

Forests, Parks and Recreation

Transition Document

I. Department Overview

The Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation

FPR comprises the State Parks Division, the Forestry Division and the Lands Administration Division. The Department administers lands for the Agency, provides management for public lands, assistance for private lands, and operates the state park system.

The mission of FPR is to monitor and maintain the health, integrity, diversity and value of important species, natural communities, and ecological processes by:

- Managing forests for long-term health and sustainable economic development;
- Providing and promoting opportunities for compatible outdoor recreation; and
- Furnishing related information, education, and service.

Forestry programs affect a broad and expanding constituency concerned with the sustainable use, management, protection and future condition of Vermont's forest landscape, representing 78% of the state. These forests provide the economic resource base for Vermont's diverse forest products industry through sustainable timber management, as well as providing the cornerstone of the state's recreation and tourism economies. Vermont's actively managed forest also provides critical biological diversity, natural communities and wildlife habitats.

The Forestry Division has responsibility for administration and oversight of the 1.9 million acres of private land enrolled in the current use tax program for forest land, stewardship activities on over 350,000 acres of state-owned land, assisting municipalities in the management of urban trees and municipal forests, forest health monitoring, assisting the forest products industry -- including high value-added wood products and the emerging advanced wood heat market -- and the administration of forestry regulatory programs.

The State Parks Division is responsible for planning & operation, maintenance, and preservation of the state park system and the protection of the natural resources within it. The State Park system currently includes 54 developed parks that, not including capital construction, contribute an estimated \$60 million annually to Vermont's economy.

The Lands Administration Division has responsibility for the administration and real estate activity of state-owned lands managed by the three departments within the Agency of Natural Resources; maintains ANR property records and maps; administers leases, licenses and special use permits for ANR lands; carries out land acquisitions and other transactions; assists with long-range management planning for ANR lands; surveys and maps ANR lands, and coordinates development of ANR lands policies.

The Forest Highway Maintenance program uses state general funds to repair and maintain the ANR forest highway network. This network consists of approximately 600 miles of roads essential to the interior maintenance and management of state forest and park land and providing Vermonters with access for a diversity of year-round recreational pursuits.

Permanent positions currently = 103

Admin = 9

Forestry = 55

Parks = 34

Lands Administration = 5

Current temporary positions:

Admin – 12 (10 rec trails state trail crew, 1 business office, 1 outreach)

Forestry – 9 foresters

Parks – approximately 350

Lands Administration – 1 surveyor

Current limited service positions:

Forestry – 4 (2 NRCS Foresters, Systems Developer, Invasive Plant Coordinator)

Lands Administration – 1 Forestry Specialist

II. Major and Evolving Issues

Forestry Division

Roll-out of revised Acceptable Management Practices (AMPs) for Maintaining Water Quality on Logging Jobs in Vermont: completion of rulemaking and subsequent guidance documents and trainings to foresters and loggers and policy makers. Required under Federal and State Clean Water laws. Supports Vermont Clean Water Initiative and work related to Lake Champlain and the TMDL.

Support for Forest Economy: Particular and emergency emphasis is needed to bolster flagging existing markets and to grow new markets for low-grade trees (firewood, chips, pellets). Some 800,000 green tons of annual export has evaporated with the recent closures of pulp mills in Maine. Value-added products using high-quality hardwoods is a Vermont strength and competitive advantage and it depends on markets for low-grade wood (sell the weeds to sustain growth of high-value trees for harvest). Continue significant ongoing work with wide array of State and private sector partners through the

Working Lands Enterprise Initiative, its Board (WLEB) and forestry subcommittee. This work represents the most meaningful and effective focus on the forest sector in decades. Expanding State purchasing of Vermont forest and wood products in collaboration with the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets, and the Department of Buildings and General Services should be pursued.

Use Value Appraisal (UVA, aka “current use”): Commissioner’s Taskforce of stakeholders including landowners and consulting foresters (and coordinated by FPR’s Private Lands Program Manager, Keith Thompson) is working on a set of recommendations to the Commissioner to improve the administration and results within the UVA Program. Recommendations will be used to support the development of new minimum forest management and plan standards, reduce administrative workloads, and increase field time and efficiency for county foresters and improved outcomes for the land and landowners.

