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Northern Forest Lands Council

54 Portsmouth Street, Concord, NH 03301

September 1994

Dear Governors Cuomo, DeanMcKernan and Merrill, and Members of
Congress:

We are pleased to present the recommendations of the Northern Forest Lands Council. This report culminates an effort that began in 1988 with the Northern Forest Lands Study and the Governors' Task Force on Northern Forest Lands.

In creating the Council, you asked us to continue the work of the Governors' Task Force and identify ways to reinforce the region's traditional patterns of land ownership and use. We accomplished this in several ways: contracting research, sponsoring forums, holding public discussions, and overseeing a natural and economic resource inventory. We appreciate your giving us the opportunity to work on issues of such importance to the region's future. We are grateful for your confidence and for the support you have provided over the years.

The Council's deliberations have produced six distinct products:

1. This report of our recommendations.
2. A compilation of the findings from our research.
3. The specific research studies, published as a technical appendix.
4. The compilation of natural resource and economic information by the states' resource inventories.
5. The summary of comments from thousands of people on our work and process.
6. The Council's consensus-building process that brought together widely-disparate views on issues of common concern.

Our recommendations are rooted in and advance a broadly shared vision of the Northern Forest. We see a region where residents and visitors alike benefit from extensive forests rich in natural resources and natural values. The forest of our vision provides a sound foundation for a diversified economy and stable communities, opportunities for quality recreation, and long-term protection of the diversity of plant and animal species residing here.

This report proposes specific actions to help fulfill that vision through a balanced approach, while maintaining the region's traditional character and use. Our strategy is guided by principles developed during our work. It calls for immediate and sustained actions by all levels of government and the private sector. We strongly recommend redirecting existing funds to address these priority actions.

In addition to these recommendations, a key outcome of this process has been the development of better communications between the various stakeholders, both private and public. We encourage further constructive dialogue and pledge to work in our capacity as private citizens to facilitate its continuation.

In the same spirit that the Council members and the public have worked together to build a strong foundation for these recommendations, we hope you will join forces and act with conviction to protect these Northern Forest Lands for us and for the generations to follow.

Sincerely,

- **Jerry A.Bley**
- **JaniceMcAllister**
- **C. Edwin Meadows, Jr.**
- **RogerMilliken, Jr.Paul O.Bofinger**
- **John D.Harrigan**
- **BeatonMarsh**
- **John E. Sargent**
- **Robert L.Bendick Jr.**
- **Robert S.Stegemann**
- **Barbara Sweet**
- **Neil F. Woodworth**
- **Richard G.Carbonetti**
- **Peter B. Meyer**
- **Conrad M.Motyka**
- **Brendan J.Whittaker**
- **Michael T. Rains**

Introduction

Since its creation in 1990, the Northern Forest Lands Council has been seeking ways for Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont to maintain the “traditional patterns of land ownership and use” of the Northern Forest. The Council has conducted in-depth research, assessed data, consulted with experts, held public meetings, and listened to thousands of people who care deeply about what happens in and to the region. The Council has weighed options for action to fulfill its mission in an atmosphere of open public participation.

This report, a follow-up to our draft recommendations report, *Finding Common Ground*, released in March 1994, represents the work of many individuals, thousands of pages of studies, and hundreds of hours of forums and public meetings. It comes out of the intense, often difficult dialogue among the Council members themselves.

This report is divided into the following sections:

- A brief overview of the Northern Forest and the history of why the Council came into being
- A review of what we learned from the public in their comments on our draft recommendations, and how their comments helped us to develop these recommendations. (For a comprehensive summary and analysis of the public comments, consult the <MI%-1>Summary of Public Comment on the Draft Recommendations, available from the Council through the end of September 1994 and individual state offices thereafter.)
- A vision of the region’s future derived from what has been learned, and the obstacles that must be overcome to realize that future
- Fundamental principles upon which the Council has based its work
- Concepts that are the foundation for the Council’s recommendations
- The recommendations themselves, with background information and justification for each. (For a complete copy of all Council research, consult its Technical Appendix, published in February 1994 and available at state and selected university libraries around the country.)
- The appendices, as listed on page A-1

Northern Forest Lands Council Members

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Bley is Principal of Creative Conservation, a natural resource consulting firm; he is a former land use policy director for the Natural Resources Council of Maine.

