

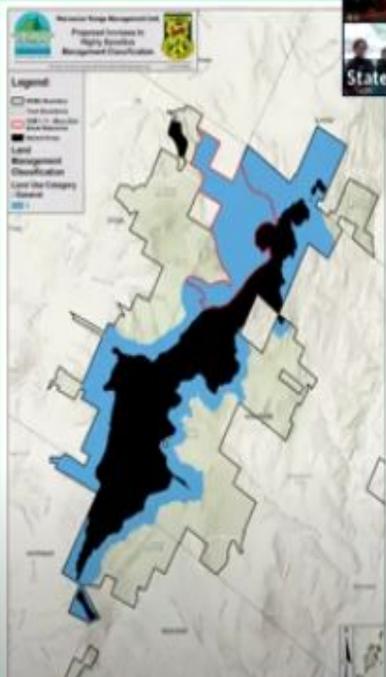
Testimony 2/22/2024

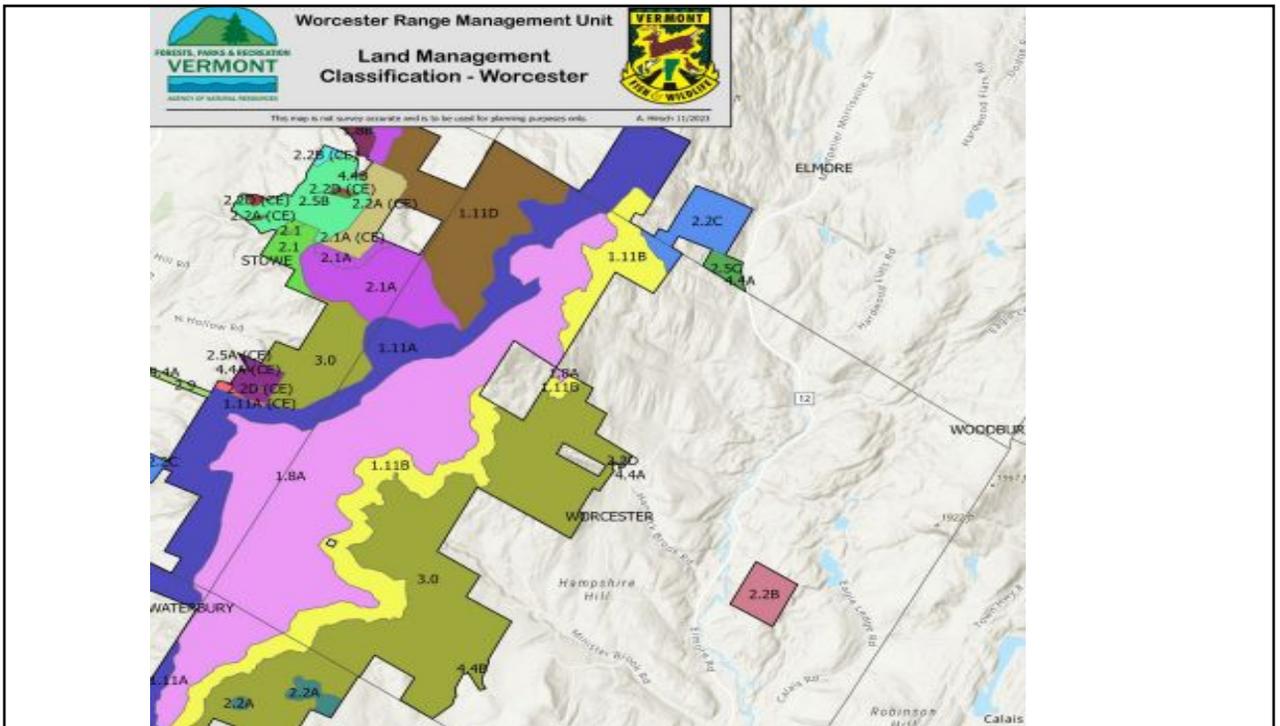
- Introduction
- Process
- New Expansion of HSM (29%) - site descriptions
- “Vegetation Management” numbers-location-type
- Questioning the True Impact on The Vt. Forest Product Industry
- Questioning the True Intent of Vermont Conservation Design and Act 59 goals
- Meeting the Future in order to “to protect, sustain, and enhance Vermont’s natural resources, for the benefit of this and future generations.”

Excerpts taken from WRMP in quotations

PROPOSED INCREASE IN HSMA

- Already-classified HSMA (4,139 ac)
 - Moss Glen Falls NA (81 ac)
 - Worcester Range NA (4,058 ac)
- New HSMA additions (5,492 ac)
 - Moss Glen Watershed Area (1,207 ac)
 - Mid-elevation inclusion (4,285 ac)
- Total HSMA: 9,651 ac (52%)





New Expansion of HSMA -

“HSM 1.11 - District Designation Highly Sensitive Management Areas (5,512.2 acres) These are highly sensitive areas protected because of steep slopes or high elevation (especially 2500+feet), wet soils or other physical limitations.

