

## Issues Raised During Northcentral High Mountain Meetings

February 13, 1996

John C. Oliver, III, Secretary  
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources  
PO Box 8767  
Harrisburg, PA 17105-8767

Dear Secretary Oliver:

Attached is the Citizens Advisory Council's report "*Issues Raised During Northcentral High Mountain Meetings*," approved at our February 13, 1996 meeting. It reports on comments received and discussions held during the five meetings the Resources Management committee held between August 1993 and June 1995. Where appropriate, we include recommendations to address the concerns raised.

As you know from your participation in these meetings, the Northcentral High Mountain area is a unique and valuable area. The high proportion of state owned land in the area makes the Commonwealth the major player economically as well as physically; any actions by the Department directly affect nearby residents.

Many view the vast amount of state land as limiting their ability to expand, either physically or economically, and requiring them to pay more in taxes to make up for the low levels paid by the Commonwealth. **We recommend that DCNR make an effort to communicate with residents of the area about how much is being returned to the area, to manage and, where appropriate, improve the resource. DCNR should clearly lay out how general fund and timber revenues are redistributed back to the forest districts, and for what purposes (i.e., road improvements, infrastructure, etc.).**

While we found some continuity from one location to another, we also found many differences. Participants at several of the meetings indicated a need for regional coordination, but it is not clear if this view is widely shared. We need to make an effort to find out if the region's residents and, in particular, their political leaders are willing to consent to participation in some broader body that could consider everyone's concerns and, where possible, turn them into regionwide initiatives for greater impact. **We recommend that DCNR consider this area as a single management unit and foster a process that has the communities share responsibility for steering the region.**

One possible approach to making such a final effort would be to convene a day-long gathering that would include invited officials and others known to be interested in this matter, but would also be open to interested members of the general public. Such an effort is not without problems, both logistical and

philosophical, including:

- determining a suitable "neutral party" to act as the convening entity
- determining a location for the gathering
- structuring the proceedings
- providing at least modest financial support for communication and logistics

As the existing Council will eventually only advise your sister agency, the Department of Environmental Protection, we would be willing to form a temporary transition committee to work with you and the new advisory council if you decide to pursue any further effort in the Northcentral region. We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and your staff to discuss our recommendations; please contact Council's Executive Director, Sue Wilson at 787-3527 to make any necessary arrangements.

Thank you for your consideration of these matters. We look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Maurice J. Forrester, Jr.  
Chairperson

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### *Summary of Recommendations and Comments*

#### *1. Deer Herd Management*

*If both the Game Commission (PGC) and DCNR manage on a species specific basis (i.e., deer vs. timber) then other areas suffer. DCNR and PGC need to develop a joint strategy to deal with the deer herd issue; the strategy should focus on biodiversity and habitat management rather than simply deer numbers.*

#### *2. Economic Impacts*

*In-lieu of taxes-- A definitive study is needed to accurately assess and clearly define the various inequities in tax structures between state, private and Clean and Green lands; Lycoming County has a recent fiscal impact study which could be a useful starting point. Act 39 (which increased the in-lieu of tax (ILT) rate from \$.60 to \$1.20 an acre) has only temporarily addressed these concerns; legislatively establishing a flat rate will always place state payments behind private rates. It may be*

*reasonable to explore more equitable formulas which include some local input, such as emulating the county Clean and Green assessment. We note a related concern is that PGC pays ILT with funds raised exclusively through hunting licenses, as opposed to General Fund revenues used by DCNR. Finally, Council does not support sharing timber sale revenues since this is only one aspect of multiple use of state forests and could increase pressure to increase cuts in an area simply to increase local revenues; alternative mechanisms should be explored.*

*Direct economic impacts--The state forest system has the potential to provide a significant economic stimulus in the region, and in some areas plays a major role in the local economy. The vast resources offer a broad range of recreation opportunities which could be promoted on a much larger scale. The Commonwealth needs to recognize its responsibility as the major landowner in the region and work in cooperation with local and regional groups to promote tourism and compatible economic value at nearby parks, forests and other state lands.*

*The local perspective appears to have changed over the last 20 years. In Renovo the common attitude used to strongly favor keeping outsiders out; now there seems to be movement toward accepting and even attracting tourists, at least from those represented at our meetings.*

