



## **Granite State Division SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FORESTERS**

Representing the forestry profession in New Hampshire

54 Portsmouth Street Concord, NH 03301

### **Comments On Proposed DES Wetlands Rules Changes**

#### **Summary**

The Granite State Division of the Society of American Foresters (GSD-SAF) is comprised of over 195 practicing professional foresters in the state of New Hampshire. We are part of a national scientific and educational association representing the forestry profession in the State of New Hampshire. As such, we have grave concerns with the labyrinth of proposed rule changes that will affect the entire forest industry. As this industry is our state's third largest in manufacturing of our state economy and has experienced extreme stress in the past few years, added and unwarranted regulations will only hamper economic recovery for this vital sector.

#### **Issue**

Where is the science that would merit the need for additional onerous rules? For forest operations that involve stream crossings and wetland protection, professional foresters, loggers and landowners follow Best Management Practices (BMPs). For the past three decades there has been a strong collaborative effort between NH DES and the forest industry to ensure adequate soil and water protection to our forests. We developed BMP manuals and have worked collaboratively to improve forest operations.

It is a great success story. Two intense studies have been implemented that measured actual soil movement after logging operations had been closed out (both forwarded to NH DES after the first comment period). Both studies were implemented by a partnership of U.S. Forest Service, NH Division of Forests & Lands, UNH Cooperative Extension and others. The first was implemented on private and state lands of the entire state around 2005. The second round of scientific sampling was completed in regions surrounding the White Mt. National Forest. The results from both surveys prove that close to 90 percent of the time, when adequate bmp's are properly implemented, soil does not reach a water body after logging operations.

Those are strong numbers. But more important, the experts who are on-site see and document what works best and where potential problems lie that can be addressed in the future. These topics are then incorporated into future training seminars. This is standing proof that the best success to protecting our wetlands and forest soils comes from over thirty years of professional training. It is best to educate rather than regulate.

Granite State Division of SAF recommends:

- The rules need to be much more clear and simpler to follow. It is imperative that the regulated community is reasonably capable of following these rules. If they are clear and

practicable that will result in more compliance and therefore a higher level of protection of the resource. They are extremely difficult to follow as they are written even for a seasoned professional.

- The Department might consider that certain minor impact forestry projects (3,000sf - 10,000sf) could be done under an SPN if overseen by a licensed forester. Licensed foresters have the knowledge, continuing education training, and a licensing board ensuring they are following a specific code of ethics. Their expertise could help minimize some of the administrative burden on the department.
- There should be a single chapter that specifically covers the forestry sector. The current literature is so onerous that only those trained in legal writing can hope to decipher the intent and meaning.

## **Conclusion**

Extensive research and comments have been submitted by both the Society for the Protection of NH Forests and the NH Timberland Owners Association. The Granite State SAF supports all proposed concerns and changes as described by these two most prominent conservation organizations.

In four decades, there has been remarkable progress for the development, implementation and constant improvement of Best Management Practices in the forests of New Hampshire. Therefore, until it can be proven that there are actual problems, backed by science for degrading water quality, we do not support these proposed rule changes at this time.

Respectfully submitted

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