisition and/or other capital development needs.

4. The Agency must be careful that it does not inadvertently undermine its mission through a sale of surplus property by carefully considering the future use the property. This is especially true if the property contains resource values that, while not significant enough to warrant continued fee simple ownership by the state, are still worthy of protection. In certain instances, it may be appropriate to insure certain resource values are protected by retaining (or conveying to another public or non-profit entity) a conservation easement on the property.

4. Under What Circumstances Should the State Continue to Accept Donations of Land? - Over the years, Vermont has benefited greatly from the generosity of numerous landowners that have unselfishly donated thousands of acres to the state for conservation and recreation purposes. As Vermont's population continues to age, an increasing number of landowners are expressing an interest in donating land to the state.

While many proposed land donations may constitute worthy and valuable additions to the state's holdings, that is not to say that all proposed donations should automatically be accepted. The Agency's policies for considering offers to donate land should be based on the same general criteria and mirror those used for reviewing other proposed land transactions.

Recommendations (Donations):

1. Unlike the purchase of state land whereby only the highest priority properties can be pursued because of funding limitations, the Agency may accept donations of lower priority properties. However, the Agency should only accept a donation of land if it meets the minimum standards for state ownership. If the property does not add to or otherwise enhance an existing state land holding and/or contain some resource value(s) of statewide significance, then it should be refused.
2. The Agency should carefully consider the hidden costs of land ownership in considering proposals to donate land. Where appropriate and if feasible, the Agency should seek an endowment from the landowner to recover some of the costs of land management.
3. Donation proposals that are refused by the Agency should, as appropriate, be referred to other public or non-profit land conservation organizations.
4. Donations of property that include buildings, dams, or other structures that come with substantial operations and/or maintenance costs should generally be refused unless it can be shown that these structures will serve a significant public purpose and that the Agency has (or can obtain) the resources necessary to adequately manage and operate these facilities.
5. As with any proposed land conservation transaction, the Agency should fully inform communities of a proposed donation and offer to meet with them to answer questions or address any concerns that may come up.

5. What Role Should Communities Play and What is an Appropriate Level of Public Input?

The acquisition, exchange, or sale of Agency lands can sometimes have a dramatic impact on a community. State land transactions can have both positive and negative effects on a region's economic, environmental and social character. It follows that communities should be actively involved and play a key role in any major decision concerning state lands within their jurisdiction.

Recommendations:

1. The Agency needs to make a concerted effort to involve local communities on a regular basis to discuss land conservation issues of mutual concern and interest. To a much greater extent than is presently practiced, these discussions should be initiated by the Agency on a proactive basis as opposed to simply meeting with a town on an individual project when so requested by the community. The Agency should work cooperatively through the various regional planning commissions to identify the most effective and meaningful means of involving communities and integrating their input into state land conservation decisions.

7. What is the Process for Plan Implementation, Evaluation and Updating? – The Lands Conservation Plan is intended to be a dynamic, flexible document that can be readily adjusted to respond to changing conditions. In developing the plan, it is therefore important to establish a formal process whereby the plan can be evaluated and, if necessary, updated on a regular and systematic basis. The recommendation for a Lands Conservation Forum outlined below will help to serve this purpose and represents a starting point in this regard. (Other recommendations for plan implementation can be found under issue #8 below).

Recommendation:

1. ANR increasingly works with “conservation partners” in the process of acquiring state lands. ANR should take the lead in establishing an annual or semi-annual “*Lands Conservation Forum*” with its working partners in land conservation to serve at least the following objectives:

- Identify general land acquisition objectives for the coming period (especially linked to land acquisition criteria generated by the Land Conservation Planning Process (“LCP”).
- Work together in developing and maintaining a centralized electronic registry or database for Vermont’s conservation lands.
- Surface all project opportunities for the coming period, and weigh those opportunities against each other using LCP criteria.
- Discuss the timing of project opportunities, commitments made to date, and ways in which project timing can be managed.
- Discuss funding needs and opportunities, what funding sources are best matched for individual projects, and the timing of funding requests.
- Encourage creative thinking to troubleshoot problem issues in individual transactions.
- Discuss allocation of roles and responsibilities for individual projects.

Note: Care must be taken to assure the confidentiality of these sessions. Success is often dependent on maintaining landowner confidences and not openly competing in the market with the for-profit sector. Forum participants must work together to develop a mechanism for assuring this need for confidentiality. While participation may vary, attendees should normally include land acquisition representatives from FP&R and F&W, and staff representatives from The Nature Conservancy, Vermont Land Trust, The Green Mountain Club and The Conservation Fund. Representatives from local/regional interests as well as the general public could potentially participate in an open portion of the forum dealing with land conservation issues.

Background Information and Description of Need:

The following elements characterize the current state land acquisition environment:

- In most circumstances, ANR works with a public or non-profit partner in the pre-acquisition process. These partners contribute a variety of resources – staff, technical and legal expertise, and financial resources.
- High quality candidates for state land acquisition are identified and developed both within ANR by department staff, and outside ANR by non-profit conservation partners. These partners often have a “field presence” that surfaces acquisition opportunities not otherwise known to ANR.
- ANR’s conservation partners independently set their own conservation objectives, strategic goals and annual targets. These objectives, goals and targets are rarely linked to ANR’s land acquisition objectives.
- In contrast to historic trends, funding for state land acquisition rarely comes in the form of a line item in the annual capital bill. Instead, ANR must rely on the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board program together with a variety of public and private funding mechanisms.
- The public and non-profit land conservation sector in Vermont should be regarded as a “closed system” with limited financial and human resources. Individual project opportunities compete with each other for time and money within this closed system.

These attributes argue for a systematic “forum” in which ANR and its partners can discuss at least annually, general objectives, specific opportunities, and project-specific strategies.

Benefits of a Land Conservation Forum:

- Better coordination between land conservation staffs.
- Getting the best thinking at the table to help sort out challenging projects.
- Reduce wasted staff effort by making project success more predictable.
- Assure that staff and financial capacity will be available when projects ripen.
- Use each organization’s strengths by matching skills to projects.

8. Define an Efficient ANR Process for ANR Land Conservation Activities – Numerous policies, procedures and statutes guide the Agency’s land transaction activities. The Agency’s Land Acquisition Review Committee (LARC) and the Lands Conservation Plan’s “Process Work Group” jointly assessed these processes. As a starting point, it was agreed that an ideal Agency process would include the following elements:

Advanced notification of proposed land acquisition projects to local and regional officials, while a good idea in theory, can become a difficult issue for the Agency. Discussing land conservation proposals in a public forum, especially before there is a signed agreement in place, can often violate the need to maintain the confidentiality inherent to any real estate transaction. At the same time, there is a legitimate need to inform and seek input from communities before a deal has been signed. Unfortunately, the need for both maintaining confidentiality and providing advance notification to communities of land conservation projects increases with the size of project. Striking a reasonable balance between these two competing needs can become a challenge.

One possible solution that would provide for notification to municipal officials while maintaining a degree of landowner confidentiality would be for the municipal board to discuss the proposed land conservation project in "executive session". In fact, Vermont's Open meeting Law (1 V.S.A., § 310) specifically provides for this opportunity as one of the few exceptions that might warrant a municipal board meeting in executive session (1 V.S.A. §313(a)(2)).

Regardless of which department is taking the lead on a particular project, appraisals are conducted of all proposed acquisitions. Typically, the department arranges for an appraisal by a qualified and licensed independent appraiser. Often, an arrangement is sought whereby the cost of the appraisal is shared equally by the Seller and the State. If federal dollars are involved in a project, the appraisal is reviewed by a review appraiser to insure it conforms to all federal appraisal standards. Most other appraisals are not formally reviewed by a review appraiser but are reviewed by ANR and VHCB staff (if a VHCB project). In any event, the state's purchase price must be substantiated by the property's appraised fair market value.