Also, a separate but related ongoing effort involves improvements to UVA database management, digital mapping and record keeping practices. This may allow for centralization of some administrative functions, reducing burden on county foresters and increased efficiency and effectiveness in interdepartmental collaborations with Tax Department (Property Valuation and Review).

Advanced Wood Heat Initiative: Continue cooperation with the Department of Public Service on implementation of 2016 Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan, particularly the roadmap to modern wood heating throughout VT at multiple scales. Deploy newly established wood energy coordinator and promote technical and financial assistance to educational institutions and affordable housing providers for conversions to advanced wood heating through the State Wood Energy Team (SWET). SWET is funded through US Forest Service and VT Vermont Clean Energy Development Fund (CEDF) grants.

Outdoor Recreation and the Outdoor Industry/Economy: Planning and management of recreation use on public lands and facilitation and assistance to recreation on private lands, working closely with statewide trail and user-group partners (municipalities, non-profits, businesses, private landowners). Each of the 6 FPR District works with a variety of recreation partners to leverage resources, incorporate traditional and newer recreation demand (mountain biking, back-country skiing) of and engage users.

“Marketing” and Dissemination of Voluntary Timber Harvesting Guidelines: effort related to the Vermont Voluntary Harvesting Guidelines and subsequent implementation plan. This is a follow-up to ACT 24 (2013) which required FPR to establish the voluntary guidelines. Marketing and outreach is essential to encourage landowner adoption and use.

Forest Biology Lab: Transfer functions to the new Vermont Agriculture and Environmental Laboratory to restore capacity for plant health, insect, and pathogen diagnostics and monitoring and provide FPR staff access to other state staff and up-to-date facilities. The

current space is not suitable for many lab functions. Increasing incidents and threats from forest pests and pathogens indicate need will only expand in near future.

Coordinate aerial biological insecticide spraying: to prevent forest tent caterpillar defoliation (FTC) of sugarbushes. Over 20,000 acres were defoliated in 2016. Damage is expected to increase. Pesticide use is minimized by targeting forests where the potential impact is high.

Emerald ash borer (EAB) preparedness: through incident management planning and recovery plans, to slow the spread of the insect, delineate its extent, and support communities and landowners at risk. EAB is a nonnative invasive insect and infestations surround Vermont but is not known to be present in the state. Five percent of Vermont's trees are ash species. Responsibility is shared with Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets and the US. Department of Agriculture.

Quantification of Statewide Timber Harvest and Stumpage Payments: Continue efforts toward improvements and modernization of Division's annual statewide timber harvest and stumpage price tracking databases to provide timely resource information to forest industry, to improve transparency and facilitate more accurate setting of the UVA value of forest land. The use value of forestland enrolled in the program is required by statute to be set annually using timber harvest data.

Invasive plant outreach and management on public and private land: Financial support is needed for an Invasive Plant Coordinator to continue agency-wide efforts to support forest managers, landowners, and citizen volunteers and ensure the use of best practices in protecting native regeneration and habitat suitability. Requires concurrent attention to and control of over-browsing by deer (and moose when healthy), retarding regeneration of native tree species and eroding habitat strength and threatening timber supply.

Urban and Community Forestry: Continuation of work relating to grants including Resilient R-O-W, Natural Resource Academy, Care of the Urban Forest and Town Forests. These grants engage volunteer citizen scientists who provide the core of our community forestry work and prepare our urban forests for climate change and extreme weather events.

Completion and then implementation of 2016 Vermont Forest Action Plan: A statewide forestry plan is required by the federal government under the 2014 Farm Bill and Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act to receive federal funds.

Establishment of the Mount Mansfield Science and Stewardship Center: partnering with the University of Vermont Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources, the Vermont Center for Ecostudies, the Vermont Monitoring Cooperative, and Stowe Mountain Resort. The goal of the center is to bring together scholars, educators, natural resource managers students and visitors to understand and sustain the vitality of mountain ecosystems.

Forest Legacy Program: Completion administrative and legal details on \$10 million in federally funded Forest Legacy projects currently in progress. Forest Legacy supports fee acquisition and easements with willing private forest landowners to maintain working forest values and public access.

ANR Timber & Management Program: Maintain timber harvest plan schedule on Agency Lands. Provides long-term management and economic continuity. Supports local jobs and economies and funds lands and facilities operations and management.

