



POSITION STATEMENT

Wilderness Designation In New England

Summary

The New England Society of American Foresters (NESAF) supports wilderness designation as a component of multiple use management on National Forests. NESAF strongly supports the forest values wilderness provides to society. The designation of wilderness on the Green Mountain and White Mountain National Forests should be done within the context of the forest planning process. Congressional designation of any new wilderness should be based on the progress made on forest plans to meet a broad array of multiple use benefits. Any new resource base allocation should favor the output of benefits most lacking under the current and projected forest plan accomplishments. Based on the record of accomplishment of the existing forest plans, the New England Society of American Foresters is strongly opposed to any new wilderness designation at this time.

Issue

Environmental organizations are asking congressional delegations to move forward with the designation of additional wilderness areas in the Green Mountain and White Mountain National Forests. The request comes at a time when the planning process for the revision of the Forest Plans is under way. Wilderness is one of many important benefits national forests provide to society. The Forests are also a critical resource for recreation, wildlife habitat, timber production and biological diversity. Active forest management activities are necessary to provide these benefits on an appropriately balanced sustainable basis. The designation of additional wilderness at this time could seriously restrict the ability of the Forests to meet an ecologically and socially sustainable output of benefits to society.

Background

Previous designation of wilderness on the forests caused substantial negative response from local communities and other forest users. The impact on the forest planning process has been negative. Planning for forest-land allocation for primary uses such as wilderness should include assessments that address the cumulative impacts, both positive and negative on commodity extraction, community stability, local, regional and national needs, and compatibility with other resource management activities. The role of wilderness in National Forest management must be coordinated in a broad scientific and social context and not be a strictly political designation.

Expiration

This position will expire five years from the date of acceptance. Accepted on December 5, 2001.

Literature Cited

- USDA, Forest Service, Eastern Region, Land and Resource Management Plan, Green Mountain National Forest, 1986.
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- Report on Forest Health of the United States by the Forest Health Science Panel, 1997, CINTRAFOR RE43.