The following concerns were identified as areas that are in need of improvement in the Agency's current process for implementing land acquisitions and conservation transactions:

- Public perception that state's appraisal process is flawed and that state acquisitions artificially inflate values of similar properties
- Lack of consistency between ANR departments on acquisition process
- Little or no "advance notice" to towns, rpc's on potential acquisition projects
- Inadequate PILOT payments for state lands
- Need for improved funding sources
- Poor coordination among state agencies regarding disposition of state lands

9. Land Conservation and the Economy – There is a strong link between land conservation and the economy. State land conservation transactions can result in a variety of impacts (both short-term and long-term) on local and regional economies. Understanding these impacts is an essential part of any state land conservation program.

Recommendations:

1. ANR should make a conscious effort to become more aware of the economic implications of any proposed land conservation activity and, where feasible, should attempt to quantify these impacts in order to gain a fuller appreciation of the relationship of such activities on local and regional economies. Further, ANR should actively work to maximize the positive economic impacts of individual land conservation projects in a manner that is compatible with conservation, ecological and recreational goals. Examples may include:

- Fostering the continuation of sustainable, privately-owned working forests by participating in the acquisition of conservation easements on forest lands and, where appropriate, promoting sustainable forest management on both new state land acquisitions and on other lands already under its jurisdiction.
- Creative uses of leases and licenses on state land where appropriate to provide for forestry, agricultural, recreational, and possibly commercial uses consistent with the land management objectives and sound stewardship practices.

2. ANR should consider hiring a staff economist and/or utilize outside expertise in order to gain a better appreciation and understanding of the relationship between state land conservation and sustainable economies.

3. ANR should seek out partnerships with the business community, academic institutions, non-profit organizations and other groups in an effort to maximize both the conservation and economic benefits of proposed land conservation transactions.

Background Information on Land Conservation and the Economy:

There is increasing evidence that land conservation (if well planned and thought out) not only makes good environmental sense but can make good economic sense as well. It is more than just coincidence that states with relatively large expanses of conserved land also have some of the strongest economies in the nation. Conserved landscapes and the clean air, water and public outdoor recreation opportunities these areas afford contribute greatly to a region's overall quality of life. These and other quality of life attributes are among the key factors in attracting growth to a region. Businesses and workers prefer to live in areas with a high quality of life.

In Vermont (and elsewhere), public open spaces and conserved lands are also principal attractions of a thriving and growing tourism industry. Over 20 million people live within a day's drive of Vermont. More and more people from nearby urbanized areas choosing to visit Vermont, if only for a few short days, to escape the congestion and development where they live and work. Tourism represents a major component of Vermont's economic activity. Approximately 25% of working Vermonters are engaged in a tourism-related occupation. If current trends continue, travel and tourism may become Vermont's largest industry.

Increasingly, proposals to spend public dollars on conservation lands acquisition are framed in economic terms. Historically, public land acquisition has been justified on a subjective or emotional basis that does not easily translate into economic terms. An increasing body of research, however, illustrates the dollar benefit of open space preservation. The immediate costs of conservation lands acquisition should be weighed against these tangible benefits.

For example, there are several recent studies that shed light on the economic importance of Vermont's open spaces and outdoor recreation resources. A 1993 study by the University of Vermont (The Economic and Social Values of Vermont State Parks) reported that the state's 46 developed state parks generated nearly \$60 million pre year in total visitor expenditures. Other recent studies have shown that snowmobiling generates up to \$45 million per in expenditures in Vermont and more than \$200 million is spent each year in Vermont by hunters and anglers on goods related to hunting and fishing. (These figures must, of course, be qualified by the fact that most hunting, fishing, and snowmobiling occurs on private lands and therefore cannot be directly attributed to Vermont's public open space. Still, Vermont's state forests, parks and wildlife management areas undoubtedly account for a meaningful portion of this economic activity.)

It should also be noted that while developed lands will usually generate greater property tax revenue than public open space, these gains are now offset by Act 60 and the statewide property tax. Also, in comparison with any other land use, the costs of providing municipal services for public open space is very low.

10. Public Education and Information Needs for Land Conservation – One of the Agency of Natural Resources' priority goals for FY'99 is to foster... "a citizenry that is knowledgeable about natural resources" (*ANR Strategic Plan, 1997-1999*). This broad goal cuts across all agency departments and programs. Within this umbrella goal statement, however, there are a number of public education and information needs that pertain specifically to state land conservation activities:

Recommendations:

1. ANR should develop public informational and educational programs and materials relating to state land conservation activities and incorporate this information as a part of its overall conservation education program.
2. Where appropriate and feasible, ANR should coordinate its information and outreach efforts with other "State-wide Environmental Education Program" members.
3. The Land Administration Section should develop "information sheets" on commonly asked questions or topics for public dissemination. Examples could include the following:
 - ANR Land Acquisition Review Committee
 - Donating Land to the State
 - State Land Management Costs
 - State Lands Inventory
 - Summary of Maps of State Lands Available
 - Summary of GIS Data Available
 - State Payment In-Lieu of Taxes
 - Other Conservation Organizations/Agencies
4. Further develop and expand the State Lands website on the Agency's Home Page and provide links to other related sites.

Note: Additional recommendations and ideas relating to public education and information for state land conservation are included under the other "White Papers" of the Lands Conservation Plan.

RECREATION WORK GROUP

WHITE PAPER

Final Draft, February, 1998

The characteristics that residents and visitors have come to expect and enjoy about Vermont are the quality, variety, and accessibility of its natural and recreational resources. The still unspoiled landscape in many areas of Vermont of forests, hill-farm and valley-farm intermingled with compact village centers provides the cornerstone of the recreation resources in Vermont, which have become less common elsewhere in the Northeast.

The recreation and travel industries are important to the quality of life and economic well-being of Vermont. After manufacturing, tourism is the state's second largest industry and provides diversity and stability to the economy. Each year, approximately 10 million visitors come to Vermont to mainly enjoy the scenery and the outdoor activities that are afforded by the rural nature of the state. The public and private sectors have complemented each other in developing and providing diverse, year-round recreational opportunities and experiences through various types of facilities and resources.

These resources are the natural and cultural resources, as well as the existing recreational facilities and open space found on both public and private lands. Natural resources include the very special land, waters, flora and fauna, scenic landscapes, and environmental systems that together compose our natural environment. Few places have surface waters as clean, or offer cross-state trails, such as the Long and Catamount Trails, as well as dozens of major ski areas, thousands of miles of snowmobile trails, open space, campgrounds, scenic roads, and Lake Champlain. Cultural resources include historic and archaeological sites, 19th Century villages, covered bridges, country inns, and special community events such as "sugar-on-snow" celebrations, music and craft festivals, theater, and major sporting events. And existing parks and recreational facilities, in addition to the natural environment and cultural resources, include opportunities provided by federal, state, and municipal governments as well as the private sector. It has been estimated that 85% of outdoor recreation occurs on the lands of thousands of private landowners, whose farms and forests are the place of so many informal opportunities for outdoor recreation.

Each decade brings new challenges. Recreation is usually an opportunity that is taken for granted; people do not know what they have until it is gone. The value of outdoor recreation cannot be based solely on the amount of dollars generated; the intrinsic nature of the experiences and benefits it provides are equally as important in determining its worth. This white paper identifies trends and issues affecting and challenging recreation providers, and possible recommendations and solutions for land conservation for the future.

