

Massachusetts Environmental Energy Alliance

April 22, 2009

Commissioner Rick Sullivan
Department of Conservation and Recreation
251 Causeway Street, Suite 600
Boston, MA 02114-2104

Dear Commissioner Sullivan,

MEEA is an alliance of groups employing a science-based approach to environmental protection and energy policy.

With the departure of Jim DiMaio, chief forester and director of the Forest and Parks Division of DCR, you are faced with the prospect of finding another person to fill his position. With respect, we would like to submit the following suggestions.

This job has changed radically. I can remember when the chief forester refereed conflicts about specific harvests or the activities of specific state foresters. (This valuable service should be separated from the director's job and maintained, if your budget allows). The Director meanwhile supervised light cuts and a lot of open space principally devoted to recreation. Now, quite abruptly, our forests and hilltops, cropland, wind and waters have been enlisted in the Energy Wars, where they are officially valued primarily (and sometimes unrealistically) for their ability to produce energy; and as a result, our small, densely populated state is faced with the same kinds of industrial demands imposed upon the natural resources of the great western states at the end of WW II. Many of these resources are found on DCR properties, in your care.

Rather than being a person trained in forestry alone, the new Director must therefore be a knowledgeable person with an aptitude for combining facts and politics to form natural resource policies. He or she must also understand the magnitude of the threat that climate change presents to forest, air, and water resources, and be prepared to defend the science in an atmosphere that is sometimes still hostile to admitting that grave changes are underway.

In a time of change, all affected parties first react by trying to cram the new wine into the old bottles. This effort always fails because the laws and policies that formerly governed no longer work. Confusion and nastiness naturally follow, while phrases like "carbon neutrality," "available biomass," and "energy independence" become rallying cries and float loose from the actual situation on the ground.

The new Director should therefore be a calm and thoughtful person, able to figure out what the current Administration and EOEEA are trying to do and also able to assess the limitations of the resource and to tell everyone the same truths without apology. Such a Director will help you to do your job without distracting interference.

MEEA stands ready to supply to your Department science-based factual material upon which you can rely without fear of accusations or contradiction. We hope you will take advantage of this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Alexandra Dawson, President