

# ROLE OF THE PUBLIC

## In planning and managing lands held by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources



Summer 2015

On behalf of the State of Vermont, the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) manages state-owned land for a variety of purposes, ranging from the protection of important natural resources to public uses of the land in appropriate places. The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources seeks input on an ongoing basis from the public with regard to the management of lands. This fact sheet was created to provide citizens with the information they need to provide comments to the ANR during the lands planning process. The three departments of the Agency — *Environmental Conservation*; *Fish and Wildlife*, and *Forests, Parks and Recreation* — manage approximately 475,000 acres of land (approximately 8 percent of Vermont's land base) in a combination of fee ownership, conservation easements, and hunting rights.

These lands are located in all 14 counties of the state and include a range of conditions from intensively managed and developed sites, such as dams, boat launches, and campgrounds, to managed forests and wildlife habitats, and to protected natural areas with little or no active management activity. Size varies from less than one acre to tens of thousands of acres.

The management of lands held by the ANR must be compatible with the mission statements of the three departments as shown below. The missions of the three departments were developed via substantial public input as part of strategic planning. These strategic plans were strongly supported by the general public. The Lands Management Principles shown on page 2 are derived from these strategic plans and assist the district offices in managing these lands.



### Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation

To practice and encourage high quality stewardship of Vermont's environment by:

- Monitoring and maintaining the health, integrity, and diversity of important species, natural communities, and ecological processes;
- Managing forests for sustainable use;
- Providing and promoting opportunities for compatible outdoor recreation; and
- Furnishing related information, education, and service.



### Department of Fish & Wildlife

The conservation of all species of fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the people of Vermont. To accomplish this mission, the integrity, diversity, and vitality of their natural systems must be protected.



### Department of Environmental Conservation

To preserve, enhance restore, and conserve Vermont's natural resources, and protect human health for the benefit of this and future generations.

**VERMONT AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

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**Montpelier, Vermont 05620-3801**

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## Lands Management Principles

While acknowledging that each of the agency departments must manage the land under its control for some differing purposes, the ANR Lands Stewardship Team recognizes the central importance of resource conservation and biodiversity protection and/or restoration on all ANR lands. Using the strategic plans of the three departments as a foundation, the team has developed the following management principles that will be applied to all ANR lands:

1. Resource and biodiversity conservation based on sound science are important goals in the development of management plans.
2. Management decisions take into consideration the purposes for which the land was purchased and any legal restrictions associated with the land.
3. Decision-making on these lands is guided by the public with respect to various aspects, including acquisition, policy development, management planning, and the implementation of policies, plans, and regulations.
4. Long-range management plans take into consideration the priorities set by local, regional, watershed, and species management and recovery plans.
5. Every parcel of land cannot accommodate all the uses that the public might want. However, ANR lands provide places for the following on at least a regional basis:
  - Sustainable timber management.
  - Sustainable recreational activities.
  - Wildlife habitat and species management.
  - Wildlife-oriented activities (e.g., hunting, fishing, and trapping).
  - Restoration and protection of water resources.
  - Protection of biodiversity and natural communities.
  - Protection of historical and cultural resources.
6. Allowed uses are described in each management plan and are implemented to ensure the conservation and, if necessary, restoration of biodiversity and the natural resource base.
7. Management actions work toward having ANR lands serve as exemplary stewardship models for the public and private sectors in Vermont.

## How Will Public Input Be Used in the Planning Process?

As the resource steward for state parks, forests, and wildlife management areas, the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) must make decisions about the “public good” which span this and future generations. Comments from the public are taken as advice by the ANR. The purpose of public involvement is not to institute majority-rule management of public land. However, in developing management plans, every effort will be made to include suggestions which are compatible with the ANR and its department’s missions; compatible with ANR lands management principles and goals; and which are fiscally realistic. The ANR will explain the extent to which public comments influence ANR lands management activities. Explanations may include a summary of how public comments were or were not incorporated into management plans.

