



The following update is a list of work at the Department related to Vermont's forests and the forest economy.

Legislation

- Sales and Use Tax Exemption on forest operations equipment and repair parts enacted July 1, 2017.
- FPR will pursue a technical correction to exempt forest operations equipment (slashers, chippers, firewood processors) that must be registered at the Dept. of Motor Vehicles, which is subject to Purchase and Use tax.
- Support for S.101 Vermont Right to Conduct Forest Operations, which will protect lawfully conducted forestry, forest operations and related trucking from nuisance lawsuits.
- 2018 may see legislation in support of changes to High Risk Occupation workers compensation insurance as an outcome of the S.34 study report. FPR has and will continue to work extensively on this issue.
- Updates to the Tree Warden statutes. 2017 has seen some high profile cases involving trees harvested within the municipal right of way and there are conflicting statutes regarding the jurisdiction and process.
- Use Value Appraisal - Modify Penalty for Minor Non-Compliance with Forest Management plan – Currently, non-compliance with a forest management plan triggers an Adverse Inspection resulting in a Land Use Change Tax applied on the areas cut contrary to the management plan and removal of the entire parcel from UVA for 5 years. There is a perception that in some cases the penalty can be disproportionate to the violation, with an entire parcel removed for a small violation. Legislation has been proposed to provide alternatives to removal of an entire parcel when a minor violation occurs.

Act 250

- The Scott Administration has submitted a report to the Act 47 Legislative Commission that includes suggested changes to Act 250 permitting of forest products processing facilities.
- Topics include:
 - Hours of operation and truck traffic related permit conditions that reflect the weather dependency of forest operations delivering to mills or other markets and the need to deliver firewood to homes and chips to schools and businesses nights and weekends.
 - Different jurisdictional triggers that reflect the rural nature of working lands businesses and their contribution to keeping land undeveloped and potentially expedited permitting.

Use Value Appraisal

- Currently nearly 15,000 parcels comprising 2,000,000 acres of forestland are under active management. This is estimated to be more than ½ of the eligible forestland in the state.
- On the ground engagement by county foresters has been prioritized with on-the-ground visits up from 610 in 2015 to 1,145 in 2017.
- Private Lands Advisory committee – following the Commissioner's solicitation of input from the consulting forester community in 2015 and the Department's interest in a formal and consistent opportunity hear from this group, the Private Lands Advisory Committee was established by the Commissioner in 2017. Voting members include 8 private sector foresters and 3 landowners. Non-voting members include two county foresters, one F&W rep and one PVR rep. Chaired by Richard Carbonetti and vice-chaired by Andy Carlo.

- Currently finalizing a recommendation on a forest management plan template to streamline plan development and review for use throughout the UVA program. Intended to reduce administrative work, and increase county forester time on the ground. Likely to be in a test phase in early summer 2018.
- Forest Management Activity Report (FMAR) – new form in 2018, which, consistent with proposed legislative changes, will be submitted to Property Valuation and Review (PVR) instead of FPR to protect sensitive personal information. New form will remove requirement of some plan information, will add requirement for reporting activity related to sugaring.
- Enrollment and record management – Ongoing work to refine the records associated with enrollments. Good recordkeeping and efficient systems allow more frequent and consistent outreach to landowners. Examples include – reminding landowners when management is scheduled to increase compliance and reduce failure to implement scheduled harvesting.

Agency of Natural Resources Lands Management

ANR lands are held in the public trust, valued for the many benefits they can provide. Meeting the needs and expectations of all of society calls for a system providing for multiple uses and benefits for the multitude of public values. Finding that balance is the responsibility of ANR Land managers. Through our public involvement process when developing long-range management plans, we reach out to all stakeholders and adapt management strategies that are compatible with the resource constraints and public desires. FPR manages 350,000 acres of forestland and 400 miles of state forest and park access roads. Through the long-range management planning process, public land is evaluated through detailed natural resource assessments and then ‘zoned’ to identify compatible and appropriate uses. On average, only one-third of the public land base is classified general use and suitable for timber harvesting. High elevations, steep slopes, riparian areas and other significant natural communities are exempt from harvesting.

