Natural Resources Committee
April 18, 2012 meeting
Approved Minutes

Attendance
Commissioners: Maggie Bartenhagen, Nicholas Bartenhagen, Dominique Haynes, John Whitman, Lynette Hamilton, Jenna Pugliese, Edie Mas

Staff: Dinah Reed.

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:10 P.M.

Minutes - Draft Minutes of March meeting; on Motion to approve by Whitman, Second by Hamilton, approved unanimously as presented.

Biomass report by John Whitman
• From Electric Plan
  o Farm methane and woody biomass meets 6% of VT electric needs, 14% of VT heating aid. Goal is 25%. Great goal except this could cause the over harvesting of wood, which could damage the forest. Federal government would like us to burn wood for electricity, but VT would rather we burn wood for heat.
  o Over the last 50 years VT has consistently grown more wood then it has harvested. Bill Guenther stated that Windham County generates more of the best hardwood than any other county in the state. The point is – the hardwood is a heavy, low energy source so it needs to be used close to where you harvest it to be cost effective.
  o Firewood or cordwood is not worth as much because it is costly to get it out of the forest.
  o Saw logs (10” diameter trees) are worth a lot if they are nice and straight.
  o Pellets can be made of crummy wood, so if you can manufacture the pellet product cost effectively, you can make a profit.
  o Forest Inventory at the state level is inadequate. Forest management and on-the-ground practices are limited. Research is needed on economics of biomass harvest.
• Woody Biomass Working Group
  o Trying to turn wood into only biodiesel is not a good use.
  o Tax policies for solar and wind should be considered for biomass.
• Working Group of Legislators (Forest Health Working Group)
  o Important not to set your standards so high that people buying biomass will just buy it from another state because it’s cheaper.
  o Foresters in VT do not have to be licensed.
- No rules state that you have to leave a certain amount of wood to keep the forest healthy—there is less regulation.
- Challenge – how do we get more biomass users to take better care of the forests?
- Procurement standards should be similar to our neighboring states.
- Is burning wood good or bad for the carbon dioxide?

**Discussion about meeting on April 25**

Continued with discussion regarding the logistics of our meeting of Conservation Commissions and other groups on 4/25. It was recommended that we put together a simple survey to hand out so folks could write in their suggestions. Other discussion took place about how to coordinate the break out groups.

**The meeting adjourned at 6:00 P.M.**

Respectfully submitted,

Dinah Reed