TRENDS AFFECTING RECREATION AND TOURISM

There are many trends in people's participation in outdoor recreation and in the provision of these opportunities by federal, state, and local governments as well as by private industries. A summary of the more prevalent trends will help put in context the needs, desires, and directions for land conservation for outdoor recreation.

National Trends and How They Affect Vermont

Demographic trends affect the types of services, programs and facilities that the public and private sectors provide for recreation as well as the types of activities people participate in and their travel patterns. The more important trends that must be considered are:

As the population of the United States and Vermont continues to increase [however, it has slowed compared to other periods], the numbers of participants will continue to increase for almost all recreational activities. Almost 95% of all Americans participate in some form of recreation. If additional opportunities are not provided, whether services, programs, or lands, there will be increased competition for the opportunities that are available. Increased growth may also have positive impacts in that with the increased demand, recreation providers will continue to provide better and more services, programs and facilities to meet the demands.

There will be continual aging of the US and Vermont population with a big bulge in the 35 to 54-age group as the Baby Boomers age and dramatic growth in the 55+ age group through the first decade of the new century. Elderly people are, by many measures, the wealthiest group of our society, the most politically powerful, and the biggest recipients of "welfare." More programs and activities will need to be focused on the aging Baby Boomers as they have, and will continue to participate in very active leisure pursuits. The aging Baby Boomers will also continue to have the most disposable income for leisure pursuits.

The economic haves and have nots are splitting further and further apart. The gap between the rich and poor is greater in the US than in other modern nations. While there will be people that can afford almost any activity, there will continue to be those that are economically disadvantaged and will not be able to afford to participate in many recreational activities, especially those that are high tech, which are usually more expensive. The rural nature of Vermont compounds this discrepancy. Many disadvantaged Vermonters do not have access to transportation to be able to participate in outdoor recreation programs.

The educational levels of Americans continues to rise. There is a correlation between the types of activities one participates in and educational level. Usually higher educational levels correlates with higher tech and adventure-type activities.

There is a growing influence of women in society and business, and a blurring of gender roles. Related, there continues to be changes in household variety, including the increase in childless homes, and fragmented family patterns due to reduced rates of marriage, higher divorce rates, lower fertility, and more diversity in living arrangements. There is also increasing cultural diversity sensitivity in the US. Recreation providers have become sensitive to various "special" groups and different household characteristics. There will need to be more diverse programs and activities that are related to these diverse groups. In addition, the family travel and recreation market will continue to increase. The move back towards emphasis on the family will have an impact on services and programs offered. Crime and the fear of crime have become a major factor shaping everyday life in America. Even in parks and recreation areas, safety is now a major concern.

Employment. Advances in technology and engineering are causing employment in the goods-producing sector to decline in importance, and employment in the service-producing sector to gain importance. Tourism is one of the fastest growing social and economic activities in many parts of the nation and the world, and provides mainly service-sector jobs. In Vermont, it has

been estimated that 25% of working Vermonters are engaged in a tourism-related occupation (1992 Vermont Recreation Survey).

Advances in telecommunications and transportation are also enabling increasing numbers of businesses and workers to locate wherever they choose. They are no longer bound to locate close to the extraction or manufacture of goods. Businesses and workers will choose to live in areas of high quality of life characteristics [clean and high quality natural resources and outdoor recreation opportunities are an integral components of quality of life].

Technology. New technologies have driven the participation in new activities, such as bungee jumping, mountain biking, parasailing, and kayaking. Technology is also aiding the development of new equipment to make access more possible and effective for persons with disabilities, therefore, increasing the demand for opportunities.

By the end of this century how we and our customers communicate will be dramatically different from yesterday. The explosion in communications technology, needs, and responses will continually tax our ability to respond to change. Recreation and travel providers will need to change their means of providing information to visitors to be responsive to these technological, and eventually social changes.

Recreation, Travel and Leisure. The amount of leisure time afforded Americans and Vermonters has been decreasing. People feel significantly more rushed, value their free time more, and increasingly recognize the link between use of leisure and health. Pleasure trips of shorter distance and duration will continue to grow at a greater rate than longer, more "extended" trips. Travel will become more and more time-sensitive as households with two-income earners are more constrained by the convenience of compatible time than by the availability of finances. In addition, vacation planning is becoming more and more spontaneous with less planning involved. As Vermont is within a day's driving distance of many millions of people, it is possible that there will be more shorter duration trips to Vermont. Most travelers to Vermont are repeat visitors (87%) on overnight trips (92%) with an average of 3.9 nights spent in Vermont (*Vermont Travel Information Study, 1997*).

National trends in specific recreation activities include (from *National Outdoor Recreation Survey, 1995*):

- Four most popular outdoor recreation activities are walking; visiting a beach or water site; family gathering; and sightseeing.
- Land-based activities that have seen the greatest growth since 1982 are: bird watching (155%); hiking (94%); backpacking (73%); camping-primitive area (58%); attending an outdoor concert or play (55%); off-road driving (44%); walking (43%); sightseeing (39%); camping-developed area (37%); attending a sports event (35%); golf (29%); outdoor team sports (25%); camping-overall (25%); picnicking (16%); and running/jogging (14%). Land-based activities that have lost participants are horseback riding (-10%); hunting (-12%); and tennis (-29%). Fishing and hunting license sales have continued to decrease in Vermont.
- Water-based activities that have seen the greatest growth since 1982 are: motorboating (40%); swimming/river, lake or ocean (38%); boating-overall (17%); swimming/pool (16%); and water skiing (13%). Water-based activities that have lost participants are sailing (9%) and fishing (4%).

In Vermont, 82% of all Vermonters used a lake or pond for recreation at least once in 1995. Most popular activities were: sunbathing, picnicking, walking or hiking (67%); swimming (62%); observing wildlife, including birds (58%); paddling or rowing a boat (36%); camping overnight (34%); fishing from a boat (33%); fishing from the shore (33%); motorboat cruising (31%); and waterskiing (13%).

- Snow/ice-based activities that have seen the greatest growth since 1982 are: downhill skiing (59%); snowmobiling (34%); cross-country skiing (23%); and sledding (16%). Ice skating is down by 1%.
- Percent of US population participating in various grouped activities are: viewing activities (76 million); fitness activities (68 million); social activities (68 million); swimming (54 million); outdoor adventure (37 million); boating (29 million); fishing (29 million); team sports (25 million); camping (26 million); individual sports (22 million); snow/ice activities (18 million); and hunting (9 million).
- Viewing, photographing, and learning about nature and history attract over 150 million participants annually. In Vermont, 83% of all Vermonters ages 16 and older participated in wildlife-based recreation with 62% participating in non-consumptive wildlife recreation such as bird feeding or wildlife viewing (*1991 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation by US Fish and Wildlife Service*). According to surveys completed by the Department of Tourism and Marketing, most visitors are interested in participating in heritage tourism activities when visiting Vermont.

Recreationists and travelers will seek more "back-to-nature" and personally enriching experiences. Depersonalization of the workplace, coupled with high technology work and living environments, will create a need for high quality and enriching recreation and travel experiences such as adventure travel, heritage tourism, ecotourism, and sustainable tourism.

There are many new emerging "consumer" trends, such as the desire for convenience over complexity, new consumerism where we are in control, expectations for quality service, and bargain mania. This is evident in the number of "packaged" tours and vacations now available. People also expect value and high quality services and programs in whatever type of experience they participate in (i.e., resort vacations, state park campgrounds, bed 'n breakfast inns).