Edward "Ted" I. Johnston, Maine Forest Products Council, 146 State Street, Augusta, ME 04330.

Johnston is former President of the Maine Forest Products Council, and a former staff member for Senator William S. Cohen of Maine; he was a member of the Governors' Task Force on Northern Forest Lands and served on the Council through May 1994.

Janice A. McAllister, RR 2, Box 141, Abbot, ME, 04406.

McAllister is a Selectwoman from Abbot, Maine, and a small forest landowner.

C. Edwin Meadows, Jr., ME Department of Conservation, State House Station 22, Augusta, ME 04333.

Meadows, formerly with the Seven Islands Land Company, is Commissioner of the Maine Department of Conservation; he was a member of the Governors' Task Force on Northern Forest Lands.

Roger Milliken, Jr., Maine Forest Products Council, 146 State Street, Augusta, ME 04330.

Milliken is Chairman of the Maine Forest Products Council and president of the Baskahegan Company, a family firm which owns and manages forest land in Maine; he replaced Ted Johnston on the Council in June 1994.

New Hampshire

Paul O. Bofinger, Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, 54 Portsmouth Street, Concord, NH 03301.

Bofinger is President/Forester of the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests and was a member of the Governors' Task Force on Northern Forest Lands.

John D. Harrigan, P.O. Box 28, Lancaster, NH 03584.

Harrigan, a small forest landowner, is also the Publisher and Editor of the Coos County Democrat and long-time resident of the north country.

Beaton Marsh, 42 Bridge Street, Colebrook, NH 03576.

Marsh, now retired, was a State Legislator for eight years; he was former Director of lumber management for Ethan Allen, where he was employed for 28 years.

John E. Sargent, NH Division of Forests and Lands, P.O. Box 1856, Concord, NH 03302.

Sargent, New Hampshire State Forester, is Director of the Division of Forests and Lands; he is a former north country resident.

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Robert L. Bendick, Jr., NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, 50 Wolf Road, Room 604, Albany, NY 12233-1012.

Bendick is Deputy Commissioner of Natural Resources for the Department of Environmental Conservation, and formerly Director of Rhode Island's Department of Environmental Management.

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Stegemann is Regional Manager for Public Affairs at International Paper, and former Executive Vice President of the Empire State Forest Products Association.

Barbara Sweet, Town of Newcomb, Box 405, Newcomb, NY 12852.

Sweet is a Councilwoman from Newcomb, NY, and a local business woman.

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Woodworth is Director of Government Relations with the Adirondack Mountain Club, and a practicing attorney in the Albany area.

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Meyer is Vice President of E.B. Hyde Corporation, an owner of family forest land in northern Vermont; he was a member of the Governors' Task Force on Northern Forest Lands.

Conrad Motyka, VT Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, 103 South Main Street, Waterbury, VT 05676.

Motyka, Vermont State Forester, is Commissioner of Vermont's Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation; he is also a forest landowner and maple syrup producer.

Brendan J. Whittaker, RR 1, Box 555, Brunswick, VT 05905.

Whittaker is a forester and former Secretary of the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources; he is also an Episcopal minister and Northern Forest Project Coordinator for the Vermont Natural Resources Council.

USDA Forest Service

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Rains is Director for the Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry. He was previously acting deputy chief for State and Private Forestry.

Northern Forest Lands Council Mission Statement

The mission of the Northern Forest Lands Council is to reinforce the traditional patterns of land ownership and uses of large forest areas in the Northern Forest of Maine, New Hampshire, New York and Vermont, which have characterized these lands for decades. This mission is to be achieved by:

- Enhancing the quality of life for local residents through the promotion of economic stability for the people and communities of the area and through the maintenance of large forest areas;
 - Encouraging the production of a sustainable yield of forest products, and;
 - Protecting recreational, wildlife, scenic and wildland resources.
-

The Northern Forest Lands Council is disbanding and closing its office in September 1994. After this date, people should contact the following offices to request literature produced by the Council and to obtain general information about the Northern Forest.