Information Technology: Data management and associated training and assistance for supporting programs. Internal systems databases need to be updated and maintained. Agency IT Staff provide needed technical support but much of the ongoing work falls to Forestry Division staff.

Division Policies, Protocols and Procedures: Developing and/or memorializing across all programs and functions. Promotes efficiency, and provides regulatory consistency.

Staff Development/Management/Training: plan priority setting and incorporating training and core competencies in performance evaluations. This enables us to prioritize mandated work and meet our mission, directly linking individual performance plans to Forest Action Plan, and ensuring staff have the technical skills to function at highest level.

Conservation Education: Expand support to Department staff to expand and improve staff engagement in outreach and education and improve environmental competency across all age groups.

New Work:

1. Successional planning on a Forestry Division-wide basis to transfer institutional knowledge and mentor new employees. Forty percent of workforce is eligible to retire.
2. Performance-based budgeting inclusion across all program areas. Ties to the Results Based Accountability initiative in state government and performance measure work with U.S. Forest Service.
3. Plans to augment budget shortfalls, particularly related to federal funds. Need to address declining revenues in the face of increasing personnel costs.
4. Plans to address chronic shortfalls in Forest Highway funding. Safe access to public lands is needed to meet increasing recreational use and management needs. Water quality and aquatic habitat is also threatened.
5. Climate change-adapted management demonstration sites.
6. Address continuing education needs of Division employees to maintain forester licensure.

7. Build Forestry Division social media capacity as an efficient and effective way to provide information and education related to forest stewardship.

Lands Administration Division

Sweet Tree Maple Operation in Essex County: Sweet Tree's reverse osmosis facility on a portion of the former Hancock lands subject to a Forest Legacy easement has been of concern to the USDA Forest Service. Resolution of this may require that the Department explore amending the easement. This approach would require landowner approval, legislative approval, appraisal and review appraisal of new easement terms, and reimbursement to the US Forest Service if the appraisal shows that the value of the easement has decreased as a result of the amended easement terms.

Management of Telecommunications Licensing on State Lands: While the Administration's decision to name DPS as the responsible state agency for coordinating the licensing of telecommunication facilities on state lands is welcome and makes good sense, support for this new approach is not without some important caveats:

- With DPS now taking the lead in preparing new license agreements for telecom facilities on state land this will save us a considerable amount of time. Frankly, this is not our area of expertise. Nonetheless, it will be important for DPS to directly involve ANR up front in the review and approval of telecom proposals and in the drafting of associated license agreements for lands under its jurisdiction and control. Ultimately, it is the managing department that should have the final say regarding new telecom proposals for lands under their authority.
- For many FPR and other ANR lands, there are legal restrictions in place that may prohibit telecommunication uses. Recognition and acceptance of the legal constraints and the primary underlying management responsibilities associated with ANR lands by DPS will be essential.
- All telecommunication license fees should go to the underlying managing department (not to DPS).

As DPS assumes this new responsibility, there will invariably be a number of details and questions that will need to be addressed. For example, what is the role of the Agency of Administration/DII in all of this? Under 30 V.S.A. §227(b), the Secretary of Administration has been designated as the point of contact and final decision-maker on the siting of two-way telecommunication facilities on state lands. This responsibility has been delegated to DII whose commissioner signs all new license agreements on behalf of the State. Will this change under this new arrangement? Will DPS be responsible for administering the licenses once they have been executed (i.e., invoicing of licensees,

insuring payments are received on time, processing license amendments, etc.)? There are bound to be other questions as well. These and other issues can be best addressed through an inter-agency MOU should be an immediate priority for DPS.

Pending Forest Legacy Projects: We conservatively estimate that we will likely close on at least 7 new Forest Legacy easement projects by next summer. These 7 projects total an additional 10,812 acres of easements requiring at least annual monitoring by FPR staff.

Forest Legacy Unspent Funds: FPR has a large backlog of approved Forest Legacy projects that have not yet closed. Legacy funding approved for these projects total over \$10 million. Given limited staff capacity and the difficulty in getting project information from some of our conservation partners, it will be challenging to get many of these projects completed in a timely manner. Although Vermont has been competitive in past funding rounds for Forest Legacy, the Forest Service may choose to not award additional funding to Vermont for FY'18 because of this unspent backlog. This possibility is a major concern to our partners.