### *3. Multiple Use of State Land Resources*

*Multiple use/conflict management--There is not only a staff shortage in DCNR, but different types of staff are needed to deal with user conflicts; DCNR needs staff that can deal with recreational issues and outreach to local interests so the foresters can deal with forestry issues. While we recognize the state's economic realities, we encourage the administration to meet its commitment to improve our state parks and forests by providing DCNR with the resources it needs to properly manage Pennsylvania's vast land holdings.*

*Timber--Timber sales could be increased along the recommendations contained in our 1992 report "These Woods are Ours" by using consulting foresters, a program that appears to have worked well in the Allegheny National Forest. This would directly enhance local economies and maintenance and management of state lands even if no money was transferred back to local governments.*

*Recreation--DCNR needs to address the all terrain vehicle issue; users*

*need to be educated on proper use--they (and other mechanized users) can do a lot of damage when used improperly. Registration requirements need to be enforced, and DCNR should consider adding an education requirement. Providing a sufficient number of allocated trails should discourage use in unauthorized areas; thoughtful application of general trespass laws should address any continued abuse on either private or state land (such protection needs to be balanced against criticisms that it inhibits tourism).*

*Regarding access, one district forester responded that the only state forest roads that are gated are oil, gas and timber sale roads which must by law be closed. Each district should review access concerns and clearly communicate to their public why any roads are closed.*

### ***3. Intraagency Coordination***

*While allowing the flexibility to deal with conditions that may vary from district to district, regulations should otherwise be enforced promptly, fairly, and consistently as regards both state lands and private operations. Continued outreach and improvement is clearly indicated in the region, including more citizen involvement, better information availability, the provision of more assistance to businesses in solving environmental problems, and making staff more sensitive to community needs.*

### ***5. Community Involvement***

*DCNR personnel should involve citizens and local governments in plans and operations. DCNR should explore public/private partnerships with local interests to provide advice on local park and forest policy and to help achieve mutual goals. The Presque Isle Partnership could be used as a model. Regional or district level advisory committees could be established to provide input on local needs and concerns.*

### ***6. Regional Coordination***

*DCNR should make an effort to communicate with residents of the area about how much is being returned to the area, to manage and, where appropriate, improve the resource. DCNR should clearly lay out how general fund and timber revenues are redistributed back to the forest districts, and for what purposes (i.e., road improvements, infrastructure, etc.).*

***DCNR should consider this area as a single management unit and foster a process that has the communities share responsibility for steering the region.***

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## ***Issues Raised During Northcentral High Mountain Meetings***

Over the last two years, the Citizens Advisory Council to the Department of Environmental Resources (now Protection) held a series of meetings in Northcentral Pennsylvania to begin a dialogue with local residents, and business and community leaders regarding DER land management and other natural resource issues in the area. At these meetings, we focused on the following questions:

- How proximity to public lands affects the local community
- How the local community values the resource
- The positive and negative impacts on the local economy
- How the community perceives the need for restoration of significant environmental damage
- What changes are needed in DER's land management policies

We attempted to ensure some balance of interests at each of the meetings: businesses, environmental and conservation groups, and local government. While the views voiced at the meetings are not necessarily representative of the entire population, they provide a starting point for further work in the area. The following is a summary of the issues raised at the various meetings, with Council comments and recommendations indicated in bold-face, italicized type. We also note that Departmental representation at the meetings was not encouraged, so the discussion does not include their responses or views.

### ***1. Deer Herd Management***

Deer herd management is a controversial issue statewide and throughout Northcentral. We heard from both sides: both too many and too few deer, depending on your perspective:

- Hunters generally maintained that the deer herd is declining and advocated limiting the number and length of the many hunting seasons and by increasing the number of food plots on state game lands. There used to be plenty of deer and forest regeneration still occurred; however, the state forests are now mature forests which can't support as many deer per acre as they could 30 to 30 years ago. A related problem is that so much private land is now posted; limited access to private land increases the pressure on public land. Several acknowledged that the perception

that the deer herd has declined may be a function of an aging hunter population.

- Tourism interests that depend on hunting as a draw (e.g. B&Bs, hotels, etc.) are adversely affected if hunting in the area declines with the deer population.
- Similarly, some claimed that the diminishing deer herd adversely impacts land values.
- Farmers and timber interests maintain that there are too many deer, adversely impacting on reforestation and crop yield. Deer fencing is effective, but can be costly.