## Public Involvement in the Planning Process

The agency develops long-range management plans (LRMPs) for each parcel of land. A parcel most frequently refers to an individual forest, park, or wildlife management area. Frequently parcels that are located in the same town or region are combined into management units. Each plan includes a degree of public involvement and serves as a guide for land management.

The plans are a complex undertaking. They involve the gathering of a great deal of information, detailed analyses of that information, as well as input from a growing number of citizens and organizations. The plans include the following components:

- resource inventories
- goal setting
- public involvement
- implementation strategies and actions
- monitoring and evaluation

When long-range management plans are created or updated, the public will be invited to participate in the planning process.

### Guidelines for public involvement:

1. Public will be notified at the start of the planning process.
2. Information will be made available in an understandable format.

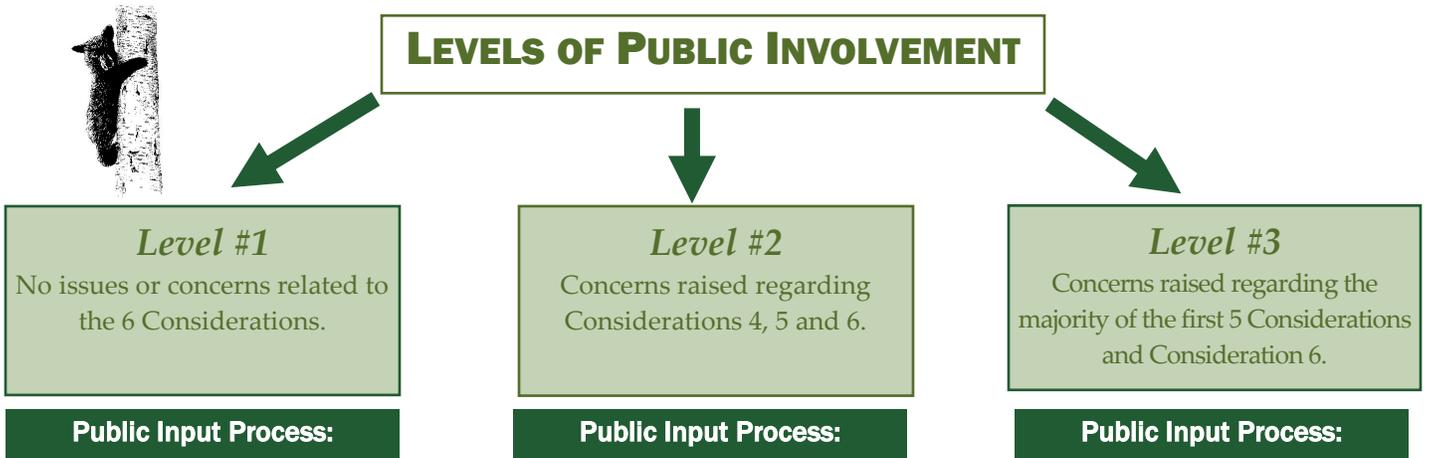
## Levels of Public Involvement

### Consideration:

1. Inventory and resource assessments have revealed ecological, wildlife, cultural, recreational, or timber resources of widespread significance.
2. There are complex legal constraints on the parcel.
3. Significant changes in the management goals and objectives are proposed.
4. Significant issues and concerns by the public are anticipated, such as user conflicts.
5. The acreage of the parcel is large relative to other ANR-owned properties in the region.
6. Proposed management of the parcel results in a significant change in land use.

3. Meetings will be held at times and locations convenient to the public.
4. Sufficient time will be allowed for public input which varies according to the size and complexity of the parcel.
5. The agency will seek resolution to conflicts in an open and respectful manner, using a wide range of methods for involving the public.

ANR will use some flexibility in implementing the guidelines when warranted. For example, when there are many user conflicts or if a significant change in the use of a parcel is proposed, the public will be involved in a more substantial way. The agency staff will use the following considerations in adjusting the amount of public input into the planning process for individual parcels.