Maine

ME Department of Conservation
State House Station 22
Augusta, ME 04333
(207) 287-4900

New York

NYS Dep't of Environmental Conservation
50 Wolf Road, Room 404
Albany, NY 12233-4252
(518) 457-7431

New Hampshire

NH Division of Forests and Lands
P.O. Box 1856
Concord, NH 03302
(603) 271-2214

Vermont

VT Agency of Natural Resources
103 South Main Street
Waterbury, VT 05676
(802) 241-3670

In addition, all Council documents and archival materials are available through the Maine State Library, Station 64, Augusta, ME 04333; telephone (207) 287-5600.

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Logo: An original 4"x12" woodcut by Sabra Field, "Winter View" 1985.

Northern Forest Lands Council
Finding Common Ground:
Conserving the Northern Forest

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In all, 37 recommendations are here. They deal not with every issue or problem, but only those that the Council felt would have the largest impact for the Northern Forest.

Some of the recommendations put forth here may take years to accomplish, while others can be enacted immediately. Nonetheless, much can be accomplished through these recommendations to assure a bright future for the Northern Forest, with diligent and concerted efforts by many people, organizations, and agencies.

* * * * *

The Council thanks the governors and Congress for their concern about the future of the Northern Forest, and for their support of this important process.

The Council also expresses its appreciation to the thousands of citizens who care deeply enough about the Northern Forest to have contributed their time, talent, and personal feelings. We have listened to them and responded to their concerns. Their assistance has greatly strengthened our report.

The Council recognizes with gratitude and appreciation the dedication and vision of the members of the Governors' Task Force on Northern Forest Lands (the Council's predecessor) and former Council member Edward I. Johnston. Their foresight paved the way for this unique consensus-building approach to natural resource management, one that will brighten the region's future for years to come. Thanks are also extended to those who worked on the Northern Forest Lands Study, including its coordinator Stephen Harper, who was an initial member of the Council.

Finally, the Council wishes to convey its thanks to its exceptionally dedicated staff: Charles Levesque, Executive Director; Esthe Cowles, Resource Specialist; and Mary Beth Hybsch, Administrative Assistant; and to the four states' coordinators: Dona Mansius (Maine), Susan Francher (New Hampshire), Karyn Richards (New York), and Mik Eraysie; Jim Horton and Charles Johnson (Vermont). The staff, above all, were responsible for the Council's unique public outreach efforts. Without their work, which extended far beyond the normal bounds of obligation to their jobs, this report could never have been produced.

The Northern Forest: Lands of Tradition, Lands of Change

The Land and the People

A 26 million-acre forest stretches from eastern Maine through New Hampshire and Vermont across northern New York almost to Lake Ontario. It is one of the largest expanses of continuously forested land in the nation and is valuable in many ways to the people who live within its boundaries, work with its resources, use its products, visit it, and care about it.

For its one million residents, this region is home. They have a connection to the land fewer and fewer Americans experience or understand. They have grown up hunting, fishing, trapping, and walking in the woods here. They are loggers, farmers, and business people. They work in the mills that have been the backbone of the region's economy for decades. Nearly 85% of the Northern Forest is privately owned and has provided a diversity of environmental and economic benefits. The economic viability of these private land ownerships is integral to community strength and the overall economic health of the region.

Some families have taken care of their forests and farms for generations; they have seen storms, droughts, great fires, and hard times. Living in the Northern Forest has often been difficult, but its people are proud of their endurance, their heritage, and a way of life so different than in the urban areas around them.

The forest-based industries of this region have profound impacts on the economies of the four states. Within the four states, forest-related jobs, including manufacturing and tourism, account for a total annual payroll of over \$3 billion. In forest products manufacturing, the total annual economic contribution for each of the states is as follows: in Maine, \$4.6 billion; in New Hampshire, \$1.5 billion; in New York, \$7.8 billion; and in Vermont, \$745 million. (Data from 1987 to 1990.) The Northern Forest provides products to people around the world.

The same forest that is the source of this deeply-rooted, traditional culture is also valued by those who live outside the region. Seventy million people live within a day's drive of the Northern Forest, and many come here for outdoor recreation, escape, and adventure. These visitors continue to find

natural beauty and opportunities for recreation here, but they often take for granted the time-honored availability of private and public lands for their use. Tourists alone spend over \$16 billion annually, generating \$750 million in state and local taxes. Across the four states, forest-based recreation and tourism annually benefit local economies as follows: in Maine, the recreation industry employs 24,600 people with a \$223 million payroll; in New Hampshire, it employs 22,470 people with a \$205.3 million payroll; in New York, it employs 48,670 people with a \$655.3 million payroll; and in Vermont, it employs 18,630 people with a \$157.2 million payroll. (Data from 1987 to 1990.)