Full Time Survey Assistant: We currently hire a seasonal temporary survey assistant. We are at the point where we need to consider turning this a full-time position. Among other benefits, this would help to relieve the backlog in Legacy projects noted above.

Conserved Land Stewardship: Stewarding Forest Legacy easements is a major, and increasing responsibility. Significant staff time is spent in monitoring, record keeping and enforcement. Currently, we have one staff person who can only commit a small portion of her total time on these stewardship activities and are now at the point where we really need a full-time staff person for this activity. Given that we have 47 easement tracts covering more than 60,000 acres of forestland, this need is more than justified and should be a high priority.

Endowment: There is a great need to secure additional funding for both stewardship of easements and management of fee-simple lands. We are now requiring new Forest Legacy landowners to provide a small endowment to help pay for on-going stewardship. Unfortunately, this does not address the stewardship costs on the tens of thousands of Legacy acres that do not have endowment funds. Additionally, there is an increasing need to secure supplemental stewardship and management funding for fee acquisitions – particularly large parcels with significant management costs or need for infrastructure improvements. Ideally, we should work with a partner such as TPL to set up a donor dedicated endowment fund within the Vermont Community Foundation for these purposes.

ANR PILOT: ANR PILOT underwent some significant changes as a result of legislation passed in 2016. Inevitably, this change results in some towns that will see an increase in PILOT funding, and some towns that will lose some funding. These impacts will be

gradually implemented over the next four years. Transitioning to the new ANR Lands PILOT formula will be challenging. We can expect a lot of questions and some concerns from towns during the first year of this transition period.

LEAN Process for ANR Land Acquisition: We are currently in the process of implementing some recommended changes to the review process for potential ANR land acquisition projects as a result of last year's LEAN event. These changes are intended to improve efficiency, inter-department coordination and communication, and increase transparency of the acquisition process.

ANR Lands Stewardship Team: There are a number of ongoing or outstanding issues before the ANR Lands Stewardship Team. These include but are not limited to review of pending draft and final long range management plans including plans for the Camel's Hump Management Unit, Victory Management Unit, Ascutney Management Unit and other ANR properties; development of policy for ANR lands regarding use of drones, and handling of encroachments on ANR lands; improving the management of DEC flood control lands; appointment of a standing ANR committee to further efforts to enhance flood resilience of ANR lands; and other projects.

Ski Areas: The sale of several ski areas on FPR lands is pending or expected in the near future including Okemo, Burke, and Jay Peak. Department approval must be obtained before the ski lease can be assigned to a new owner. We will need to seek assurances that the new owner has the financial capacity and experience to meet their obligations and responsibilities under the lease. The EB-5 investigation into the owners of Jay Peak and Burke may indirectly impact the Division. There is currently a litigation hold on all correspondence and documents relating to these areas. The department has considerable correspondence and documents pertaining to both of these areas which (not surprising given the long history of leasing state lands to these ski areas). Responding to discovery request for documents could take up considerable staff time. We are currently negotiating an amendment to a 3-party MOA between Okemo, Timber Creek LLC, and FPR regarding reimbursement to the State for its prior purchase of the former Pace property (now a part of Okemo State Forest). Timber Creek has made a partial payment to FPR under the MOA but still owes the State approximately \$220,000. The terms of this balance payment is the subject of the amendment to the MOA. MOA funds go into the department land acquisition account and are to be used to fund acquisition and conserve wildlife habitat in the Okemo region.

Quechee State Park Lease: We are currently in the process of negotiating a new lease with the US Army Corps of Engineers at Quechee State Park. The former lease with the Corps expired two years ago.

Succession Planning : While this is an issue for the Department (and Agency) as a whole, it is particularly significant for the Lands Administration Division given that a full third of

the Division (ANR Lands Director and Lands Administration Sections Chief) are considering retiring in 2017.