- FPR is reviewing the administration and management of its State Lands Program. This includes overseeing leases, licenses, special use permits and the “real estate” shop within FPR. In 2018 FPR will fill two vacant positions that perform vital coordination and land management functions. In addition, we are undertaking process improvement that will address bottlenecks in planning and implementing treatments on public lands, including:
 - FPR and our sister Departments within ANR are initiating a LEAN process that will begin in 2018 and is intended to reduce the time required to complete Long Range Management Plans.
 - FPR leadership meets biweekly to discuss process, updates and efficiencies regarding State Land Management
 - Starting in 2018 the Department will hold an annual Timber Purchasers meeting to inform potential bidders of anticipated timber sales, provide updates on procedural changes and solicit feedback.
 - FPR is doing our part to build a culture of safety by implementing improved safety planning on all State Lands timber sales and in 2018 will be both issuing and following guidance on how to determine what insurance is needed by contractors and subcontractors on a timber sale on State or private lands.
- On average, one percent of Vermont’s forested acreage has some form of harvesting annually. This rate is equivalent to the harvest on state land, roughly 1,200 acres. Approximately 12 timber sales will go out to bid in 2018.
- Timber harvesting on public land generates revenues of approximately \$300,000 annually. These revenues either go into the Lands and Facilities Trust Fund to support land management infrastructure or to the Parks Revolving Fund to support state parks operations.
- Time accounting over the last ten years shows that on average, state sales provide a net income of more than \$400 per acre.
- Timber harvesting on state land provides other benefits. All sales have some type of wildlife habitat activity to improve landscape scale or specific species habitat needs. State forest and park access road improvements are often incorporated and subsidized from timber harvesting. Many of our recreational trails were created from access roads from harvesting activity.

Forest Economy

- Working with public and private sector partners to advance potential markets for low-grade wood through expanded use of wood for thermal energy in homes and businesses.
- FPR compiles annual data of Vermont's timber harvesting, monitors and reports on regional markets and assists with developing and funding new markets for forest products.
- Coordination of the State Wood Energy Team that has provided incentives for 8 new pellet and wood chip systems (over 3 years) creating/maintaining markets for 500 tons wood chips and 700 tons of pellets annually.
- FPR recently hired a Wood Energy Coordinator to promote heating with wood chips, pellets and cordwood.
- Engaging with other efforts to bolster the forest economy; Working Lands Enterprise Initiative, UVM Logger Business Training, LEAP training (Logger Education to Advance Professionalism), Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund and other partners. FPR has staff on the board of the Working Lands initiative which funds programs such as the Vermont Farm and Forest Viability program that offers business planning services to working lands business operators. Strengthening the business skills and management capability of forest economy business owners to help them navigating the current and future market conditions is an important goal for FPR.
- States are cooperating on efforts to maintain existing and recruiting new wood using markets... both low-grade and sawlog markets
- Starting a state and regional economic analysis of the forest industry to document to decision-makers and the public the importance of the industry to the region.

Water Quality

Status of the AMP rulemaking process

- AMP rules are being updated to make technical corrections to last year's update. There are changes to five definitions and addition and clarification of requirements for temporary and permanent stream crossings.
- To learn more, go to: http://fpr.vermont.gov/forest/vermonts_forests/amps
- Public meeting dates: Lyndon State College, Tuesday Jan. 16th from 5:00- 7:30
Howe Center, Rutland, Thursday Jan. 18th from 5:00-7:30
UVM Extension office, Barre, Tuesday Jan. 23rd from 5:00-7:30
- Public comment will end on February 2nd.
- Goal is for the new amendments to the rule to go into effect before June 1st.

The AMP Manual

- FPR is working with a designer on a new manual and it will be similar to the Maine BMP Manual
- Will include sections on planning, wetlands, spill kits etc. Will include more information than the old manual.
- FPR is planning on having the manual ready to print as soon as the rulemaking process is complete. May-June 2018

The Watershed Program is experimenting with Truck Bridge Rental and Skidder Bridge Rental

- FPR will own two ADM bridges (35' and 45) rated for 99,000 pounds that will be available for rental by Loggers, Foresters and Landowners when not in use on State Land. For temporary use only.
- Rental fee will be minimal, and landowner/contractor will have to provide insurance certificate and sign a rental agreement.
- FPR will also have 30' steel skidder bridges available for rent (2-3).