Most acknowledged that the deer population varies considerably across the region. For example, in Wellsboro, some were skeptical about claims that the herd is too big; one suggestion was for a trap and transfer program to bring in deer from areas where there are too many. Most also acknowledged that many factors affect perceptions of the size of the deer population, such as coyotes attacking small/baby deer, and poor field counts by the Game Commission (PGC). Several indicated that PGC needs to be more responsive to other segments of Pennsylvania's population; it has a very large impact on the Commonwealth's ecology overall, but manages only on a species specific basis.

***Council comment: If both PGC and DCNR manage on a species specific basis (i.e., deer vs. timber) then other areas suffer. DCNR and PGC need to develop a joint strategy to deal with the deer herd issue; the strategy should focus on biodiversity and habitat management rather than simply deer numbers.***

## ***2. Economic Impacts***

The magnitude of state owned land in many Northcentral counties is significant, averaging nearly 30% in the ten county region (Table 1). This has both positive and negative implications for local economies, as discussed below.

### **Table 1: State Land Ownership by County**

Sources: "State Forest Land by County and Township," January 11, 1993, Bureau of Forestry, DER.  
"Pennsylvania Bureau of State Parks Facility Inventory," April 6, 1993, Bureau of State Parks, DER.  
"1993 Tabulations," June 30, 1993, Bureau of Land Management, State Game Commission.

In lieu of taxes--Inequities between taxes generated by private land and the money paid "in lieu of taxes" (ILT) for state land were raised in all but one meeting. Most local governments feel that ILT revenues are insufficient; in Emporium, the ILT rate is an order of magnitude lower than the tax rate on private lands. These inequities are compounded in areas with large amounts of state land, such as Renovo, which is virtually surrounded by state land and has little opportunity to expand physically or economically.

One person stated that tax increases occur because of development; the cost associated with providing services in a developed area increases over the cost of maintaining open space. The reverse view is that ILT does not cover the added cost of state owned land to local governments, regardless of the fact that reduced (if any) service levels are provided on state lands. Another concern was that raising taxes to compensate for the low amounts received from the state may increase pressure on private forest land owners to sell their land for development.

Act 39 of 1995 has temporarily addressed this issue by increasing the ILT rate from \$.60 to \$1.20 an acre. Other suggestions included:

- sharing timber revenues generated on state land with adjacent local governments;
- returning a percentage of revenues to the parks and forests where they were generated;
- establishing a user fee/conservation license for uses other than hunting or fishing which already generate license revenues to maintain land resources;
- developing a formula basing the ILT rate on the percent of state owned land in each county; counties with a higher percentage of state lands would get a higher payment rate.

At several meetings we heard complaints that large lumber companies who are able to take advantage of lower "Clean and Green" tax assessments on their large landholdings then are posting this land and leasing it out for hunting. At least state lands can be used by all. They questioned where we should draw the line between Clean and Green and a business venture for hunting, and felt that Clean and Green inequities also need to be addressed.

***Council comment: A definitive study is needed to accurately assess and clearly define the various inequities; Lycoming County has a recent fiscal impact study which could be a useful starting point. Act 39 has only temporarily addressed these concerns; legislatively establishing a flat rate will always place state payments behind private rates. It may be reasonable to explore more equitable formulas which include some local input, such as emulating the county Clean and Green assessment. We note a related concern is that PGC pays ILT with funds raised exclusively through hunting licenses, as opposed to General Fund revenues used by DCNR. Finally, Council does not support sharing timber sale revenues since this is only one aspect of multiple use of state forests and could increase pressure to increase cuts in an area simply to increase local revenues; alternative mechanisms should be explored.***

Direct Economic Impacts --It is hard to attract new business to this region. Existing industries include agriculture, timber and recreation, with lumber rapidly replacing agriculture as number one. Some areas, such as Clinton County, suffer from an acute shortage of developable land as so much is owned by the

state. Some also claim that state land is subject to less stringent environmental regulations than private land. It was noted that while lumber is a major commodity, there is little secondary wood processing in the region. Problems include inadequate roads, the climate, and cultural constraints. Some noted that capital requirements are hard to meet and that Pennsylvania is generally not "industry friendly."