Increasingly, the dichotomy between static park and recreation infrastructure and a dynamic visitation pattern is creating stress on built systems and compromising the quality of the visitor experience. Public facilities in Vermont, especially at state parks, is grossly outdated and does not meet the standards expected of today. As visitors' and their needs change, public entities will need to make changes as well.

Increased transportation and ease of access will become increasingly critical. Mass transportation as a mode of vacation travel and other travel will begin to return. Adequate service to areas outside major metropolitan areas and corridors will be a continuing challenge to tourism development. Major investment in our system of highways will be critical to maintaining viable tourism and recreation activity. Developing adequate transportation linkages for multi-modal transportation will remain a substantial challenge in the future. This has become evident in Vermont with the marketing of Amtrak trains as a means to bicycle or ski Vermont as an escape from New York and other eastern seaboard cities.

Resource Use, Allocation, and Management. There is the emergence of more and more splinter groups vying with each other for limited resources. This creates greater polarization and creation of "us" versus "them," with growing unwillingness to listen to the other side of a position. Often resulting from these diverse groups are user conflicts and resources specifically designated for a type of recreational activity.

There is an increasing shift from commodity values to amenity values in the use of our natural resources. This is particularly evident in Vermont with more and more groups forming to protest cutting of timber on public lands and advocating the protection of the resources for outdoor recreation, biodiversity, and future generations' appreciation.

Tourists and recreationists will tend to become more destination-oriented, which will place challenges on managing increased numbers of visitors and impacts to the environment. As the unique character of Vermont is appreciated and cherished by more and more people outside of Vermont, they will be selecting Vermont as a destination. Foreign visitation from overseas countries to the United States and Vermont will also continue to increase. The travel industry has been aggressively marketing to foreign markets and trying to recapture some of the US market share that it has slowly losing over the last decade or so. As more people come to Vermont because of its natural and cultural resources and opportunities, there will be more and more impacts to the very resources that are cherished.

For the recreation and tourism industry, management, as well as marketing and sales, will become increasingly important. Managing tourism so that its benefits to our economy and the visitor are high while its costs are low will be paramount. Without management, high levels of visitation and use can damage fragile resources that serve as the foundation for travel and recreation. It can affect the quality of life of those that live in popular destinations.

There are more and more pressures for incompatible uses of public lands (i.e., landfills, communication towers) as well as for privatization of public lands for various types of recreation (i.e., ecotourism, ski areas, RV and ATV parks). Managers are having to weigh the public benefits against resource protection.

There will be a scarcity and substantially rising cost of open recreational space in general and particularly in and near urban areas. Citizens will find increasingly limited opportunities to pursue recreational activities which require outdoor spaces. Increasing costs will make it more difficult for agencies and organizations to acquire and maintain land. The regions of the country rich in open spaces will be increasingly sought after, and this is especially true for Vermont as we are located within a day's drive of many millions of people.

Increasingly, park and recreation managers are considering transportation systems, allocation of resources to specific uses, reservations, limitation of entry, fees, visitor information and education, visitor demonstration of skill/knowledge, and other use control strategies to ameliorate pressures from congestion, crowding, and degradation to the natural resources.

Issues

A number of issues have been identified that are related to lands conservation for recreation opportunities. Briefly summarized these issues are:

Resource Use and Allocation. Accompanying the growth in visitation at many recreation areas, visitors and managers often complain about crowding, congestion, and a loss in the quality of visitor experience. Conflict resolution, resource use and management tradeoffs, limits of acceptable change, human carrying capacity, limits of growth, and sustainability are becoming more frequent in terms of managing resources and areas for outdoor recreation.

Resource Degradation. The unique character of Vermont, which annually draws up to 10 million visitors, is changing, and continually threatened, as Vermont's population grows, and more and more people discover Vermont. The loss of the scenic landscape is an important recreation-related issue as scenic resources provide the backdrop for many activities and the reason why people visit Vermont (*1993 Vermont Recreation Plan*).

The cumulative impacts of increased development, adverse encroachments and other incompatible land uses continue to threaten and are steadily diminishing Vermont's wetlands, critical habitats, and unique resources. In addition, inappropriate uses and overuse by some forms of recreational activities are also adversely affecting many of these resources (*1993 Vermont Recreation Plan*).

Water Resources. Vermont's outstanding scenic, natural, and recreational water resources continue to be threatened by a variety of sources such as pollution, inappropriate development and land uses, and aquatic nuisance species, and the existing mechanisms for protection and conservation are inadequate. The development and management of water-based recreation opportunities are also inadequate to meet the needs of Vermonters (*1993 Vermont Recreation Plan; Lake Champlain Opportunities for Action; and Connecticut River Management Plan*).

- Lack of swimming areas on Vermont lakes, ponds, rivers and streams.
- Lack of access to remote or "wilderness" ponds for passive or quiet recreational use activities, where appropriate.
- Lack of access to Lake Champlain and other lakes, ponds, rivers and streams.

Land Resources. Access to and use of Vermont's public and private land-based resources, in terms of both quantity and quality, are diminishing perceptibly (*1993 Vermont Recreation Plan*). It is estimated that 85% of recreational activities occur on private lands. Decisions by private landowners ultimately affect the availability of recreational opportunities in Vermont. The long-standing tradition of open, private lands for recreational use is eroding in Vermont due to a number of factors, such as the property tax structure, recreational use pressures on these lands resulting in disregard for private property (vandalism, littering, cutting fences, etc.), landowner liability, and conflicts between different user groups and between landowner property uses and perceived rights of the users. Posting of private land is moving users from private lands to public lands, therefore, placing greater pressures on public lands. This is evident recently with loss of snowmobiling trails due to posting of private land in protest to education funding and timber heavy cut laws, and more pressures for hunting public lands as a result of more and more areas posted to no hunting or fishing.

Increased uses and pressures on public lands are causing congestion, overcrowding, and resource degradation at more popular public recreational areas. Public land managing agencies are not able to keep up with increased demands for access to lands and water for emerging forms of recreation and travel. The 1997 random public survey for the ANR Lands Conservation Strategy planning process found that 95.3% of Vermonters think that it is important for the state "to provide areas for outdoor recreation activities," 91.6% think it important "to provide opportunities for non-motorized recreation," 85.9% felt it important "to provide public hunting opportunities," 89.4%

felt it important "to provide public access to fishing areas," and 66.3% felt it is not important for the state to provide opportunities for riding motorized recreational vehicles." Outdoor recreation was the third most important reason to acquire land. In general, people want more areas to recreate for their particular activity, such as access to "quiet" waters for canoe or kayak camping, remote or backcountry experiences, ATV trails, and mountain bike trails.

Existing trails, greenways, and recreation paths in Vermont are inadequate to meet the needs of Vermonters and visitors (1993 Vermont Recreation Plan and 1993 Vermont Trails and Greenways Plan). The resource base used for trails and greenways is continually threatened by human growth and development, and the posting of private lands. Most trail systems are located on private lands. Competing, and sometimes conflicting, uses for trails has become more common. Other trail users have few opportunities on public lands for their activity. People are expecting more and more recreation paths close to home, such as on abandoned railroads.

Recommendations

The following actions or recommendations have been identified in previous studies, reports, and plans.

- 1) A proactive planning assessment for various types of recreational opportunities needs to be conducted in order to specifically determine areas and sites that should be acquired for recreational purposes.

