

## **ELEMENT 161: FOREST RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PLAN**

### **01 INTRODUCTION**

The development of this plan was accomplished through a cooperative agreement between the Department of Environmental Management's Division of Forest Environment (DFE) and the Statewide Planning Program. The State Planning Council adopted this Plan as State Guide Plan (SGP) Element 161 on March 10, 2005. The last forest resources management plan was adopted in 1984.

This Plan is based on its predecessor; it carries forward many policies and themes of the 1984 Plan. It adds new policies or new emphasis on changing topics as the scale and dimension of issues surrounding forest management have evolved. This Plan establishes a vision for the management of the forest resources of the state. It provides goals, policies and strategies focused on the management of tree resources within the state. It is intended to advance local stewardship of the state's forest resources towards the twin goals of a healthy, sustainable economy and environment. It has several purposes:

- ▶ It sets state policy, to guide public and private decisions involving the use of tree and forestlands.
- ▶ As a SGP Element, it is a basis for determining consistency of other plans, programs, and projects with state policies.
- ▶ As an element of the SGP, this Plan requires the comprehensive plans prepared by the state's municipalities be consistent with its goals and policies. All 39 Municipalities have locally adopted comprehensive community plans, and as of 2005, most have received state approval
- ▶ Publicly supported projects of several specific state agencies are required to be consistent with the Plan. Other elements of the SGP are integrated with and support this plan, in particular *A Greener Path.. Greenspace and Greenways Plan for Rhode Island's Future*, SGP Element 155 and the *Rhode Island Urban and Community Forest Plan*, SGP Element 156. Inclusion of forest resources management goals and policies in the SGP also helps insure that these concerns are properly coordinated with other functional areas covered by the SGP.
- ▶ It provides a long-range framework for advancing projects in annual work programs for the DFE.

### **02 ISSUES ADDRESSED**

The plan was developed from the following inputs:

- A Forest Resources Management Plan Advisory Committee (FRMPAC) appointed by the State Planning Council in 2003 was comprised of 30 various stakeholders related to forest resources representing state agencies, local governments, regional organizations, private forest organization and user groups, and citizens having an interest or expertise in forest resources matters.
- Focus group sessions were held that comprised of FRMPAC members, invited agencies, private sector representatives, landowners, and public members. These groups allowed for public discussion of the goals, policies and recommendations of the 1984 Plan, as well as, defining new issues. A total of 47 individual participated in the five focus group meetings. The group meetings were divided as follows:
  - Environmentalists
  - Private Forestland Owners
  - Resource Professionals
  - Commercial Forest Users
  - Recreational Forest Users

- Updated statistics on forest cover, species diversity and uses were provided the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service.
- A 50-question survey was mailed to 2,819 forest landowners owning 10 or more acres of land in 13 communities in 2003. Over 600 questionnaires were returned – a 24% response rate. The major objective of the survey was to solicit the opinions and concerns of forestland owners on major forest issues and to compare those issues to the opinion of similar surveys conducted in 1979 and 1981. Detailed results of the 2003 survey are included as Appendix B.

The FRMPAC reviewed the forest resource issues of the 1984 Plan and discussed relevant issues facing the management concerns of 20 years later. Previous issues were analyzed and updated, consolidated or removed—depending upon whether they are a continuing concern, or had been acted upon. Several new issues, considered critical at this point in time, were added. The committee developed the following issues for the preliminary draft plan.

1. Forest Resource Management (changed name, formerly forest resource planning in 1984)
2. Sustainability (new issue)
3. Information and Education (continued from 1984)
4. Forest Health (changed name, previously was forest fire in 1984)
5. Commercial Forest Products (changed name, previously was soils management in 1984)
6. Water Resources (changed name, previously was soils management in 1984)
7. Recreation and Tourism (new issue)
8. Fragmentation (new issue)

### 03 MISSION, VISION, GOALS AND POLICIES

#### A. Mission and Vision

The 1984 edition of the Rhode Island Forest Resources Management Plan created a single, all encompassing goal. This goal has continuing validity, and is adopted as an overall mission statement for stewardship of the state’s forest resources:

**Mission: Protect and manage the forest resources of Rhode Island to meet the demands for recreation, water supply, wildlife habitat, forest products, and a high-quality environment.**

The FRMPAC developed a vision for Rhode Island’s forests to supplement the 1984 Goal:

## Rhode Island’s Forest – A Green Hope for All

#### B. Goals and Policies

Specific goals, policies, objectives and strategies to obtain desired future forestland conditions were developed from current issue conditions and solutions suggested by Rhode Island’s forest landowners, environmental groups, forest resources professional, commercial forest users and forest recreational users. A new format for the Plan was development around each policy issues as follows:

- Goal(s)
  - Policy (ies)
    - 1. Objective(s)
      - A. Strategy (ies) for each objective
        - a. Performance Measure(s) for each strategy where applicable

## Forest Resource Management (FRM)

*FRM Goal:* To manage State-owned forestlands in order to provide a safe environment and reduce conflicts between users while maintaining the health, vigor and sustainability of the forest resources.

*FRM Policies:*

FRMP 1. State owned forestlands will be managed to provide sustainable forest resources for a variety of uses while working to insure the health of the forest and promote the safety of its users.

FRMP 2. Develop and maintain a comprehensive planning process to evaluate and manage the forest resources of the state.

## Forest Sustainability (S)

*S Goal:* To create, conserve, and maintain sustainable forest resources.

*S Policy:* S 1. Promote sustainable management of forests that provides a wide range of benefits to fulfill current needs without compromising the ability of these forests to provide for future generations.

## Information and Education (IE)

*IE Goal:* To educate public officials and the general public to gain an understanding and appreciation of the state's forest resources, so they might better utilize, conserve and protect these resources for future generations.

*IE Policy:* Promote increased awareness and appreciation of Rhode Island's forest resources through education and information.

## Forest Health (FH)

*FH Goal:* To protect and improve the health of Rhode Island's forests.

*FH Policies:*

FH 1. Monitor and respond to forest health threats to avoid unacceptable losses to the state's forest resources.

FH 2. Maintain a forest fire defense plan to protect against the possible loss of lives, homes and forest resources.

## Commercial Forest Products (CFP)

*CFP Goal:* To maintain a viable forest products industry in Rhode Island.

*CFP Policy:* To optimize the economic values of forest products from Rhode Island forestlands.

Water Resources (WR)

*WR Goal:* To protect and manage the state's forestlands in support of water resource goals and objectives and the needs of Rhode Islanders for plentiful and healthy water supplies.

*WR Policy:* Promote the development, protection and maintenance of forested landscapes to protect water quality.

Forestland Recreation and Tourism (FRT)

*FRT Goal:* To provide statewide recreational activities and promote tourism in forested recreation areas.

*FRT Policy:* To include diverse recreational opportunities in the state's forestlands consistent with objectives for sustainable and healthy forest resources and the promotion of recreational user safety.

Fragmentation (F)

*F Goal:* To conserve and restore Rhode Island's forests so as to minimize forest fragmentation.

*F Policy:* To maintain forestland area and minimize further fragmentation of forest resources through innovative land conservation and management techniques.

**TABLE 4-1, IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX**

Table 4-1, Implementation Matrix, contains the objectives, strategies and performance measures, where applicable for the 8 policy areas outlined above. The table is laid out according to the 8 policy area narratives as presented in Part 161-04. All policies are referenced by the policy abbreviations cited in the text and page numbers are provided to enable cross-referencing with the narratives, goals, and policies. The objectives and strategies are flowed by performance measures, where applicable, along with the primary responsible implementing party or partners for each. A listing of acronyms used within the table precedes the Table.