And everyone, even those who may never see the Northern Forest, realizes its importance as a source of clean water and clean air, as a place essential to sustaining a rich diversity of plants and animals, and as a peaceful contrast to urban areas.

Changing Times

Complex social and economic forces, some originating outside the region, often lead to competing and conflicting uses of the Northern Forest. Alarms sounded in the 1980s over possible historic shifts in land ownership and use, and gave rise to the Northern Forest Lands Study and, ultimately, the Northern Forest Lands Council.

In 1988, about one million acres of forest land formerly owned by Diamond International Corporation went on the market. In Maine, with 790,000 acres of these lands, tracts which were sold went principally to conservation and timber management interests. In New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont, two developers bought nearly 200,000 acres as recreational and residential properties. Conservation organizations and the three state governments bought about 100,000 of these acres in outright purchase or easement. (Across the region, some lands were sold later for development or short-term timber liquidation.) The remainder of the lands went to a variety of uses, including development. (See Appendix D for more details.)

The sale of these lands drew quick attention, and lots of it. Earlier forest land sales chiefly occurred between timber companies, for value as timberland. Yet in the 1980s, the forest land was marketed, at least in part, for its development value. It was sold to all types of buyers, many with interests other than timber.

The final disposition of the bulk of these lands ultimately was not dramatically different than in the past, but the risk of change to the character of the land and the impact of change on important public values, on a scale never seen before, was perceived as an issue requiring attention.

And thus, Vermont's Senator Patrick Leahy and New Hampshire's then-Senator Warren Rudman prompted Congress to initiate the Northern Forest Lands Study, undertaken by the USDA Forest Service. The study was to look closely at changes in the Northern Forest, assess the impacts of change on the region and its people, and lay out possible ways to maintain the Northern Forest and the traditional uses and quality of life dependent upon the forest.

The study had its charge in the words of an October 1988 letter from the two senators to the Chief of the Forest Service:

“The current land ownership and management patterns have served the people and forests of the region well. We are seeking reinforcement rather than replacement of the patterns of ownership and use that have characterized these lands for decades.”

The Northern Forest Lands Study report was released in May 1990.

A four-state “Governors’ Task Force on Northern Forest Lands,” working along with the Forest Service, guided the study, provided states’ perspectives, and, in the end, wrote its own report to the four governors, making specific recommendations for action. One of its recommendations was to establish the Northern Forest Lands Council.

The Northern Forest Lands Council: The Making of a Public Process

Congress created the Northern Forest Lands Council to continue the work begun by the Governors’ Task Force and the Northern Forest Lands Study for another four years. It was to examine further the issues identified in the study and develop specific recommendations to Congress, state governors, and state and local elected officials.

The Council was established in 1990. It consists of four governor appointees from each of the four states—Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont—and one USDA Forest Service representative. Each state representative speaks for one of four constituencies: forest landowners, environmental interests, state conservation agencies, and local communities. The latter is an important voice that was not present on the 12-member Governors’ Task Force.

The Council’s 17 members all have a stake in the future of the Northern Forest and have dedicated large amounts of their time to the Council for the past four years. They feel deeply about the region, its people, and its future, and each has a special, personal reason for participating in this effort.

From the outset, the Council has believed that it represented many constituencies in all four states. It saw its role as consulting with the broadest

possible range of citizens on their hopes and fears about the future of the Northern Forest and their relationship to it.

The Council consulted with experts and commissioned studies on biological resources, conservation strategies, land conversion, local forest-based economy, property taxation, recreation and tourism, and state and federal taxes to obtain a further understanding of the problems of the region and the implications of these problems for the future.

The Council recognized that its efforts would not succeed unless they included the many interests in the region. Council members believe that the future is best served not by dividing interests, but by working together to find common ground, to make rational public and private choices about what should be. Environmental and economic considerations are interdependent and reinforce one another.