Water Resources

- 1) Secure additional access to Lake Champlain, and other interior lakes (1996 DFW Strategic Plan; DFW Access Area Plan; 1993 Vermont Recreation Plan; Opportunities for Action - Lake Champlain; 1994 Finding Common Ground: Conserving the Northern Forest; & 1991 Acquisition Survey Report).
- 2) Secure remote camping sites and adequate management for the Lake Champlain Paddler's Trail and Connecticut River, and develop a system for remote lake camping experiences on both lakes and ponds and rivers and streams (1993 Vermont Recreation Plan, 1993 Trails and Greenways Plan & Opportunities for Action - Lake Champlain).
- 3) Permanently protect "wilderness" or remote ponds through public acquisition of shorelines (1993 Vermont Recreation Plan). Providing access to wilderness or remote ponds should be carefully considered so that the character of the remote or wilderness pond does not change dramatically. Where appropriate, limited access to these lakes are important for quiet and passive recreational pursuits.
- 4) Continue to protect additional wetlands by acquiring land for fish and wildlife, recreation and special needs, such as endangered species protection (1993 Vermont Recreation Plan & 1996 DFW Strategic Plan).
- 5) Protecting undeveloped lakes and river shores (1991 Acquisition Survey Report & 1993 Vermont Recreation Plan).
- 6) Public recreational access to rivers (1996 DFW Strategic Plan) should continue to be a high priority for land acquisition for canoeing, swimming and fishing, and for trails and greenways

(1993 Vermont Recreation Plan & 1994 Finding Common Ground: Conserving the Northern Forest).

- 7) Acquire lands surrounding the Green River Reservoir for recreational opportunities *(1997 Acquisition Priorities in the Northern Forest).*

Trails, Greenways and Recreation Paths

- 1) Continue to protect existing and potential trail corridors *(1993 Trails and Greenways Plan)*. Acquiring lands that would make possible new long-distance trail systems, either foot trails, bicycle trails, or boat trails *(1991 Acquisition Survey Report)*.
- 2) Acquire lands to protect the northern section of the Long Trail *(1997 Acquisition Priorities in the Northern Forest)*.
- 3) Continue to protect Vermont's mountain tops and ridge lines from inappropriate and poorly sited development *(1993 Trails and Greenways Plan)*.
- 4) Through conservation greenways, protect natural resources to maintain wildlife corridors, biodiversity, and recreation and aesthetic values *(1993 Trails and Greenways Plan)*.
- 5) Protect and promote historical trails, roads and corridors *(1993 Trails and Greenways Plan)*.
- 6) Continue to support and encourage trail and greenway linkages with public lands to develop interconnected systems *(1993 Trails and Greenways Plan)*.
- 7) Acquisition of lands to protect trail corridors should consider less than fee simple options, such as easements.

Land Resources

- 1) Additional land is needed to increase opportunities for recreation, to complete ongoing programs, for boundary consolidation, and where in-holding parcels need to be acquired to achieve more effective management of the resource *(1993 Vermont Recreation Plan & 1996 DFW Strategic Plan)*. Additional lands are also needed in order to start resolving user conflicts due to overcrowding and congestion.
- 2) Acquire additional lands for future state park development *(1997 State Parks Long Range Plan)*. Specific sites or areas throughout Vermont need to be identified as potential sites for new state parks for current and future development (landbanking).
- 3) In land acquisition, emphasize access to water resources, protection of trail corridors, wildlife habitat, special resources, and on consolidating land holdings *(1993 Vermont Recreation Plan)*.
- 4) Continue to acquire and provide public access to natural areas that are not too sensitive to receive recreational use *(1993 Vermont Recreation Plan)*.
- 5) Secure significant cave sites, unique forests, and geologic sites (gorges, cliffs, etc.) to protect resources and provide recreational access as appropriate *(1993 Vermont Recreation Plan)*.

- 6) To provide remote and wilderness recreation opportunities, as well as traditional recreation, need to protect two wildlands in Vermont: the spine of the northern Green Mountains from Mount Mansfield to the Canadian border, including the Worcester Mountains; and the Nulhegan and Victory Basins in the Northeast Kingdom (*1997 Northern Forest Alliance Wildlands Proposal*).

Types of Recreation Resources Identified as Priorities

- Trails and Greenways, especially the Long Trail, Loop Trail Opportunities, and Recreation Paths (rail-trails)
- Conservation Corridors and Buffers along Shorelines
- Undeveloped and Remote Lakes
- State Parks
- Waterfront for Swimming, Fishing Access, and Boating (especially Lake Champlain)
- Inholdings
- Contiguous Land
- Large Tracts for Traditional Recreational Uses
- Game Lands (public hunting areas)
- Islands
- Mountain Tops and Ridgelines
- Geologic and Unique Features -- Waterfalls and Gorges, Caves
- Scenic Views/Vistas/Overlooks and Scenic Corridors
- Natural Areas
- Historical and Archeological Sites
- Lands that can help alleviate conflicts in other areas
- Swimming holes on rivers

ECOLOGICAL WORK GROUP

WHITE PAPER

Final Draft, February, 1998

AN ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON PUBLIC LANDS OWNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN VERMONT

The Ecological Work Group recommends a combination of focusing protection resources both on the critical resources of given species or natural communities and on a reserve approach, as the means for Vermont to maintain its ecological values for the long term. A working rural landscape, with its many economic and cultural assets, can help maintain the ecological goals of protecting Vermont's native biodiversity.

One of the challenges in the protection of Vermont's ecological values is to develop a public understanding of some fairly complex ideas, and even what protecting a state's native biodiversity means. There is a fairly strong well of public support for traditional measures of ecological values, such as protection of wildlife and healthy forests. People also generally support the protection of rare species. Unfortunately, what gets lost, and is often the source of conflict between interest groups, is that we now know that protection of these values is not possible by simply focusing on isolated parcels of land or isolated species. Protection of biodiversity is often nothing more than a synthesis, on a landscape scale, of the interactions between these three traditional measures of ecological resources. These in turn then must be integrated into our economic uses of the same landscape. Even with public understanding, this will be difficult, but it does not need to be divisive. However, it will not be possible without more public education and public leadership on the issues of biodiversity protection than now occurs.

To protect Vermont's native biodiversity, we envision a reserve system that would use fee acquisition for the core reserve areas themselves and easements or other protection tools to protect the surrounding lands and the interconnections between core reserves. While these spiderwebs may appear intimidating on a planning map, the reality is that much of the land area covered by the reserve would be private land, subject to easements to maintain the ecological viability of the landscape and to prevent fragmentation. Public ownership would be targeted at the smaller core reserve areas where uses would be limited in an effort to maintain natural communities that have high levels of biological integrity. The surrounding areas, protected by easements, would help maintain sustainable working forests, as well as Vermont's traditional rural landscape, for many parts of the state.

The Ecological Work Group wants to stress that using this approach will be successful only if the Agency's review of land protection opportunities is put into a larger context than a parcel-by-parcel assessment of values, and only if protection options greatly expand beyond fee acquisitions. The state needs to take an approach to land protection that is far less reactive and based more on approaching land owners with options that fit into a well-developed system designed to provide long term viability to the nature we all enjoy and use.

I. WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT ECOLOGICALLY BASED CONSERVATION

- In the last 20 years we have learned that any isolated piece of habitat, even on the scale of our largest national parks, loses native species over time no matter what level of protection or

original biological integrity the habitat had. Habitat that is surrounded by, or connected to, other natural landscapes has a better chance of maintaining species over time.