Although many perceive a negative financial impact from state lands, others emphasized the importance of recreation and tourism opportunities on state land (e.g., we were told that Bucktail State Park draws a million people per year to the area) and wanted to see more effort on the part of the state to increase recreational activity on state land. In Laporte, we learned that tourism provides \$6 million dollars per year to the county and that 60% of the housing units are owned by non-county residents; Potter County's recreation industry is reportedly \$20 million.

In Wellsboro, several mentioned the importance to the region of maintaining the environment because of the area's reliance on recreation as a source of income. Some suggested that the Department move to more holistic approaches such as ecosystem management and protecting the entire headwaters of important watersheds to ensure adequate resource protection.

Potter, Tioga, Clinton and Cameron counties have joined together to promote tourism and recreation. Many indicated a need for more emphasis on marketing recreation and tourism opportunities that are unique in Pennsylvania, if not in the urban northeast. Additional suggestions included opening more state forest roads for multiple use recreation; obtaining more funding for bridge reconstruction and road maintenance; and building and maintaining a variety of trails including small family-oriented walking routes. Another was to build more rental cabins in Sullivan County state parks.

***Council comment: The state forest system has the potential to provide a significant economic stimulus in the region, and in some areas plays a major role in the local economy. The vast resources offer a broad range of recreation opportunities which could be promoted on a much larger scale. The Commonwealth needs to recognize its responsibility as the major landowner in the region and work in cooperation with local and regional groups to promote tourism and compatible economic value at nearby parks, forests and other state lands.***

***The local perspective appears to have changed over the last 20 years. In Renovo the common attitude used to strongly favor keeping outsiders out; now there seems to be movement toward accepting and even attracting tourists, at least from those represented at our meetings.***

Land Ownership--There were some complaints that the state already owns too much land in the region and is still buying more. In Laporte we also heard the reverse view that some tourist attractions are inaccessible because of private land ownership patterns; they advocated the acquisition of such sites although they emphasized that such acquisition should be limited. One commenter asked Council to



encourage the purchase of more state land, to avoid problems with development and overuse as has happened in the Poconos. While state ownership itself did not appear to be an overwhelming issue, there are equity concerns related to tax burdens and development constraints that need to be addressed.

A related concern was that much privately owned land is owned by non-residents and used seasonally. Out of 7,500 property owners in Wellsboro, 5,500 are reportedly seasonal, which was perceived negatively. In Laporte, the fact that state land encourages second home development was a benefit.

### ***3. Multiple Use of State Land Resources***

State forests and parks represent a vast resource to a wide range of users--trees for cutting; habitat for wildlife; and opportunities for a wide variety of recreational pursuits. The large tracts of undeveloped land help ensure a clean water supply and enhance biodiversity. Many of the recreational uses are relatively new; where state forests used to be almost exclusively a timber source, many more people are using state forest lands in a wider variety of ways.

Multiple Use/Conflict Management-- Obviously, many uses conflict; timber cutting has a major impact on habitat; ATV riding and wildlife watching are mutually exclusive. Even within each use there are concerns--the timber industry would like opportunities to cut more timber while some biodiversity and preservation interests want less; equestrian and hiking clubs disagree over the use and maintenance of trails. In some areas, there was a significant amount of discussion regarding conflicting uses of state lands, especially state forests. Many indicated a need for more balance between resource development (i. e., timber, oil, gas) and recreational uses generally.

There were also varying viewpoints on how best to manage these conflicts--avoid them by maintaining separate trails and areas for each use, or merely separate motorized from non-motorized. One person noted that there is an increasing number and variety of uses (he claimed that there are now over 100 user groups in Pennsylvania) and that we cannot maintain separate trails for each type of use; he recommended that trails be designated simply for motorized or non-motorized use. However, this will only address some of the user conflicts; we heard concerns expressed by several hikers over conflicts between equestrian use and hiking; hiking trails are not constructed to sustain horse traffic, and damage is not typically repaired by the equestrian users, but falls to the hiking clubs.

The fact that managers now have to deal with much more than just trees also raises some issues. While most were highly complimentary regarding BOF staff's ability to deal with forestry issues, most indicated concern that new skills and additional staff are needed to deal with the needs of and conflicts between changing recreational uses of the forests.

