



Forestry Management Guidelines

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Statement of Purpose

The Commission, as of this writing, has under its control approximately 1,800 acres of land. Those acres consist of a variety of types: forested, open, wetlands. The Commission has long recognized the need to manage conservation parcels. This document goes a short distance to providing some guidance for the Commission and the public. With the addition of a town forester it is hoped that the objective of long term health of our forests and open space can be maintained into the future for the enjoyment of the public and benefit of the natural world around us.

The purpose of the FMG is to focus the Commission on the management of both forested and open land by providing a framework for the application of best management practices (BMP's). The goals and objectives presented within the FMG offer a palette for management, and it is the job of the Commission to wisely select elements from that palette of choices appropriate to the parcel(s) under consideration with the help and advice of a qualified forester.

It must be noted that this document is not intended as an exhaustive specification, or procedure for management.

Goals

The goals presented here are not universal to all properties, but represent an overall set of achievable ideals. They are intended to apply to all types of land, and in that sense some will be competing. The Commission will need to select among sometimes competing goals with the guidance of the town forester and the public to achieve a harmonious balance. It is recognized that, although not the primary goal, economic incentive is a necessary component of any forestry management plan.

- Promote healthy forested land and enhance timber value.
- Income from forestry is to be directed to conservation land improvement and management.
- Promote old growth characteristics where appropriate.
- Wildlife habitat improvement.
- Provide open and successional areas for nesting birds.
- Preserve and maintain open agricultural space.
- Protect vernal pools and wetland resources.
- Removal, reduction, and control of invasive plant species.

- The application of “low impact” , “low disturbance” forestry practices is a high priority.
- Partner with private landowners when and where possible.

Objectives

Immediate:

- Complete the Forestry RFP and put it out for bid.
- Select a forester based on RFP results.

Long term:

- Forester to review and analyze Commission parcels.
- Forester will assist the Commission in deciding strategy for management.
- Select parcels and prepare forestry and cutting plans.
- Public education on healthy forest management benefits and practices.
- Public input.

Strategy

The initial strategy is to partner with the Groton Water Department (GWD) to secure the services for the Town of a qualified/licensed forester. This will be done through the standard MGL Ch 30 bidding procedures. The actual RFP document “Town of Groton Forestry Request for Proposal” outlines the overall contractual requirements. By acquiring the services of a forester the Town can begin to analyze parcels and determine how best to manage our forests and open areas over long time spans. Derive income from forestry in order to provide funding for the management of conservation lands. A further enhancement to the strategy would be to extend planning and partnering with private land owners to combine forestry management and operations to achieve greater benefits. Incentives for private land owners such as tax benefits should be considered by the Town in return for forest protection and management. Combine public and private forestry management to achieve landscape level protection. Benefits would ensue for both parties by reducing cost and disturbance and achieving a more uniform result over a larger area. This would hopefully benefit future forest and wildlife habitat.

The Commission recognizes that not all parcels are ideal candidates for cutting, either by virtue of small size or poor timber quality. When considering cutting a strategy of pairing less desirable parcels with more desirable must be considered.

This will permit the management of parcels that would otherwise be left in an unmanaged state. The goals for all parcels when considering a cut must be those stated in the “Goals” section of this document.

In summary the strategy consists of the following items:

- Partnering with the GWD to prepare and release a Forestry RFP to select a forester.
- Direct income from forestry to conservation land management.
- Working with the selected forester to analyze all GCC and GWD parcels.
- Select parcels for forestry in line with the “Goals” herein set forth.
- Partnering with private abutters where possible to achieve greater economic and management benefits.

Procedures & Practices

This section, as in previous sections, presents a set of guidelines that should be applied to any planned forestry management project. These guidelines should be reviewed as part of the process in managing any parcel or parcels. The desired effect will be to allow the Commission and GWD to consider multiple possible options and strategies before proceeding with any particular plan. Here again this is not intended to be detailed or exhaustive, but rather to provide guidance regarding what should be considered when planning forestry operations or developing stewardship plans.

Procedure

The procedure begins with analysis of parcels with recommendations by the forester. The forester will present recommendations to the Commission. The Commission will work with the forester to apply the “Goals” and may further stipulate additional requirements, such as canopy retention, invasive management, legacy tree retention, and vernal pool and wetland guidelines. The forester will conduct a site walk to review the proposed work for the Commission and the public. The Commission and the forester will review comments and make changes as deemed appropriate. After the Commission and forester have completed, to the Commission’s satisfaction, an appropriate plan for parcel/parcels, the forester will then be authorized to put such parcels out for bid. Proceeds from forestry operations will be used to defray the cost of the forester, conservation land management and other considerations.

Practices

When managing a parcel or parcels the Commission will give precedence to best management practices (BMP's) for sustainable forestry. The Commission and forester will give highest priority to "low impact" and "low disturbance" logging, and all logging practices shall be designed to have minimal impact on the forest floor, wetlands, vernal pools, and other sensitive sites. Prevention of the inadvertent transportation of invasive plant species will be a prime consideration in any forestry projects considered. All machinery shall be thoroughly cleaned prior to introduction on any parcel in order to prevent introduction of invasive plant species.

Review & Reassessment

This document is intended to be reviewed and updated as the Commission gains experience with the practices and process of managing forests and open spaces. The intention is to review this document after one year of accumulated experience. Further reviews will be on an as needed basis, but should not be longer than five years from the date of adoption.

MEG/mg