

**Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR)  
POLICY:  
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN ANR LANDS MANAGEMENT**

**Philosophy:**

Public land under the jurisdiction of the three departments of the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR), consistent with legislative direction, is held to protect, conserve, and enhance its inherent qualities. It is also managed to provide recreational opportunities, timber products, varied plant and wildlife habitats, utilization of fish and wildlife resources, clean water, and natural beauty for compatible enjoyment of and use by people. The ANR's goal of providing exemplary stewardship for these resources will be promoted by the departments working together in managing the lands under their specific jurisdictions.

As the resource stewards for state parks, forests, and wildlife management areas, the departments of the ANR must make decisions about the "public good" which span this and future generations. Implicit in this function is an obligation to conduct public needs assessment. Without such assessment we cannot purport to manage for the enjoyment of and use by the people. Public involvement, or citizen participation, is a broad term for a variety of methods by which the people of Vermont have input to public land management decisions. Recognizing the value of the public's role, the ANR is committed to seeking and incorporating the public's ideas for the management of these lands. The ANR is also committed to explaining how its lands planning process works, how people can participate, how lands are managed on an ongoing basis, and how final management decisions are made.

One result of the ANR seeking that input may be that important changes are made in how ANR lands are managed. Other results intended are that the general public, stakeholders, and interest groups understand that a principled approach to public involvement is being taken and that the process is fair; appreciate the value of public ownership of ANR land; become empowered as stewards of state lands; and support the ANR's approach to long-range management planning.

**Policy:**

The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) shall encourage and be responsive to expressions of citizen interest in its lands management activities, including development of long-range plans, implementation of programs, development of policies, and management of state lands. Citizen expressions include written and oral comments which may pertain to any ANR lands program or area of management at any time.

Comments from the public shall be taken as advice by the ANR. Every effort shall be made to include in ANR lands management suggestions which are compatible with the ANR and its departments' missions, compatible with ANR lands management principles and goals, and which are fiscally realistic. The ANR shall explain the extent to which public comments influence ANR lands management activities.

ANR personnel shall actively solicit input from the public through more formal methods whenever (1) a long-range plan is written or (2) a long-range plan requires an amendment due to a significant change in existing use or status quo being considered. Examples of significant changes are major land acquisitions, major capital expenditures for new projects, facility closures, and major changes in land use.

ANR personnel shall offer the public opportunities to comment on less significant changes by making annual work plans available and/or by notifying the public when such changes are proposed.

**Procedure for Implementation:**

Due to the great variability of the situations, publics, and resources in question, implementation of this policy is through guidelines rather than strictly prescribed methods. Attachment 1 gives further guidelines for department personnel.

<u>/s/</u> _____ Conrad M. Motyka, Commissioner, FPR	<u>11/4/02</u> Date
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<u>/s/</u> _____ Ronald Regan Commissioner, FW	<u>11/4/02</u> Date
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<u>/s/</u> _____ Christopher Recchia Commissioner, DEC	<u>11/4/02</u> Date
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<u>/s/</u> _____ Scott Johnstone Secretary, ANR	<u>11/4/02</u> Date
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Attachment 1

## **Procedure for Implementing the ANR Policy: Public Involvement in ANR Lands Management**

With the great diversity of ANR land holdings and the diverse interests of constituents, there is no one prescribed method of gathering public input regarding the management of state lands. Therefore flexible guidelines are necessary for implementing the policy on public involvement for ANR lands.

### **Public Involvement in Long-Range Planning and Amendments to Plans**

Ongoing review of lands management needs by the five district lands stewardship teams, with input from the ANR Lands Stewardship Team, determines when long-range management plans are needed. Six general considerations are to be used in determining how intensively the public should be involved, as follows:

1. Inventory and resource assessments have revealed ecological, wildlife, cultural, recreational, or timber resources of widespread significance;
2. There are complex legal constraints on the parcel;
3. Significant changes in the management goals and objectives are proposed;
4. Significant issues and concerns by the public are anticipated, such as user conflicts;
5. The acreage of the parcel is large relative to other ANR-owned properties in the region; and
6. Proposed management of the parcel results in a significant change in land use.

Generally speaking, the greater the number of these considerations pertain to a parcel, the more the public should be involved in the planning process.

Agency personnel will also follow the following guidelines during the LRMP process:

1. The public will be notified at the start of the planning process;
2. Information will be made available in an understandable format;
3. Meetings will be held at times and locations convenient to the public;

4. Sufficient time will be allowed for public input which may vary according to the size and complexity of the parcel;
5. The agency will seek resolution to conflicts in an open and respectful manner using a wide range of methods for involving the public; and
6. The agency will make clear the role of the public in the planning process.

### **Additional Public Notification Efforts**

Besides involving the public in long-range management plan development and amendments, ANR personnel will provide the public with an opportunity to review the following:

Annual work plans;

Development of lands management policies; and

Acquisitions to ANR lands of parcels that are small in acreage, do not propose a change in existing management, or have significant user conflicts.

In addition, agency personnel will receive public comments at any time regarding ANR lands management.