***Council comment: We agree that there is not only a staff shortage, but that different types of staff are needed to deal with user conflicts; DCNR needs staff that can deal with recreational issues and outreach to local interests so the foresters can deal with forestry issues. While we recognize***

***the state's economic realities, we encourage the administration to meet its commitment to improve our state parks and forests by providing DCNR with the resources it needs to properly manage Pennsylvania's vast land holdings.***

Timber--Some expressed concern that a mature forest is not necessarily a healthy one. Poor regeneration is a major concern as are forest pests, species mix, and the amount of dead timber:

- Note was taken of the regeneration problem and the involvement of the state's deer herd as a key factor; fencing, deer herd management and application of herbicides to eradicate ferns seem to be the only obvious solutions.
- Some (Laporte) clearly supported more spraying of state forest land for the influx of various insect pests. Current Department policy is to utilize integrated forest pest management to mitigate the effects of destructive forest agents.
- Some (Laporte) opposed clear cutting, but a local timber representative offered a justification on the basis of the regeneration needs of certain species.
- The timber industry views the large amount of dead timber on state forest land as a wasted resource. They want the state to salvage dead timber before it is too late, increase the amount of lumber cut on state lands and do more to ensure regeneration of desired species. It was noted that the price of wood fiber has tripled in the last 5 years, making such decisions economically important.

The timber industry indicated that the Game Commission generally manages their land better than the Bureau of Forestry in that their timber sales are larger (although they admitted that the Commission's pest control strategy is less effective than BOF's). In Wellsboro, it was generally agreed that DER has a good land management team that focuses on multiple uses. They are supportive of the present method of land use allocations (timber, recreation, wildlife). Some (Emporium, Wellsboro) recommended using contract services to mark timber, apply herbicides (to eradicate ferns) and for other purposes (recreation, timber sales, preparation) to more rapidly adapt to changing needs rather than establishing more employee positions. Contracting was a point of disagreement with others.

***Council comment: Council agrees that timber sales could be increased along the recommendations contained in our 1992 report "These Woods are Ours" by using consulting foresters, a program that appears to have worked well in the Allegheny National Forest. This would directly enhance local economies and maintenance and management of state lands even if no money was transferred back to local governments.***

Recreation--In Wellsboro, one area of disagreement was whether DER should intensify special management issues; some want more developed recreation and tourism infrastructure and contracted recreation services, but others promoted less commodity production such as timber.

Many of those we heard from want the state to take a stronger role in promoting tourism and recreation opportunities available on state lands. They also want DCNR to improve accessibility, better maintain existing infrastructure and develop new infrastructure where needed. Specific comments included:

- ATV trails are heavily used and could enhance tourism. Several expressed a need for more ATV trails on state lands in the Emporium area. Alternatively, others questioned whether DER can adequately regulate ATV use; they are damaging both state and private lands.
- Passive development of Bucktail State Park (e.g. tree identification walk).
- Consider grooming snowmobile trails to attract more use; are dollars being allocated for grooming and not being spent?
- Improve access to state forests. Renovo residents believe too many roads are gated and/or inadequately maintained. One questioned whether DER wants it to be publicly accessible; if the gas companies and lumber companies can have access, why can't the public?
- Insufficient road maintenance results in erosion and stream siltation.
- Provide roofed facilities and parking near access points to heavily used trails.
- Is there sufficient demand for state cabins to justify building more?
- There are currently no public swimming pools in Sullivan county; a swimming pool at one of the state parks in the county would help meet local needs.
- Hiking could be a tourist draw but we need to improve the trails and advertise them.
- Some trails should be designated as available only for hiking, and clearly communicated to users.

***Council comment: DCNR needs to address the ATV issue; users need to be educated on proper use--they (and other mechanized users) can do a lot of damage when used improperly. Registration requirements need to be enforced, and DCNR should consider adding an education requirement. Providing a sufficient number of allocated trails should discourage use in unauthorized areas; thoughtful application of general trespass laws should address any continued abuse on either private or state land (such protection needs to be balanced against criticisms that it inhibits tourism).***

***Regarding access, one district forester responded that the only state forest roads that are gated are oil, gas and timber sale roads which must by law be closed. Each district should review access concerns and clearly communicate to their public why any roads are closed.***

### ***3. Intraagency Coordination***

Complaints regarding DER operations ranged from inconsistent enforcement to poor public image. Many of these complaints had to do with programs which now reside in DEP.