Miscellaneous: There is an unresolved encroachment at Coolidge State Forest in Plymouth next to the Round Top (Ski the Notch) ski area. The ski area cut about an acre of forest and placed a considerable amount of fill on state forest land. The owner has so far been unresponsive to the Department's efforts to seek a resolution of this matter. We will be using the net proceeds from the sale of the Lafreniere homestead property (about \$34,000) to further stabilize the historic barn complex located on adjacent state land. Markowski Excavation is seeking town and Act 250 approval for expansion of their stone quarry onto what is now state forest land in Plymouth. We have legislative approval to sell Markowski a 32-acre parcel of land directly adjacent to their existing quarry for the sum of \$275,000. These funds are to be used to acquire other priority acquisitions.

New Work:

- **Revise 1999 ANR Lands Conservation Plan** – This plan, though still valid and useful, should be updated within the next couple of years.
- **FPR License and SUP Fees** – These fees are established through rulemaking and were last updated/increased about ten years ago. They should be updated again within the next few years. This would be especially important and helpful for establishing reasonable fees for telecommunication licenses on FPR land.
- **Primitive Camping Rules** – The Primitive Camping Rules should be amended to include additional ANR lands open for primitive camping and to provide the Secretary with the authority to add new units available for this activity when they become available without the need to go through rulemaking.
- **Records/Document Management** – Development of a document management system for ANR land records (and ideally all FPR records) is an important need. This is a significant undertaking that will likely occur in small increments at the Agency level.
- **State Lands Archeologist** – The Agency currently contracts out all archeological assessment work on state lands to various consultants at the cost of many thousands of dollars. We could save money and do this work more efficiently if we developed the capacity to do this work in house by hiring a state lands archeologist. This position could be funded by all three ANR departments and would be similar to the State Lands Ecologist position. There is precedence for this – we believe AOT already has such a position.
- **ATVs on ANR Lands** – LCAR recently opposed ANR's proposed rule for allowing ATV connector trails on ANR lands. Despite this setback, this remains a priority of VASA and will likely resurface once the new administration becomes established.

State Parks Division

Marketing - Effective and efficient targeted marketing is critical to the continued high level of success of the state parks system. We long ago transitioned from traditional, costly and questionably effective efforts to very targeted, less costly and much more effective means. Extremely important is our ability to continue to take advantage of a variety of contemporary online, social media platforms. Communicating with our 25,000 e-newsletter readers, our 36,000 person Facebook community, our 19,000 Twitter followers and our blog contributors is crucial.

Volunteerism - represents a significant part of our future. We have volunteer campground staff in almost every park, we have over 30 volunteer photographers each season, we have several corporate partners that return each year for employee volunteer projects and we have countless relationships with scout groups, church groups, service groups, schools, etc. Coordinating this takes a significant effort that we constantly work to improve and expand. Recruitment, coordination, supervision and reward all require unique skills for volunteer activity.

Capital needs - The park system was largely constructed in either the 1930's by the Civilian Conservation Corps or the 1960's. Despite the high-quality, long-lived construction design and techniques of the CCC and because of the quick, short-lived work in the 1960's, the state park infrastructure has become a major focus over the last several years. Over the last 6 years, FPR has received almost \$13 million in capital construction funding that has been used for a wide variety of critical infrastructure needs including rebuilding the Bomoseen State Park bath house and day use area, rebuilding the marina facilities at Burton Island, and roads, bridges, and utility systems across many parks. Major projects proposed in the near future include significant investments upgrading Maidstone, Alburgh Dunes and Sand Bar State Parks plus several replacement campground restroom/shower buildings. We have demonstrated the capacity to spend \$3 million per year on important, well-constructed, well designed projects with the ability to spend even more in short order on specific large scale construction projects that have planning, design and permitting accomplished earlier. Important to our success at executing projects is the ability to exercise flexibility within the annual capital allocation. Funds can be applied within broad approved categories for projects that are ready for construction and if design or permitting issues delay a project, funds can be shifted to some other project that is better prepared to move forward.

Rather than just rebuilding the infrastructure as is, we routinely conduct an internal (and sometimes external) assessment of the true contemporary recreational contribution of each park. We consider changes needed to make the parks more relevant to today's park visitors and to make the operation more efficient to maximize visitation (relevance) and minimize operational costs (efficiencies). This thinking has been applied in the Burton Island, Maidstone Sand bar and Alburgh Dunes projects.

Capital investment needs to be made strategically to enhance both attendance and revenue. Campground cabin construction (underway for several years) and playground improvements are good examples.