- Protecting biodiversity is a major part of making land acquisition and management decisions from an ecological point of view: conserving biodiversity means maintaining functional examples of all natural community types and viable populations of all of a region's native species, as well as the interrelationships they have with each other and their biological and physical systems. It includes the protection of natural ecological processes at local and regional scales, and is impacted by global environmental issues such as air pollution and climate change.
- We lack understanding and knowledge of many of our native species; therefore if we are to protect biodiversity efficiently we must look for some way to focus on aspects of the environment that capture the essential needs of a wide variety of species at one time. Two approaches that have been used are natural communities (theory: if the full variability of all natural communities is protected, then most native species will be protected as well) and landscapes (theory: if all landscape types are protected, then most natural communities and most native species will be protected).
- For some species we know their ecological requirements well enough to be able to focus protection and management work to specific habitat or ecological processes in order to maintain their populations (i.e. bat hibernaculum).
- It is far cheaper to maintain existing populations of species than to reintroduce species into ecosystems, or to rescue species at the brink of extinction.
- In order to protect the long-term viability of all native species and natural communities, it is necessary that a large proportion of the landscape (estimates range from 25-50%) be managed with native species and natural communities in mind. This does not mean all that landscape must be publicly owned or a natural area. Much of it can and should be working forest, but it does mean there is a need for long term predictability that those habitats will address issues related to biodiversity.
- We have a relatively unique situation in the northern forests of the Northeast to maintain and improve the region's ecological integrity because some of the more intensive land uses that have heavily and permanently fragmented landscapes in much of the rest of the East and Midwest have come only more recently to this area. The forest has had a chance to revegetate in a less disturbed condition than in other areas, where people are faced with maintaining biodiversity as islands of natural landscape in a sea of fragmentation not conducive to long-term ecological integrity. Vermont's landscape still retains the relatively high degree of connected-ness that is so important for maintaining an area's ecological health.
- Most ecological systems are exceedingly complex, sometimes with subtle changes creating dramatic effects, and in many cases the systems are too complex to fully understand (particularly within reasonable costs and time frames). Therefore, it is important that we have examples of natural communities and landscapes that we manage to maintain natural ecological processes for other intrinsic values and so that we can learn more about these processes and compare them to areas we more intensively manage.

- Compared to most states, Vermont has few globally rare species, and has low overall biodiversity. This does not make Vermont unimportant in the regional biodiversity picture, but it makes our work more manageable than that of a high-diversity state like Hawaii.
- Large problems remain for the ecology of Vermont's ecosystems and the long-term viability of its biodiversity. Invasive exotic species are increasingly prevalent, and even some relatively non-invasive, but non-native species may create changes that are detrimental to ecological integrity. Extirpation or extinction of some species also may create problems without remedy.
- Our ability to protect aquatic ecosystems (we still are at the beginning stages of even classifying the natural communities) and their biodiversity is rudimentary.
- There are many information resources available to help biodiversity protection in Vermont. These include the extensive databases of the Nongame and Natural Heritage Program, where information on locations and condition of rare species and the natural communities of Vermont resides. In addition, the ANR Biodiversity Committee has created a list of data available in a short paper called *The Elements of Biodiversity* and has summarized much of that data, particularly what has been inventoried, in a report of a Biodiversity Workshop that the committee held in 1995. A 1996 publication of the Nongame and Natural Heritage Program *Natural Communities of Vermont Uplands and Wetlands* details the states upland communities. Work as part of the Vermont Biodiversity Project (a partnership of public agencies and non-profits) is ongoing to classify the aquatic communities of the state. The Vermont Biodiversity Project, led by the Conservancy, is also working to use Vermont's scientific ecological expertise, known data throughout the state, and GIS analytical capacity to outline and ground truth a comprehensive statewide reserve system. A grassroots effort led by a nonprofit called the Wildlands Project is doing outreach and education about reserves systems, and though it has created reserve system designs elsewhere, currently it has no plans to in Vermont. The Conservancy is also undertaking a national effort to look at biodiversity at an ecoregional level and will have some data to contribute in the future.

II. THE CHALLENGES

- Most North American landscapes, including Vermont's, are becoming increasingly fragmented, and thus are isolating natural habitats from their landscape surroundings. We are shifting from low intensity agricultural and forestry use to more intensive land uses, such as suburbanization, large road corridors, and more intensive forestry and agriculture, which can have more lasting impacts on native species and ecosystems.
- Most public land acquisition and management is oriented toward a few specific goals rather than toward overall ecosystem health and integrity. Studies in other state have shown little relationship between the distribution of representative landscapes, natural communities, or rare species and the location of public lands; it is not likely to be different in Vermont. Land acquisition and management often puts more focus on game species and recreation with less specific focus on ecosystem integrity and biodiversity conservation. On the positive side, the less intensive approach toward management on state lands in Vermont has probably helped biodiversity issues.
- The State's current land protection and management capacity is extremely limited.

- Although there is widespread public support for maintaining wildlife and healthy ecosystems, there seems to be less support for public agency ownership of large tracts of working forest land. There is a mistaken perception that the need to incorporate ecological considerations into management of large proportions of the landscape means that that landscape will be owned by government agencies.
- Much biological inventory work remains to be done before we can confidently measure our successes in conserving biodiversity.
- Residents' knowledge of biodiversity remains low and thus makes creating a reserve system difficult. In addition, resources for landowners wanting to manage land to protect ecological values remain limited.

III. SOME POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- The ecological goal of public land acquisition and the protection of ecological values should be the protection of viable, high quality examples of all native species and natural communities, and to capture the variation of these across their respective ecoregion, that are not adequately protected on other lands.
- Protection of ecological values and fee land acquisition are not synonymous. We need to greatly expand the types of protection tools used by the state such as conservation easements, management agreements, management leases, tax credits etc. In exchange for long term assurances of appropriate management, the state could provide financial assistance for owners undertaking new management, or even contributing to some of the start-up costs of the new management that would protect ecological resources. The amount of educational work with landowners discussing long-term ecological goals and how management affects those goals should greatly increase. All of these tools are particularly important in order to protect ecological processes and to minimize landscape fragmentation, issues where it will be impossible financially and politically to solve problems simply by public ownership of land.
- Focus protection work on those ecological values not readily available or protected in a permanent manner on private lands (hereinafter called ecological values).
- Generally focus land protection or management activity on ecosystems and natural communities. However, some consideration may be given to rare and endangered species, indicator species (a species, often relatively rare, that serves as a measure of greater ecological integrity, often of processes) or important game species, but these species should not drive management which could be detrimental to overall ecological integrity. Use natural communities as one of the primary coarse filters to capture native biodiversity.
- Inventory, protection, and management priorities should be set by looking at area-wide issues, not just a property by property assessment. Some work should be done to prioritize protection work from a regional basis so money and resources are used efficiently.
- Encourage ecosystem management of public lands and increase the integration of management between agencies. To the extent possible, include ecological processes in the definition of what is being protected.