Generally, the attitude toward DER in much of the region was negative, with complaints that staff are too "self important," and that the agency is out of control and intimidates people. Since all of the meetings were held prior to the Ridge administration taking office, it is unclear whether these perceptions have changed significantly in the interim.

There was a clear perception of inconsistency between the Meadville and Williamsport Regional Offices, especially with regard to air permits for the powdered metals industry. At the Emporium meeting, it was noted that these businesses have difficulty obtaining DER permits from Williamsport, but not Meadville, placing one region at a competitive disadvantage.

Several indicated that DER is not sensitive to local needs; the agency is not easily understood nor is there clear knowledge of whom to contact for a specific issue. In addition, unless you know exactly what questions to ask you are unlikely to learn anything from the bureaucrats; they never volunteer information. Some positive changes were acknowledged, such as the new public liaison positions, as well as the new Williamsport regional director. In Renovo, while commenters seemed satisfied with specific DER personnel they deal with, they indicated a need for help in securing information and in coping with paperwork requirements. Some recommended that public information exchanges (not unlike the CAC meeting) should be held periodically throughout the region. Other suggested improvements included:

- Regulations should be clear, understandable and non-contradictory.
- DER suffers from too much central Harrisburg control and lack of accountability.
- Statewide regulations don't always work; there should be a greater local role in developing regulations, to respond to the different conditions across Pennsylvania. One suggestion was to use Interstate 80 as the dividing line for creating regional regulations
- We need better coordination among state agencies and among programs within an agency.
- Local control of Act 537 sewage enforcement is unlikely to work well.
- Fines should not be kept by DER.

***Council comment: While allowing the flexibility to deal with conditions that may vary from district to district, regulations should otherwise be enforced promptly, fairly, and consistently as regards both state lands and private operations. Continued outreach and improvement is clearly indicated in the region, including more citizen involvement, better information availability, the provision of more assistance to businesses in solving environmental problems, and making staff more sensitive to community needs.***

## 5. Community Involvement

Wellsboro, Emporium and Renovo participants indicated a willingness and even a need for more community involvement. There is little interaction between citizenry and state personnel on decisions and issues, such as recreation planning and related decisions. Local communities are often left out of decisions that have a significant impact on their communities. For example, Renovo, with an unemployment rate of over 10% will benefit from even relatively small projects.

In Laporte, several indicated confusion about state game lands vs. state forest lands. Others noted a noticeable lack of knowledge about issues such as air quality, water quality and industrial waste disposal and that BOF's land management plan (ecosystem management) will likely be misunderstood and not supported by those directly impacted. There is a need to train and encourage staff to communicate with local governments and citizens more effectively about DER related activities. The "forest ranger" positions proposed in BOF strategic plan were noted as one way to improve interaction with the public in dealing with issues beyond just land related issues. It was also recommended that forest district level advisory teams could be invited to DER internal meetings to see first hand how land management decisions are made. However, a training/orientation will be needed for advisory team members.

Many recognized that budget and personnel constraints have resulted in significant maintenance backlogs in state parks and forests. However, most also felt that it simply takes too long for the state to get things done, and often what gets done is not what is most needed. DCNR could achieve much more if it worked with local people and materials; for example, maintenance costs could be reduced by using local maintenance materials rather than bringing materials in from outside; trails could be maintained by or in conjunction with local groups; funds could be raised from users and support groups to supplement available state funds. In Renovo, most indicated wide support for the work of the Pennsylvania Conservation Corps in Sproul State Forest. However, we also heard that in some areas, we are losing the volunteers that maintain the trails, and that DER does little to help volunteer efforts beyond sometimes furnishing equipment. It has also helped county probation department "at-risk" youth program who work on some trails, but who now can't even paint blazes on trees, probably due to OSHA rules.

***Council comment: DCNR personnel should involve citizens and local governments in plans and operations. DCNR should explore public/private partnerships with local interests to provide advice on local park and forest policy and to help achieve mutual goals. The Presque Isle Partnership could be used as a model. Regional or district level advisory committees could be established to provide input on local needs and concerns.***

## 6. Regional Coordination

In Wellsboro, several indicated a need for a regional coordinating body, based at least in part on the previous Highlands Forum. In addition, the region needs a regional study based on the entire watershed

which could lead to the development of a master plan. Any such plan should assure the protection of the beauty and character of the region, be done systematically and consistently apply to all planning and administrative purposes. One of the problems that would have to be addressed is how to manage the growing number of visitors and new residents to the region. Roundtable meetings could provide a local interface with government agency activities.