- Sustain service quality and enhance workforce (numbers and pay rates) to accommodate expected further increased visitation
- Sustain or enhance capital annual allocation for infrastructure
- Adjust revenue sources to be able to sustain increased operating costs (fee increases, explore alternative sources)
- Implement nature center improvement project (in partnership with ECHO) funded by VPF
- Internal strategic planning/visioning exercise focused on facility management (outcomes: workload assessment, position functions, description/classification changes and/or clarification)

FPR Outdoor Recreation Issues

Note – Although FPR’s mission and statutory mandates include planning, provisioning, and promoting outdoor recreation (as indicated in the department’s name), there is no specific recreation division or appropriation. Consequently, this important function and the expanding and diversifying public demand for outdoor recreation access and infrastructure is an increasing challenge for department capacity yet it represents an outstanding opportunity for increased attention and return on investment in increased economic activity, human and community health, and environmental literacy.

- **Communication:** Between FPR and Partners, foster a strong and growing relationship with the Vermont Trails and Greenways Council, create a relationship with the commercial outdoor industry
- **Supporting public recreation on private lands:** redefine and clarify Act 250 jurisdiction on public recreation trails on private lands, provide meaningful incentives for private landowners who offer public recreation, ensure broad understanding of liability exposure for private landowners
- **External information:** Use existing state Trail Ethic in an outreach campaign with a coordinated communication strategy
- **Trends:** Increase cooperation and participation of partners and create pilot programs for new uses when possible
- **Resources:** Create a comprehensive list of resources and groups linked to overall goal, and create a robust recreation program within FPR with adequate staffing, budget allocation, etc.

FPR Legal Issues

Plum Creek Supreme Court decision: The Supreme Court reversed the Superior Court decision and reinstated the Department's adverse inspection report finding that Plum Creek cut contrary to their UVA Forest Management Plan. The issuance of an adverse inspection report requires that the Director of PVR of the Department of Taxes shall discontinue the entire parcel from the UVA Program for a period of 5 years and the landowner must pay a land use change tax on the developed portion of the property (approximately 130 acres). The issue of what constitutes the "entire parcel" for purposes of discontinuance was raised in the Superior Court litigation, but not decided as the Superior Court reversed the adverse inspection report. This issue, and the determination of the land use change tax remains unresolved and the Supreme Court Remanded these issues to the Superior Court for determination.

It will be important to be briefed on this issue early on.

Ongoing enforcement matters:

Sunrise Condominium Homeowner's Association: This case involved the development of a platform, tent and remote restaurant area on state land that is encumbered by a conservation easement held by VLT. Sunrise charged the public for ski and snowshoe tours and had music, beverages and food services on the platform on stat land. The platform was built in a wetland that is important bear feeding area and was one of the attributes identified as important for acquisition of the property. The parties are continuing settlement negotiation of the NOAV and penalties.

Round Top Ski Area: This case involves the encroachment onto approximately 1 acre of state forest land that included filling a wetland that as associated with the abutting landowner's development of a snowmaking pond for a private ski area in Plymouth. The parties are negotiating a resolution to the state lands encroachment issue.

FPR Business Office Issues

Ongoing issues and needs:

- Eliminate our dependence upon the Lands and Facilities Trust Fund for operating expenses, prevent the fund from reaching a zero balance.
- Forest Highway is chronically underfunded by at least \$500,000 annually.
- There is a downward trend in federal funds for the forestry division. Federal funds are used to pay for staff throughout the division, we need to seek ways to offset this decline to avoid losing critically needed staff.

- The parks special fund balance must be maintained since park revenue is highly dependent upon weather (summer recreation and winter ski leases). A balance must be available for continuity of operations in the event of bad weather.
- The capital program is very important and we could utilize more dollars. The Parks has a huge amount of aging infrastructure which must be maintained to support park attendance and in turn generate park revenue.
- Outside of federal and state special funds for the RTP grants coordinator we do not have any dedicated funding for recreation staff. There is increasing demand for recreation which should be met with increasing our staffing in this area. We believe that we are unable to take advantage of all federal and non-federal grant opportunities available to support recreation due to the lack of staff.

