

## Changes to Forests Sub-Group Report based upon Public Comments

The Forests Sub-Group received approximately 130 public comments on the September 10<sup>th</sup> draft of the Forests Report which we tried to reflect appropriately in the final report to the GC3.

Several changes have been incorporated into the final report based upon this considerable public input. Our goal continues to be a balanced report with as much consensus as possible amongst Sub-Group members and key stakeholders. Substantive changes to the September 10<sup>th</sup> draft report follow:

- 1) The term “Proforestation,” previously featured in the Mitigation section of the report, has been removed.
  - a. The goal of this report has been to remain balanced and build upon Connecticut’s history of multiple-use management of forests to benefit many social and environmental values combined with the recognized importance of forests to carbon sequestration and storage. Overall, we believe that Connecticut’s forests – public and private -- should be primarily driven by science-based forest management, which includes the full spectrum of options from active to passive management based upon site-specific conditions, landowner goals, and many other considerations. Using the term “Proforestation” is not necessary to make this point.
  - b. Unfortunately, the term “Proforestation” has been used in other states and regions in a more polarizing, less balanced way than the primary authors of the Mitigation section had intended with its original inclusion in this report. Based upon the intensity of the input from many members of academic, wildlife conservation, professional forestry, and others expressing concerns about unintended polarization around terminology, it has become increasingly clear that controversy over this term is getting in the way of recommending science-based forest management which considers carbon sequestration and storage across the landscape.
- 2) Although establishing forest “reserves” or “wildlands” continues to be an important consideration in the report, we recognize that the specific acreage goals for reserves on state lands are arbitrary and have been removed.
  - a. However, it is important to note that although approximately 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of State Forest lands are currently considered to be under “passive management,” these forest lands are not legally prevented from future management should significant unforeseen changes occur.
  - b. Recognition that most private woodlands and some land trust properties are passively managed and should be considered as likely contributors to overall statewide carbon storage (Cite M. Tyrell 2015 CT Woodland Owners study)
  - c. There is a need to review the criteria for Old Forest Management Sites so that these sites represent areas that are the best examples of sites for long-term management as such, and not just areas that may be hard to access (for example).
  - d. Recognize that old growth sites are one of many tools available for increasing carbon storage using a systemic approach. Considerations related to carbon sequestration and storage should be thoughtfully incorporated into forest management plans for State Forests that are under development and in the future.

- e. Reserves or wildlands should continue to be part of the mix on both public and private lands depending upon various site-specific considerations, and it's important to emphasize that the largest untapped potential for keeping forests as forests and for re-foresting currently unforested lands to new forests exists on private lands.
- 3) A more robust discussion has been added to the report on the benefits of well-managed forests to wildlife habitats, especially highlighting those species that depend upon a matrix of both mature forests and young forests.
- 4) A more robust discussion of the mitigation benefits from long-lived wood products as part of a systemic approach to sustainable forest management has been added to this final report based upon significant science-based input on this issue.
- 5) We add specific acknowledgement in the report that professional forest practitioners are the ones we entrust with developing forest management plans and leading the implementation of silvicultural practices to achieve various on-the-ground results in addition to carbon storage and sequestration based on landowner goals. Furthermore, we acknowledge that maintaining high standards for forest practitioners is a critical element of ensuring forests on private and public lands are well-managed.
- 6) Lastly, the definition of certain terms which can be interpreted in several ways – e.g., “protection” – have been clarified as much as possible in the Glossary at the end of the report.