In the course of its work, the Council and its staff accomplished the following actions to seek the broadest possible representation of views, experiences, and concerns:

- created Citizen Advisory Committees (CACs) in each state, representing landowners, property rights interests, environmental interests, timber industry, academia, recreation and tourism businesses, and communities. The CACs served as a microcosm of Northern Forest society, bringing forth many perspectives. CAC meetings, like those of the subcommittees and their work groups, were open to the public. CACs met regularly, serving as sounding boards for their state council members and providing feedback and criticism on the Council's research and direction.
- created work groups of about 20 experts each to serve as advisors to the Council's seven subcommittees studying each subject area.
- held regular public meetings and forums throughout the region.
- conducted issue-specific public forums on land conversion, local forest-based economies, biological resources diversity, and state and federal taxes.
- facilitated the creation of the Northern Forest Resource Inventory through which the states have compiled natural and economic resource data.
- published a comprehensive Technical Appendix of all its research and forum proceedings.
- released Findings and Options in the fall of 1993, which elicited more than 1,000 pages of written response from people inside and outside the region.

The Council released its report of draft recommendations, **Finding Common Ground**, in March 1994. It was based on years of research and public input. It evoked written and verbal comment from more than 1,600 people inside and outside the region. It provided the basis for these recommendations. Thus the Council's proposals are based firmly on a combination of public input, gathered data, expert analysis, and our own extensive discussions.

What We Learned from the Public

The Northern Forest Lands Council released its draft recommendations on March 3, 1994, welcoming comment from individuals and organizations in writing, by phone, at meetings, and at any of 20 listening sessions and 12 open houses that were held from late March through early May.

The public responded with great interest. Nearly 3,000 people attended the Listening Sessions and Open Houses, 800 of whom spoke. Another 800 sent letters. In total, we received 1,676 comments.

The comments reflected a wonderful diversity. A number of individuals and groups submitted written comments nearly as long as *Finding Common Ground* itself, while one person sent a fax that simply noted “B+”. Overall, commenters were extremely thoughtful and constructive.

The Council was heartened that so many commenters agreed with the approach, in whole or in part, of *Finding Common Ground*. To us, it was an affirmation that we were on the right track. Most of the comments contained two general themes: one, to alleviate the range of pressures that discourage landowners from holding and managing lands for the long term; the other, to protect and enhance the ecological resources of the region. The Council’s final recommendations take these themes into consideration, recognize their interdependence, and represent a balanced way to address each. (A comprehensive 100-page summary and analysis of the public comments is available from the Council and the state offices listed inside the front cover.)

What We Changed from the Draft Recommendations

This final report looks different than our draft recommendations. The organization of the recommendations and much of the text has changed in response to what we learned.

The Council added language to and slightly revised *A Way to the Future* and *Fundamental Principles*. We rewrote and modified sections on *Forest Practices*, *Public Land Management and Acquisition*, *Biodiversity*, *Land Use Planning*, and *Education and Technical Assistance*. We added some entirely new sections—*What We’ve Learned* and an *Action Plan*—and new recommendations on *State Easement Programs*, *Cooperation in Sustainable Forest Management*, *Water Quality*, *Community Development Financial Institutions*, and *Natural Resource Education for the Public*.

We found we could not accurately estimate costs for each recommendation due to the variation among the states and the many assumptions necessary for the national estimates. Thus, we did not attempt to give them. All other sections either were unchanged or received only minor wordsmithing

A Way to the Future

The Council's understanding of the views of the many people and experts we have consulted—and intensive discussion among the diverse members of the Council itself—has given us a sense of what the future of the forest can be, and what kind of future people want for this region.

These discussions have also given us a strong sense of the forces for change. The conditions which up to now have conserved the Northern Forest can no longer insure its perpetuation. In our discussions time and again we faced a fundamental conflict—between market-driven efficiency that encourages maximum consumption of resources with the least amount of effort in the shortest time, and society's responsibility to provide future generations with the same benefits we enjoy today.

We believe that until the roots of this conflict are addressed and the economic rules changed so that markets reward long-term sustainability and recognize the worth of well-functioning natural systems, existing market forces will continue to encourage shorter-term exploitation instead of long-term conservation of the Northern Forest.

This report does not address all aspects of this conflict. Instead, we have chosen to concentrate on feasible, effective steps toward changing a range of public policies and trends that now inhibit conservation of the region's forest resources. They include:

- increased polarization among forest user groups.
- rising property taxes, causing loss of land from natural resource uses.
- pressure for development of high-value areas near shorelines and scenic places.
- jobs lost to competition from other regions and countries.
- incomplete knowledge of land management techniques to maintain or enhance biological diversity.
- lack of funding and clear priority-setting for public land and easement acquisition.
- insufficient attention to and funding for public land management.
- fear of losing public recreational opportunities and access to private lands.