HSM 1.11A - High Elevation Worcester Range-West (2,301.8 acres)

HSM 1.11B - High Elevation Worcester Range-East (1,699.8 acres)

HSM 1.11C - Elmore Mountain High Elevation (303.6 acres)

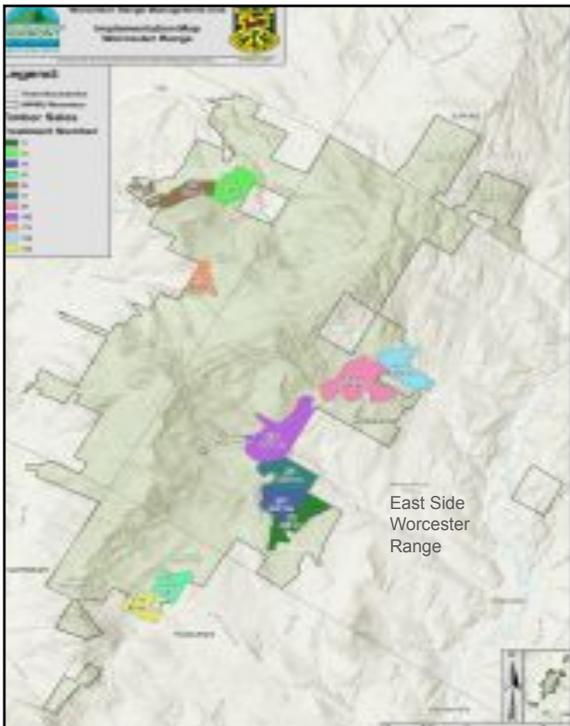
“Most of this highly sensitive area has very steep slopes, thin soils, and is easily damaged if not carefully protected.”

HSM 1.11D – Moss Glen Headwaters (1,207.0 acres)

The primary management goal for Moss Glen NA is to protect and preserve the natural features. Therefore, any management maintaining a healthy watershed upstream of the Natural Area will be the top priority in this Moss Glen Headwaters area.

Current HSM HSM 1.8A - Worcester Range Natural Area (4,057.9 acres)

In 1983, Vermont Governor Richard Snelling designated this portion of the Worcester Range as a State Natural Area. This designation means these areas will be managed and maintained for the preservation of their natural condition.”



In the Worcester Range Management Plan, the majority of General Management acres are located at lower elevations in the towns of Middlesex and Worcester, making up one large contiguous block of 3,431.4 acres. Most of the plan's timber harvests are proposed for this Worcester/Middlesex block. Of the total timber harvests over the next 20 years (1,935 acres), 71% are planned for this block, where the 1,370 acres to be logged represent 40% of the block's total acreage.

D. Vegetation Management Activities

“Approximately 2,250 of these acres were unavailable for forest management activities prior to the acquisitions of the Brownsville Forest Property in 2019 (758 acres) and the Patterson Brook Headwaters Tract in 2020 (1877 acres), due to being inaccessible or in non-state ownership. With these two acquisitions, a total of 875 acres of existing state land that had previously been inaccessible for timber management became accessible. Of these 875 acres, 440 acres are scheduled for forest management activities in this LRMP.”

General Habitat Condition

“Although having been logged extensively by early European settlers and subsequently farmed by their descendants (1700-1900), much of the WRMU since then has experienced only limited, light timber harvesting. The extensive acreage and few access points of the ownership limit the ability of forestry staff to measure current forest stand characteristics. However, based on partial inventories conducted in 1990, mean stand diameters were determined to range between 9 and 14 inches. As these means were measured over 30 years ago, and no removal by harvest has occurred since, it is reasonable to estimate the dominant trees range in age between 90-120 years old. These figures would indicate a dominant forest cover of relatively old and large trees.”

General Habitat Condition:

“Given the expansiveness of the major forest types comprising the WRMU, the property supports the range of bird and mammal species that depend and even thrive on the interior forest that can’t easily be found elsewhere in the state. Examples of these include Scarlet Tanager, Northern Goshawk, and perhaps even Pine Marten.”

(Note - Pine Martin is an endangered species in Vermont)

VCD OLD FOREST TARGETS

- VCD Target of 95,000 acres of old forest in Northern Green Mountains
- Analysis shows approx. 81,000 acres of "Wildland," which are expected to become old forest.
- This includes the existing Worcester Range Natural Area (4,100 acres).
- Draft LRMP adds 5,500 acres of HSMA, making a significant contribution towards the old forest target.

Questioning the Intent of VCD and Act 59

The testimony of FPR is stating that old forest targets are being met and increased by lumping together all the the HSM acreage which is fragile with very steep slopes, thin soils, and easily damaged without careful protection. Certainly much of these higher elevations already exhibit old forest structure, and are protected by default because of topography.

The plan completely excludes Northern Hardwood Forest communities of the lower elevations "which are of very high ecological quality (A -ranked). This example is of statewide significance."

" It is recommended that state-significant natural communities which be afforded a higher level of protection than other areas of the management unit."

No old forest protection is offered in the lower elevations on the east side of the Worcester Range.

Vt. Conservation Design

“Old forests are biologically mature forests, generally with trees exceeding 150 years in age. Old forests with large trees, abundant dead and downed wood, and natural canopy gaps, are essentially absent on the landscape. The complex structure of these forests creates diverse habitats, many of which are not present in younger forests. These complex structures also make these forests remarkably resilient. Old forests will be important “life-boats” that allow species and ecological processes to adapt to a changing climate.”



Photo taken by
Susan Morse in the
Worcester Range