- Create a “natural areas” category of State land protection, usually fee or easement acquisitions, that will protect the most important sites of viable populations of rare and endangered species, necessary wildlife habitat, and viable natural communities. These are usually small sites that sit in a landscape of low intensity use that have high ecological value.
- Generally follow a limited reserve system model for protecting ecological values. This is a system of protected areas that contain a core where ecological integrity is highest (and some of these should represent the old-growth condition) surrounded by low intensity land use, that maintains a reasonable level of biological integrity designed to support the core and connect one reserve to another.
- Try to keep corridors of low intensity land use, preferably multiple corridors, open between reserves, or do not separate reserves from each other by great expanses of high intensity land use.
- Design reserves as much as possible so they can change with changing ecological conditions (diversity of landscape type such as geology and topography are important within a reserve).
- Design reserves to minimize long-term management costs.
- Design reserves to take advantage of clusters of significant natural communities and rare species so that we minimize the amount of land in public ownership while capturing the most biodiversity value.
- Large fee ownership by public agencies should be focused on reserve cores and natural areas. When ecological values can be adequately protected over a 100-year scenario using tools that keep the land private, then that approach should be given priority.
- Protection of biodiversity and ecological values does not preclude public access. One should just start with what the ecological needs of the land are and then overlay recreation and private land uses on that, rather than trying to change the ecology to fit the recreation or other use. Maintaining the ecological integrity within a landscape is the least costly, least conflict driven approach in the long run to a healthy ecosystem that incorporates human use and activity.
- Inventory public lands to determine what ecological/biodiversity values they provide including high quality examples of natural communities, rare species habitat, and critical or limiting habitat for wildlife.
- Existing public lands should have protection plans completed that determine what land or other ecological values should be protected to create public ownership boundaries that are determined by ecological parameters. We need to know where to stop expansion of public land ownership.
- Continue biodiversity inventory of the state, with cooperation and permission of landowners, and regularly assess adequacy of biodiversity protection in the state.
- Develop a method of classification and inventory of aquatic species and communities so that land protection work can efficiently focus work and money at creating buffers and riparian zones where the most benefit to biodiversity is gained.

- Greatly increase the State's ability to fight the invasion of exotic species into reserve core areas and other areas of high ecological value such as the highest quality examples of natural communities.
- Increase the Agency of Natural Resources' land protection capacity (people and money) which will make the state less reliant on regulatory programs in its efforts to protect ecological values.
- Fund and increase the Agency's educational capacity so that the public has a clear understanding of why the protection of ecological values is important, and how a reserve system and an ecosystem approach to management benefits Vermont's biodiversity. Land acquisition without context will not be politically acceptable over the long term.

IV. DEFINITIONS

Biodiversity - The variety of life and its processes, including all native species, the genetic differences between them, and the natural communities in which they occur, as well as all the ecological processes that keep them functioning and viable over the long term.

Biodiversity (Agency of Natural Resources definition) - The variety of plants and animal, their genetic variability, their interrelationships, and the biological and physical systems, communities and landscapes in which they exist.

Ecosystem - A complex array of organisms, their natural environment, the interactions between them, and the ecological processes that sustain the system.

Natural Community - An assemblage of plants and animals that is found recurring across the landscape under similar environmental conditions, where natural processes, rather than human disturbances, prevail.

Landscape - A heterogeneous area of land containing groups of natural communities and clusters of interacting ecosystems. These can be of widely varying scales, but normally include a range of elevations, bedrock, and soils.

Reserve - An area of land, managed with the long-term conservation of biodiversity in mind. These areas are large enough to incorporate functioning natural processes and usually are a mix of land uses. The "core" reserve is usually surrounded by a landscape of mixed, but low intensity land use, where the biodiversity needs are mixed with human economic needs in a manner that does not destroy the long-term viability of the populations of native species protected by the reserve. Reserves need to be connected with each other with corridors of low intensity land use, or placed in relatively close proximity to each other.

Core Reserve - A relatively small area of land, set aside for the conservation of biodiversity, where management is focused on mimicking natural conditions and processes that usually maintain an ecologically mature state of the communities represented and protected by the reserve.

Protected - The use of a wide variety of binding mechanisms that will ensure the maintenance of predictable conditions (though not necessarily static conditions) for a given area of land or water over the 100 year time frame.

FOREST RESOURCE VALUES WORK GROUP

WHITE PAPER

Final Draft, February, 1998

Overview

In addition to providing recreation and wildlife habitat, forests are the very underpinning of Vermont's rural working landscape, serving as the economic base for many communities. At a minimum, a statewide lands conservation plan needs to consider the impact of an acquisition and conservation program on the ability of our state's rural culture to survive; preferably, the plan should strengthen Vermont's rural culture.

Discussion

Specific to working forests, members of the Forest Resource Values Work Group believe when the state seeks to conserve large tracts of parcels primarily valuable for their timber resources -- as opposed to lands with rich ecological or recreational values -- the state needs to be sensitive to the rural economy often dependent on the timber industry, which, in turn, can impact the entire fabric of rural communities.

To the extent possible within the Lands Conservation Plan, the state's conservation efforts should seek to sustain Vermont's rural culture by keeping the state's forest industry viable, continuing to allow hunting, fishing, and other forms of recreation on state lands, and providing towns with the first opportunity to conserve properties primarily of local or regional importance. Vermont's forest industry -- and, correspondingly, large blocks of working forests -- is a critical component of maintaining this rural culture. Although protection of Vermont's rural culture is not an explicit responsibility of the Agency of Natural Resources, work group members note that it is reflected in the Agency's philosophy and mission, which states: "We believe that people have a right to the reasonable use and enjoyment of the state's natural resources." It is also in keeping with the Agency's strategic plan, which, among its 25 goals, calls for the "sustainable use of, and development of markets for, natural resources" and good fish and wildlife recreational opportunities.

In implementing its Lands Conservation Plan, the state will ensure the continued, sustainable extraction of timber resources from large blocks of working forest lands while striving to ensure that the following values inherent to large acreages of forest land are protected in a balanced manner:

1. Aesthetics
2. Wildlife
3. Fisheries
4. Recreation
5. Timber Production
6. Watershed protection
7. Prevention of fragmentation

The Agency should not pursue acquisition or other means of conserving isolated parcels without any of these public values.

It is becoming increasingly clear that land owned in fee by the state is expected to provide values not guaranteed on private lands. However, the resources of the Agency are not expected to increase to meet all of the demands of various interest groups.

The Agency of Natural Resources has added substantial fee acreage during the past decade while reducing the size of its staff. At the same time, district offices have taken on the responsibility of administering new programs, which has limited the time available for managing existing state lands. This has resulted in a decrease in the quality and intensity of management for all forest resources values. The addition of more fee land without increased staff and resources will certainly aggravate this situation.

Without properly managed state-owned lands, the state risks undermining the rural culture of communities where forestry accounts for a portion of the local economy. Traditional uses of forest land need to be maintained unless a present use is causing severe damage to natural resources; the state should pay special note to important areas within a large parcel it may be considering to conserve, such as wellhead protection areas, locally important gravel pits, and threatened and endangered species habitat.

The Forest Resource Values Work Group recommends an increased use of public-private partnerships. These partnerships may exhibit a variety of formats but should address the values listed above. Any number of creative cooperative projects (such as exchanges, easements, and mutual management agreements) should be used to meet the state's land conservation goals. The outright purchase of development rights, or in some cases timber rights, are currently common. The state should encourage towns to use creative approaches and negotiation to achieve conservation in concert with growth.

Easements are relatively new tools in the conservation arena. They often contain creative and cooperative arrangements involving the sale, trade, or transfer of various rights, providing private landowners with the ability to benefit from an asset they might not otherwise use. In entering easement agreements, the Agency needs to be careful in identifying the resources the state wants to protect and make certain that it does not acquire too many or too few rights. Purchasing too many rights could potentially negate the goal of sustaining the working forest; acquiring too few could undermine the state's investment.

By purchasing specific easements on private land, the state is more likely to ensure the long-term productivity of the land; such long-term agreements are important considerations for many small mill owners and loggers, who today have no guarantee that public lands will stay in timber production. Easements should encourage the growth of high-quality timber for sawlogs, which are much more likely to benefit Vermont processing facilities. This goal parallels the findings of the Northern Forest Lands Council, which stated, "For rural communities in the Northern Forest to be healthy and sound, they must have healthy and sustainably managed forests. Indeed, the two are interconnected."