-
- **loss of respect for the traditions of private ownership and uses of private land.**
 - **failure to consider forest land as a whole, as an integrated landscape.**

The impacts and influences of these threats may be stronger or weaker depending on economic cycles, but over the long run they will bring about change that, if left to proceed on its own, is likely to harm both the forest and the people who live here.

We believe that to ignore what the Council has discovered about the forces for undesirable change and take no action would be to guarantee an uncertain future for the Northern Forest, one that could lead to break-up of large undeveloped tracts of forest land, a steadily weakening economy, and continuing pressure on finite natural resources. For these reasons, the Council believes people must act in a careful way to shape change, to conserve the important public and private values of the forest.

We see a Northern Forest with extensive forests rich in natural resources and values cherished by residents and visitors; timber, fiber, and wood for forest products and energy supporting successful businesses and providing stable jobs for residents; lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams unspoiled by pollution or crowding human development; viable communities in which people can live, work, and raise families; forest tracts large enough for wide-ranging wildlife, protected and managed in ways that sustain the diversity of plant and animal species; a culture deriving its identity from the environment in which it has evolved.

The Council sees traditional ways of life and patterns of ownership continuing, with residents of towns, villages, and the forests themselves more certain of staying there and of securing livelihoods from the land around them. The Council sees outdoor recreation and tourism compatible with the natural environment and dependent on the qualities which now characterize the region.

The Council's picture of the future Northern Forest is of a landscape of interlocking parts and pieces, inseparable, reinforcing each other: local communities, industrial forest land, family and individual ownerships, small woodlots, recreation land, public and private conservation land.

The Council's recommendations are neither quick solutions nor a response to an imminent crisis. Rather, they are intended to help each state act deliberately to carry on the work the Council has begun, as follows:

- **supporting property owners to hold and manage land for forest products and other benefits.**
- **helping communities strengthen their natural resource-based economies.**

-
- **protecting biological diversity through management based on sound scientific principles.**
 - **acquiring lands for public ownership based on clear public priorities, demonstrated need, and fairness to landowners.**
 - **providing public recreation on public and private land as an important part of the region's economy and way of life.**
 - **recognizing that for the very long term, the use of conservation easements to protect lands from development will be needed to ensure sustainability of the forest resource in areas with significant development pressures.**

The states should act on these measures with assistance from local and federal governments.

While the Council's recommendations are not a radical departure from the past, they are not business as usual. Today, organizations and people, in the states and region, need to investigate tools for taking the future into their own hands. They should no longer be so subject to economic forces beyond their control. States should have sufficient resources to protect public values in ways that are fair to private landowners.

Accomplishing this goal will demand new, imaginative thinking and doing. It will take people—as individuals, in communities, through organizations—to work more closely than they have in the past. It will take governments at all levels—local, regional, state, and federal—to put aside long-standing views and understand a greater good. It will take partnerships among private companies, residents, communities, organizations, and governments in a commitment to conservation and appropriate use of our natural resources. In fact, given the experience of Council members, we believe it will take commitment from diverse interest groups to work through their differences and seek answers that work.

Based on the above, we believe urgent and sustained action is necessary to enact these recommendations for the long-term integrity, character, and productivity of the Northern Forest. The Council has fulfilled its charge to find ways to alter those public policies which fail to reinforce traditional patterns of land ownership and use in the Northern Forest. We now urge those public policy makers who gave us our mandate to act decisively on these recommendations.

Fundamental Principles

The Council's work rests on several fundamental principles. These should also guide the implementation of the recommendations. The key principles are as follows:

- **People must have a right to participate in decisions that affect them.**
- **The rights of private property owners must be respected.**
- **Natural systems must be sustained over the long-term: air, soil, water, and the diversity of plant and animal species.**
- **The history and culture of the Northern Forest and the connections between people and the land must be respected.**
- **States must work in partnership with local and federal governments.**
- **Differences among the four Northern Forest states must be recognized.**
- **People must appreciate that the Northern Forest has values important beyond its boundaries.**
- **Public funds are scarce; the greatest public benefit must be secured for any additional investment.**
- **Proposals must be judged by their long-term benefits, at least 50 years ahead.**
- **Existing programs, regulations, and systems must be evaluated, built upon, and improved, before new ones are created.**

Guiding Concepts

Based on the Council's studies and experience over the past three years, we have formed several beliefs and concepts to guide policy-making for the future of the Northern Forest. These concepts complement the Council's mission.