III. Inter-Agency Issues

AAFM: Working Lands Enterprise Initiative and Board, Invasive species and forest pests/pathogens, Current Use, overlap in statutory authority for maple sugaring, AMP's for logging, forestry issues.

Agency of Administration: Budget, Human Resources Consolidation, Information Technology, Tax Department/Current Use Administration; Parks (Human Resources, Buildings and General Services, Finance, etc.). Electronic communications on state lands (DII, BGS).

Agency of Commerce and Community Development: Economic Development through forestry and outdoor recreation, Historic Preservation, Act 250, forest land-use planning and regulation to prevent fragmentation and to support forest economy.

Agency of Human Services/Corrections: Parks workforce

Public Service: Coordination of roadmap to and implementation of wood energy aspects of Comprehensive Energy Plan (Advanced/Modern Wood Heat Initiative), including shared Wood Energy Forester position to be housed at FPR.

Attorney General: State Lands Encroachments/property disputes and related survey and boundary issues. Enforcement/litigation of AMP and current use violations. We coordinate closely with ANR legal counsel and the Attorney General's Office on these matters when necessary.

Department of Labor: Parks workforce, workforce training and development for forest sector, workers' compensation issues.

Public Safety: Emergency Management, SSF#1, SSF #11, Law Enforcement Coordination.

Secretary of State: State Lands Information Management System - coordinating an Agency-wide effort to develop a comprehensive, web-based data management system for all Agency

land parcels and with the Secretary of State's Office (State Archives and Records Administration) on. Continued on-boarding and outreach/continuing education for newly (7/1/16) enacted forester licensing.

NRCS: Cost-share programs for private woodland owners are now administered by NRCS. FPR provides technical services, review of practices and revaluation of plans and activities. Cost-share opportunities will grow in the future and without the technical expertise within NRCS, more work will fall to county foresters.

Vermont Youth Conservation Corps - FPR is the administrator of pass-through monies from state parks, AOT, trail funds, general funds and donations. This program educates youth in good conservation ethics through employment in natural resource related projects.

IV. Key Decision Dates

V. Legislation

As directed by Legislature (Act 171 of 2016):

Develop reimbursement guidelines for municipalities requesting reimbursement from FPR for wildland forest fire suppression costs and continue to work with volunteer fire departments in forest fire training and deployment.

Complete Report to the Legislature on benefits and costs of implementing a timber harvest notification system.

Develop report to legislature on intergenerational transfer of forestland ownership.

Develop report to legislature on possible changes to municipal and Act 250 regulation of forestland use and development.

Possible "fix" to "entire parcel" removal statute for development in current use, pending outcome of superior court remand penalty decision.

Joint Resolutions Regarding Department Lands: T. 10 V.S.A. §2606(b) authorizes the Commissioner of FPR to enter into various land transactions subject to the approval of the legislature. The department typically seeks legislative approval for such transactions via Joint Resolution. It is not known at this time whether we will be seeking legislative approval for additional land transactions during the upcoming session.

VI. External Group and Organizations

All conservation, environmental and special interest groups interact with FPR. Also, all landowner, industry, forestry, traditional use, recreational, and sporting groups and organizations interact with FPR.

These groups and organizations include: Associated Industries of Vermont/Forest Products; APHIS USDA, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service; Vermont Chapter, American Society of Landscape Architects; Vermont Forest Products Association; Green Mountain National Forest; NRCS USDA, Natural Resource Conservation Service; Society of American Foresters; US Forest Service, State & Private Forestry, Northeastern Area; The Nature Conservancy; US Fish and Wildlife Service; US Park Service; University of Vermont and UVM Extension; Vermont Association of Planning & Development Agencies; Vermont Natural Resources Council; Vermont Nursery and Landscape Association; Vermont Wood Manufacturer's Association; Vermont Woodlands Association/Vermont Certified Consulting Foresters; local governments, local services groups, non-profit trail groups, non-profit employment programs, local, park focused groups; The Nature Conservancy; The Conservation Fund; Vermont Land Trust; The Green Mt. Club; Catamount Trails Association; Upper Valley Land Trust; Vermont Association of Snow Travelers; Vermont Mt. Bike Association; VT Backcountry Alliance; Outdoor Industry Association; Vermont ATV Sportsman Association; Vermont Ski Area Association.
