



Draft Minutes
State Land Committee
September 2012 Agency
Meeting
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**MINUTES OF THE STATE LAND COMMITTEE MEETING
September 13, 2012**

Committee members in attendance included Agency Chairwoman Leilani Ulrich, William Thomas, William Valentino, Sherman Craig, Designee Robert Stegemann, Department of Environmental Conservation, and Richard Booth, Committee Chair. Members Frank Mezzano, Arthur Lussi, and Designee Dierdre Scozzafava, Department of State joined the Committee. Also participating in the meeting was Executive Director Fred Monroe of the Local Government Review Board. Staff included Executive Director Terry Martino, Associate Natural Resources Planner Walt Linck and Senior Natural Resource Planners, Kathy Regan and Kevin Prickett.

The Committee meeting convened at approximately 2:00 p.m.

An Overview of the Former Finch Pruyn Lands (Karyn Richards, DEC)

Ms. Richards provided highlights of the former Finch Pruyn Lands and noted that the presentation was for informational purposes only.

Member Booth asked what the time frame is for closing on the property. Designee Stegemann responded that by the end of this year, the purchase of the Essex Chain and Indian River parcels should be completed.

Connie Prickett from the Nature Conservancy noted that there are lease agreements that will continue until the Fall of 2013. Ms. Prickett noted that some of the lease agreements will be extended until 2018; primarily those parcels with cabins.

Member Craig asked when Agency Board Members would be allowed to visit the lands in lieu of (prior to) classification. Designee Stegemann responded that formally, once Department staff have made their recommendations for classification to Agency staff, the Agency Board then becomes engaged in looking at classification of the land. He noted that informally discussions certainly can occur, however, he asked that the Board stay true to the process and allow Department staff the ability to review and prepare a complete unit management plan for the former Finch lands for Agency review.

Member Thomas asked about the Opalescent Club which has lease agreements in the MacIntyre Tract. Connie Prickett further explained the lease process for some of the clubs located in that area and noted that further information could be found on the Finch Forest Management Website. Mr. Thomas then asked about the mining area retained by NL Industries. Ms. Prickett responded that area is not part of this proposed acquisition. Kathy Regan added the area Mr. Thomas was referring to was part of an earlier acquisition.

Designee Stegemann noted that the 10 year phase out of leases began when The Nature Conservancy purchased the land in 2008. Ms. Prickett added that the 10 year period of time began when the disposition plan was publicly announced. Therefore the timeframe is 2008-2018.

Local Government Review Board Executive Director Monroe noted that some of the leaseholders are under the impression that the 10 year period will commence once the sale of the land to the State is complete. Ms. Prickett noted that it was important information for her to know and is concerned that communications had not reached all members of the clubs.

Mr. Monroe then asked if consideration had been given to transfer any of the building rights from those camps that will eventually be removed once the State has acquired the land, to the communities for tourist related facilities and affordable housing for residents. Designee Stegemann responded that the goal is to develop vibrant communities within a Wild setting and will certainly be part of any discussion as the proposal moves forward.

Member Thomas asked about the pieces of land that the Towns of Newcomb and Long Lake are purchasing through the acquisition process. Ms. Prickett responded they were all separate parcels.

Executive Director Martino noted that Agency staff will be coordinating the SEQR process and public hearings as the acquisition moves forward. Designee Stegemann added that Department staff will be developing a very thorough recommendation to the Agency for consideration.

Committee Chair Booth asked if classification should be done for each acquisition or if it should be done after all of the parcels are acquired. Kathy Regan responded that staff have been directed to look at classification for the first

acquisition. Mr. Booth responded that an argument exists that the land should be looked at conceptually as a whole, particularly for the parcels in the northern area of the unit. Member Valentino added that an analysis needs to be done on soils and carrying capacity before any classification can be undertaken. Designee Stegemann added that the parcels that are not acquired cannot be classified until the State has completed the purchase.

Agency Chair Ulrich stated that discussion should continue with staff as to the need to look at unit plans and their adjacent lands collectively so that classifications are done based on a regional perspective. Local Government Review Board Executive Director Monroe responded that from local government perspective, classification should be done as acquisitions are completed due to the negative impact that will prevail on the involved communities once the existing camps and clubs are removed. He added that due to the lengthy timeframe that often times accompany acquisitions, the sooner that public access can be established, the sooner communities can recover from the loss of the camp closures and the loss of lands managed for their forestry value.

Member Craig asked if a legal obligation exists for the Agency to make a decision on classification within a certain timeframe once the acquisition has been completed and the Department puts forth a recommendation. Walt Linck stated that the Master Plan does require the Agency to determine classification within a certain amount of time after acquisition.

Watson's East Triangle Wild Forest UMP Amendment (Keith Rivers, DEC)

This was a first reading of the amendment proposal. Committee Chair Booth asked about handicap access to the existing tent site. Mr. Rivers responded that after evaluating the site, Department staff determined that retaining the existing road configuration would have less impact than establishing a new lean-to and access trail. Member Craig asked why the planned lean-to was being scrapped. Mr. Rivers responded that the primary users of the site are big game hunters and the group generally uses large tents during big game season. Therefore the proposal is to only make the existing site accessible, there will not be a lean-to constructed. Agency Chair Ulrich asked for Agency staff comments. Walt Linck stated that Agency and Department staff have worked collectively on the amendment and Agency staff support the proposal. Local Government Review

Board Executive Director Monroe noted that local governments would support this proposal to provide access for disabled persons to remote areas.

Member Booth asked that an agenda item be brought forward in the future concerning roads entering into Wilderness units to private in-holdings.

Implementation of the St. Regis Canoe Area UMP (Steve Guglielmi, DEC)

Mr. Guglielmi presented the management objectives and major proposals of the unit management plan for the St. Regis Canoe Area.

Member Lussi asked how Department staff re-established the restored sites. Mr. Guglielmi responded that the sites were reclaimed using soil from near the site area; soil is typically not brought in when reclaiming a site. By relocating tent areas and fire rings away from shoreline areas, the impacts will be less severe on shoreline vegetation areas.

Member Booth asked how success is measured when reclaiming and relocating tent sites. Mr. Guglielmi responded that the sites are monitored through photos and forms that document the restorative measures taken to recondition the sites. He added that typically it takes approximately 5 years for a site to be restored to its natural state.

Member Craig asked if the truck trail had been a road or old rail bed. Mr. Guglielmi responded that it was built around the 1930's and was for administrative access. Member Craig then asked if erosion problems have developed due to mountain bike use. Mr. Guglielmi noted that the road is primarily used for administrative purposes such as pond reclamation. However mountain bike use is permitted and there is no significant erosion problem in the area. Member Lussi asked if a helicopter was used to stock the ponds with fish; Mr. Guglielmi responded affirmatively.

Member Lussi commented on the filtered view that is offered from the lean-to area and added that staff should keep in mind that visitors to the Park enjoy seeing and being near the water.

Member Valentino noted the carrying capacity in the area seems sensitive. He also noted staff answered many of his questions

during their presentation in regards to site reclamation efforts.

Agency Chair Ulrich noted the importance of the scenic vistas within the Park to residents and visitors alike. Member Craig referred to a DEC position paper and a summary opinion paper drafted by Agency staff and noted that this is a long-standing unresolved issue. He added that the unresolved issues between Agency and Department staff do not always reach closure.

Old Business

None

New Business

None