The Council firmly believes that to protect the region's traditional character it is essential to adopt policies that move ahead of events, avoid the need for a crisis response, and allow the people of the region to engage in a deliberate process to influence, not be victims of, change:

It is essential to recognize and understand the concerns of those who live within and care about the Northern Forest. Landowners worry that the value of their land, their privacy, and their long-standing connections with their property will be taken from them without fair compensation. Residents are upset that if forests are not managed well, their heritage, their way of life, and their jobs may be lost. Hunters, anglers, hikers, and canoeists fear that the forest—their place of escape from the cares of everyday life—will be closed to them. Many fear that certain forest practices are unsustainable and that plant and animal species will be damaged or destroyed. Others fear that large areas of mostly undeveloped land will be lost forever to development and other pressures from an expanding population. Measures to conserve the land must address these concerns. They must also involve people in the process of making decisions affecting their future.

The potential for undesirable change still exists. We must act now to direct and guide change. The Council and its predecessors, the Northern Forest Lands Study and Governors' Task Force, were created in response to fears that the large, privately owned lands of the Northern Forest were at grave risk of break-up and conversion. The initial crisis and cycle of land development of the 1980s has passed. A Council-commissioned study of land conversions revealed that, during the 1980 to 1991 period, at least 203,000 acres of land across the region were parcelized in connection with the sale of large tracts of forest land (of 500 acres and greater). This represents approximately 1% of the 26 million-acre Northern Forest area and approximately 4% of the 5.5 million acres of these large ownerships which changed hands during the period. Of this acreage, parcelized, at least 39,000 acres were converted by development. This represents approximately

2/10ths of 1% of the study area and nearly 1% of the acres which changed hands. At least 344,137 acres were sold to public agencies during the period. This represents approximately 1.3% of the Northern Forest area and approximately 6% of the total acreage sold during the period. These figures do not reflect sales or conversions of parcels less than 500 acres in size, as little data are available on smaller parcels.

The Council also discovered through its research that the ingredients of future undesirable change are still present, particularly on high amenity lands. Rising property taxes, high land valuations, and high estate tax rates make passing of land intact from one generation to the next very difficult. Many forest products markets, especially pulp and paper, experience continuing weakness. National and global competition puts pressure on forest product industries. Currently, corporate and other large land holdings continue to be marketed, although a notable change is that institutional pension fund inventors with long-term investment horizons have become forest landowners in the region. The millions of people who live within a day's drive of the Northern Forest will continue to look for places to acquire along a lake or near the mountains, and to use and enjoy the forest.

We must view human and biological relationships to the land with equal regard. For many generations, residents of the Northern Forest have earned their livings directly or indirectly from the land. These connections are just as irreplaceable as those of plants and animals of the forest to soils and waterways. Those living outside and perhaps unfamiliar with the way of life here must understand that it is entirely possible to conserve the forest and sustain towns and villages within its boundaries in ways that damage neither its human nor its plant and animal communities.

The forest must be viewed as an integrated landscape that includes both private and public lands. The history of the region has shown that the values we are concerned about can be maintained through predominantly privately-owned forest land. Proposals to conserve values of the forest must include a wide range of measures to encourage the careful long-term stewardship of private land. Such stewardship can and should include sound management for the harvesting of trees. It should be clear, however, that acquisition of property or interest in property by the public has been and should continue to be an appropriate way to conserve land with exceptional biological, scenic, and recreational values. Acquisitions should take place in accordance with plans developed with full participation of all affected landowners and local residents. Taken together, long-term stewardship of private lands and measured acquisition of public land of exceptional importance, using fee and less-than-fee tools, can work to conserve the important values of the forest.