When none of the above considerations pertain to a parcel, a simplified public input process is most appropriate. Steps in this process most often include the following:

- General public notification via website, media, and mailings. Includes notification to regional planning commissions, selectboards, local planning commissions, and/or conservation commissions.
- Immediate presentation of a draft plan.
- At least one public meeting held.

When Considerations 4, 5, and 6 above pertain to a parcel, a more complex public input process should be undertaken so that the public can help define issues and develop alternative strategies for the management of the parcel. Steps in this process most often include the following:

- General public notification via website, media, and mailings.
- Questionnaire and/or focus groups.
- More than one public meeting held which could be open houses or facilitated meetings.

When many of Considerations 1-5 as well as Consideration 6 apply to a parcel, a lengthier and even more complex public input process is recommended. Steps in this process most often include the following:

- General public notification via website, media, and mailings.
- Questionnaire and/or focus groups.
- Establishment of citizen committees, members of which may represent different interest groups.
- More than one public meeting held such as community-wide meetings, open houses, and facilitated meetings.

## Who is Involved in State Lands Planning?

### District ANR Stewardship Teams:

*(located in the five districts of Vermont)*

Five district ANR stewardship teams include a forester, wildlife biologist, fisheries biologist, state parks manager, and technician. Technical assistance is provided to the district teams by a state lands ecologist, watershed basin planners, and a recreation coordinator. These teams are responsible for setting priorities for planning, conducting inventories, implementing the public planning process, and writing and implementing management plans for the ANR properties within each district.

#### **Barre District (Lamoille, Washington & Orange Counties)**

**Diana Frederick, Stewardship Forester**

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#### **Essex District (Addison, Chittenden, Franklin & Grand Isle Counties)**

**Jason Nerenberg, Stewardship Forester**

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#### **Rutland District (Bennington & Rutland Counties)**

**Lisa Thornton, Stewardship Forester**

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#### **Springfield District (Windham & Windsor Counties)**

**Tim Morton, Stewardship Forester**

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#### **St. Johnsbury District (Caledonia, Essex & Orleans Counties)**

**Louis Bushey, Stewardship Forester**

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### At the Statewide Level:

#### **The ANR State Lands Stewardship Team**

*(located at the State Offices of the ANR in Montpelier)*

The ANR Lands Stewardship Team is comprised of division directors from the Agency of Natural Resources, including the Departments of Fish and Wildlife; Forests, Parks and Recreation; and Environmental Conservation, as follows: wildlife, fisheries, forestry, parks, lands

administration, water quality, and planning. Major policy decisions affecting state land management are made at this level.

#### *Mission Statement for the ANR State Lands Stewardship Team*

##### Mission

The ANR State Lands Stewardship Team directs the stewardship of the public lands for which the agency is responsible, including state parks, state forests, dams and surrounding lands, wildlife management areas, and other lands or interests in public land held by the agency.

##### Responsibilities of the Team

1. Advising the Secretary of the Agency of Natural Resources on policies concerning agency land ownership, including planning and management.
2. Reviewing procedures and practices that staff develop for managing public lands.
3. Overseeing development and implementation of long-range management planning for public lands.
4. Providing guidance to the agency lands staff and the district stewardship teams and reviewing their annual work plan to ensure that the policy is being implemented.
5. Ensuring coordination among the three agency departments so that every effort may be made toward implementing exemplary stewardship and management of the public lands under agency control.

To contact the ANR Lands Stewardship Team:



**Michael Fraysier, ANR Lands Director**

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## Your Comments Are Important

Additional information about individual parcels and terminology used in this fact sheet can be found on our website at [fpr.vermont.gov/state\\_land/management\\_planning/documents](http://fpr.vermont.gov/state_land/management_planning/documents). Everyone with an interest in planning and management of ANR lands in a particular district should contact the appropriate regional stewardship forester. Please direct comments about the information we have provided in this document or the public involvement process to the ANR Lands Division at 802.272.4156.