Furthermore, although the state does not assume complete control of a parcel when it chooses to purchase an easement rather than full-fee acquisition, the state is in position to stretch its conservation dollars further at much-reduced management costs.

Finally, work group members believe the state's Lands Conservation Plan needs to be adaptive to reflect regional differences and changing circumstances over time.

Recommendations

After reviewing the comments received from the stakeholder interviews, interactive television hearing, and public opinion survey, sharing their own experience, knowledge, and observations, and much discussion, members of the Forest Resource Values Work Group make the following recommendations for the full Steering Committee to consider:

The state cannot and should not attempt to become the owner of vast tracts of working forest, particularly tracts that do not possess important public values (wildlife, fisheries, recreation, etc.). As noted earlier, the state does not have the resources to assume such a role, and Vermonters consider other types of full-fee acquisition (such as the purchase of undeveloped lakeshores) to be higher priorities. The state and communities, however, do have an interest in keeping large blocks of forest in timber production as a means of maintaining rural economies, assuring continued low-impact recreational uses, protecting ecological values, and continuing traditional land uses. Easements offer the least expensive means of protecting a land use where full-fee ownership is not necessary, and they provide a means for the state to stretch its conservation dollars further.

As stated in the final report of the Northern Forest Lands Council, easements are important voluntary means to protect productive forestland from changes in land use. When forest landowners decide to remove the development rights from their land through use of easements, some of the economic pressure to change the use of the land is removed. Encouraging landowners to do this promotes long-term stewardship.

When negotiating the possible purchase of an easement on an extensive block of working forest, the Agency should keep the town apprised as early in the process as feasible and, where appropriate, invite the community to become a partner in the conservation project.

CONSIDERATION OF OTHER CONSERVATION VALUES

WHITE PAPER

Final Draft, February, 1998

There are a number of other resource values or land categories that have traditionally been a conservation priority for the Agency that are not specifically discussed or addressed within the preceding white papers. While these "other conservation values" will be obviously need to be addressed within the Lands Conservation Plan, the Steering Committee felt it was also important to present a preliminary discussion of these values within its own white paper.

Wetlands: Wetlands provide multiple functions, including critical wildlife habitat, water filtration, and flood protection. Although all wetlands are protected to some degree through federal or state regulation, these regulations do not guarantee access to wetlands for recreation or study, nor do they fully guarantee access for management of wildlife habitat within the wetlands. The state has a special interest in protecting priority wetlands, which are threatened, unique, or part of a major wetland already in public ownership. The Agency has documented the importance of wetlands and, in cooperation with private conservation organizations, has identified wetlands worthy of public acquisition through publications such as the *Vermont Wetlands Conservation Strategy and the Lake Champlain Wetlands Acquisition Study*.

Undeveloped Shorelines (Lakes, Ponds, and Rivers) and Access: The Agency will give high priority to undeveloped lakeshores and riverbanks and access to the state's waterways. Priorities for conservation include:

- The Agency has a specific interest in undeveloped lakes (a very limited resource in Vermont) that can provide a wilderness lake experience for paddlers, campers, and hikers.
- The Agency has a strong interest in lakes that, while not undeveloped, could be classified as "quiet lakes" in that they have a high percentage of undeveloped shoreline, limited traffic, and cannot be used by motorboats or personal watercraft.
- The Agency will pursue long stretches of lakeshore and undeveloped river frontage as identified in the *Outstanding Resource Waters of Vermont* study.
- The Agency also seeks to provide access points on rivers and larger lakes, and is particularly interested in acquiring sites on Lake Champlain, Lake Memphremagog, and the Connecticut River, three bodies of water without enough public access points.

Islands: Islands can provide important wildlife habitat and can offer unique recreational experiences, making them priorities for conservation. The Agency is particularly interested in Lake Champlain islands.

Consolidations and Linkages: The state should acquire inholdings, connection between disparate units of state lands, and access areas *if* such acquisitions will improve management or provide important protection to values on the property. Such conservation efforts enhance the state's existing investment, expand recreational opportunities, and provide additional access points.

Scenic Lands: Protection of scenic vistas is generally not a primary reason for a state conservation project, but instead, is often a secondary benefit. Due to the sheer amount of acreage involved, the Agency is not in a position to acquire in fee vast tracts of land to protect vistas. The Agency should consider working in partnership with the Agency of Transportation to purchase scenic corridors and scenic overlooks, particularly within designated scenic corridors.

Lands with Historic Values: The state also needs to consider historic and archeological values that may be part of a parcel available to the state. The Agency of Natural Resources should work with the Division of Historic Preservation when considering conservation of parcels that contain such values.

Geologic Sites: Given Vermonters' interest in mountaintops, waterfalls, cascades, gorges, and caves as unique natural areas worthy of protection, the Agency should consider acquiring properties with such features unless there is a great risk of incurring substantial liability or major management costs. Also, because some waterfalls, cascades, and gorges are primarily of local or regional prominence, the state should first pursue the possibility of conservation through municipalities or local land trusts. Other waterfalls, cascades, and gorges - identified in the *Agency's Waterfalls, Cascades and Gorges of Vermont* - are of statewide or interstate significance and should receive Agency protection.

Public Water Supply: The state typically does not purchase parcels simply because they contain wellhead protection areas, springs, or aquifer recharge areas. These values are principally secondary benefits to state land acquisition and by themselves, should not drive state land acquisition decisions. If these are the principal values associated with a parcel that contains few recreation or ecological resources or does not enhance existing state ownership, then state acquisition would probably not be warranted.

Flood Control/Floodplain Conservation: Although the Agency has rarely acquired property for flood control purposes in recent years, the Department of Environmental Conservation does have statutory authority and responsibility for acquiring lands for these purposes. The Agency will acquire such properties only if there is a strong, demonstrated need for doing so. When reviewing a possible acquisition or conservation project which encompasses floodplain land, the Agency should consider the benefits of prohibiting development within the floodplain.

Research and Demonstration Areas: Due to the special character of many state lands, they sometimes provide important research opportunities. However, dedicating a portion of state-owned lands for research or monitoring programs, such as the Vermont Forest Ecosystem Monitoring, Inc., is usually the result of a management decision for an existing state parcel rather than a primary reason for acquiring a property. The Agency would acquire a parcel for this specific purpose only if it could be demonstrated that the site was uniquely suited for a research or demonstration project.

Inappropriate or Incompatible Purposes

Communication Tower Sites: The proliferation and regulation of mountaintop communication towers has become a contentious issue in recent years. Although a small number of towers are on state-owned property, comments taken at public forums held by the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation indicate that a clear majority of Vermonters consider this an inappropriate use for public lands. Given the public's desire not to site additional towers on state-owned land, the Agency should not acquire parcels for the purpose of siting communications towers.

Landfill Sites: Although landfills provide an important public benefit, they are owned and operated by private businesses, solid waste districts, or municipalities -- with no history of state ownership. In addition, the Waste Management Division estimates that there is adequate landfill capacity for several years. The Agency should not acquire parcels for the purpose of siting landfills.

Gravel Supplies, Mineral Extraction: Similar to landfills, sites for mineral extraction are owned by private businesses or municipalities, without any history of state ownership. Given this history and relatively low public interest in having the state pursue ownership of such properties, the Agency should not acquire parcels for the purpose of mineral extraction. (Note that if the state already owns land with a commercial gravel deposit and arrangements can be made with a community that safeguard the environment while providing a source of gravel for the municipality, it may be appropriate to allow gravel extraction. Also, the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation routinely extracts gravel from sites on state land for use on forest roads).