Traditionally, Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont have worked with landowners and non-profit organizations to conserve the Northern Forest. While federal action can be important to the future of the region, the states, working with local communities, should continue their lead role. The Northern Forest states have different histories, traditions, and citizen views. These all must be respected. But these forests provide great benefits to many within and outside of the region. All users have an obligation to share the true costs of proper management of public lands, and to assist communities and private landowners in the stewardship of public values.

The Northern Forest has been and can continue to be a powerful force for long-term economic well-being for its residents and the Northeast region in general. In a world of growing human population and diminishing forest resources, a properly managed forest can provide a needed source of wood and fiber to support jobs in the forest and in mills and woodworking shops. The wood products industries of the four states have an annual economic value of at least \$14.6 billion. (Data from 1987 to 1990.) Similarly, in a world where the opportunities for escape to a natural surrounding are also diminishing, the forest, if it remains a forest, can always provide a place for compatible tourism and recreation. But these long-term economic values will be lost if the forest's integrity is sacrificed for short-term gain.

The Northern Forest can continue to provide a great diversity of values and serve many interests and constituencies. It is large enough, its resources diverse and rich enough, to do this. But it cannot serve every purpose for every user without limitation or without affecting the legitimate interests of others. As members of a society that consumes the greatest percentage of the world's natural resources, we have a moral and ethical responsibility to use our own resources, use them efficiently, and conserve them for future generations. In doing so, we should not ask other, perhaps more environmentally sensitive, regions of the world to supply our needs. Therefore, it is important that we manage our own resources to the best of our collective abilities. We must set the example.

The Council believes that all interests must work together to achieve cooperative and informed long-term stewardship of public and private land. Our recommendations are directed at achieving this goal.

Our specific recommendations are only part of what we offer for the future of the Northern Forest. In addition to our specific proposals, we have demonstrated something about the process for achieving a desirable future. We have shown that people of different perspectives can work together, gather information, consult experts, discuss emotional and important issues with a broad spectrum of the public, and then proceed in a rational way to accomplish common goals. This can be done without individuals or groups

giving up their own points of view, but rather by finding those things they can agree upon and those things they are willing to accept to reach agreement on overall issues.

We have made specific recommendations for how the people of the region can approach their own planning for the future of the Northern Forest in this same way, with the involvement of - and respect for - everyone interested in participating in the process.

Recommendations

The Northern Forest is not simply a collection of people, or natural resources, or the environment in which they exist. It is a complex and dynamic interrelationship of people, communities, land, water, plants, and animals.

Just as no single person or organization can achieve the broad goals in this report, the recommendations, like the forest and its residents, are bound together. They are to be considered as an entire package, a synergistic whole, not as individual elements in isolation from one another.

Nevertheless, we know all the recommendations cannot be implemented simultaneously. But we believe now is the time to begin. Some recommendations can have an immediate impact while others will take more time to develop.

For purposes of organization and clarity to the reader, the recommendations are listed by topic, and grouped into four categories that reflect the major societal arena in which they work, as follows:

- I. Fostering Stewardship of Private Land**
- II. Protecting Exceptional Resources**
- III. Strengthening Economies of Rural Communities**
- IV. Promoting More Informed Decisions**

Further, the order and number of the recommendations (and sub-recommendations within recommendations) do not indicate any priority, but are numbered sequentially for ease of reference. All the recommendations are of top and equal priority.

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These recommendations seek to redefine public policies on state and national levels, not just in the area of the four states called the “Northern Forest.” The reason is simple. As we discovered through our findings, and heard from thousands of people, the forces for change identified earlier are affecting forest land everywhere, both within the Northern Forest and outside it. Thus, all the state-based recommendations are meant for statewide policy changes, and all federally-based recommendations are meant for nationwide changes.

The cost to implement these recommendations will be substantial. It will require commitments of time and money from many agencies. In many cases, it need not demand new appropriations or staff because agencies should already be doing much of what is being recommended to fulfill their respective missions. Existing grant programs should be directed toward implementation of the Council's recommendations, rather than the creation of new programs. While implementation of some of these recommendations will require additional public appropriations, existing resources should be used first. We firmly believe that these recommendations represent a critical, wise, and timely investment in our future, and that all levels of government should make forest land conservation a high priority.

We would have preferred to include cost estimates for every recommendation, but determining these figures is complex and difficult. It relies on many assumptions, which in turn make the estimates unreliable. Thus, we suggest that cost estimates be developed as an integral part of the implementation process.