Sullivan County commenters decided they had a stake in improving their county. If they work together, they have more in common than they have differences. Those present indicated that they would meet again to focus on how to improve the county. Strong sentiment was expressed in favor of managing change in Sullivan County in ways that would preserve the county's character as much as possible.

Wellsboro commenters indicated that a regional interface with municipalities is lacking and asked the CAC to call a meeting to help focus the attendees after all five meetings are over. Coudersport attendees also indicated that they want responsible use and development.

## ***7. Miscellaneous***

At each meeting, site specific concerns were raised. Some of these are summarized below.

Many in Wellsboro were concerned with local flooding problems. When people remove debris in streams to alleviate flooding on their property, they are charged with disturbing the soil and dirtying the water. One individual claimed to have lost 52 acres of prime farmland to flooding. He blames the Corps of Engineers and its policies. There needs to be a way to remove gravel from streams to reduce flood loss. The new general permit to make stream cleanup easier is only slightly different from the existing program, and will do little to alleviate the situation.

One Wellsboro commenter claimed that dead deer are being dumped by a stream near a camping area in Sizerville State Park; DER did not respond to complaints. In Emporium, commenters indicated that no one was taking care of road kill because no one knew how to dispose of it.

DER is not fulfilling the maintenance obligations for land it will assume from Conrail as part of the rail to trail project along Pine Creek.

In Wellsboro, Emporium and Laporte, it was indicated that even though streams have been affected by runoff from coal mining operations, very little mine reclamation money has ever been spent in the region.

Views on the proposed expansion to the Antler Military Operations Area were deeply divided.

A Coudersport citizen reported concerns about a private logging operation (Cushing Run, which is a wild primary trout stream). The Williamsport Office has apparently indicated that all is OK, but the pictures we were shown appear to be a total clear-cut on a slope, with no effort to control erosion and sedimentation. The Conservation District is inspecting the site but can't take enforcement action. There

are a lot of sites they don't know about unless there's a complaint.

In Laporte, we heard about the American Forest and Paper Association's guidelines for ecologically sound silviculture. Participating companies are to apply the guidelines themselves (with verification), and are to ensure that purchased wood was also cut according to the guidelines.

In Coudersport, there was a concern about the tops of maples dying off. We were later informed that a team from DER, Allegheny National Forest, International Paper and Kane are studying the issue.

Some hunters raised concerns about introduction of the fisher, which they believe to simply be just another turkey predator; turkey is a valuable draw for Potter County. Blue herons are coming to the area too, and cleaning out a lot of native brook trout. All of these things are adding up to a negative impact.

There is a double standard in enforcing logging requirements--DER intimidates small operations but lets the big ones go--and citizens have no way to make them do what they're supposed to do.

Roads entering Hammersly Wild Area from the north are gated, but the one from the south is not because the "property is in dispute"; this allows vehicle access where it should not occur.

Trail clubs have problems when a trail goes over a stream on state land--they are not allowed to build walking bridges anymore without a permit, requiring the bridge to be designed by BOF engineering department and resulting in very high costs. A similar concern was raised about DER roads--a lot are condemned even though they really are structurally sound simply because of liability concerns.

Small private forest land is also not regenerating. Large companies are spraying and fencing, so they don't have the same problem. There will be a long term negative effect on biodiversity and ecological soundness. Fencing and herbicide costs \$50-100/acre. Superior regeneration in surrounding states makes it easy to tell when you cross a border.

Agriculture regulations were developed by people who don't know the application. There are currently less than 150 farms in Potter county, compared to 900 in the 1930s. Agriculture is the biggest income producer in Potter (not including forestry).

We need to identify and address constraints that are keeping DCNR from being able to put up deer fencing, mark trees, and maintain roads. For example, would large lumber concerns support incorporating the building of bridges to minimum standards into sale bids? Bridges and roads could be used by the public after the cut is complete.

In Renovo, it was noted that a recent local fossil find of unusual antiquity should be displayed locally and not transported to Harrisburg; it could provide another draw for tourism in the area.

Sewage permitting is a big problem.

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