

State of Vermont
Vermont Superior Court -- Washington Division

Standing Trees Inc.

v.

Docket No.25-CV-03722

The State of Vermont,
Julie Moore, Secretary of the Agency of
Natural Resources, in her official capacity,
Danielle Fitzko, Commissioner of the
Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation,
in her official capacity, and
Andrea Shortsleeve, Commissioner of the
Department of Fish & Wildlife, in her official
capacity

PLAINTIFF'S SUR-REPLY MEMO

ATTACHMENT A

Transcript – Testimony of Commissioner Danielle Fitzko re ANR Process and Transparency [Prepared by Plaintiff’s counsel]

Vermont House Committee on the Environment, *House Environment – 2026-01-23 – 1:15PM* (YouTube, Jan. 23, 2026), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kisxojY2BW>

Starting at mm 32:52

32:52	I did want to just touch briefly here on our process and transparency because I think you heard a little bit about that uh we’re not transparent and we’re not engaging and that, that hurts to be honest.
33:00	We really do our best to meet the public and our process is we develop long range management plans, and we do assessments.
33:10	It’s the first thing we do. We want to understand the landscape and as part of that assessment is public scoping. We ask Vermonters what they want out of that parcel.
33:21	And I know you hear from a lot of constituents, and I know you can imagine what we hear. More timber harvest, more wildlands, more recreation, no recreation, more habitat—man, I mean, it’s all over because everybody has different values for what they want from public lands, and it’s our job to listen to that, their input, and look at the assessments and make some really smart land management decisions in a plan.
33:42	Then we take that plan and we go back out to the public and we ask them to comment on it. What do you think? Did we strike the right balance? You know, and we really look at the feedback on that. And I’ll give you an example, the Worcester Range Management Plan.
34:04	We had a call for more wildlands, not uh, we didn’t want to, and a call for more working lands honestly as well, but we heard that and we added 5,000 acres to ecological reserves in the Worcester Range. So it’s absolutely a public process and we stand behind that.
34:22	Now, do we do a public process after the plan is developed? No, we implement. Because that’s now, we have to now, we implement the plan. If we were to go through a public process for all the projects that we’re implementing, it would not be transparency. It would be, we’d be paralyzed to be honest.

34:39	But I will tell you, we go through all the same permitting that everybody else does. And we have, the way we manage plans for managed lands. We have five different districts and each district has a stewardship team.
34:52	A district stewardship team that is made up of a watershed planner, a wildlife biologist, a fisheries biologist, a recreation specialist, a forester, an ecologist, forest health.
35:05	They review everything. And it's and I'm going to tell you, it is not easy to get through that review. Because everybody has their discipline and they come together and say "if we're doing it, it's going to be done the best way possible."
35:17	So, yes, uh we do public input in the planning process, and we implement professionally based on assessments and review.
35:27	I just want to call that out because to me it's so important to recognize our incredible staff that work on state lands because they are some of the most dedicated public servants that care so deeply on meeting the values of what Vermonters have asked for and I just want them to know that they are supported. I support them 110% on the work that they're doing.
35:52	This is, I really, I have one more after this, but it's a quick one. I just want to bring us back to that one forest that we have in Vermont. That's 74% forest land and all the benefits that they, that forest provides.
36:05	As we manage state land at a landscape scale, we try and balance ecological integrity. We try and manage climate resilience. We bring in recreation at appropriate places. We bring in working forests because they're so important for the economy and for our management needs.
36:22	We think about community well-being. We think like socially, how do people use the area? We think about flood protection and so much more. So that is what we do. We're managing public lands.
36:35	Uh, so I just want to end and say thank you for letting us talk about this because we've been thinking, we think about this all the time. And this is not new for us and we care deeply about it and want to be partners with you on how do we think about it. We are smart and strategic about where ecological reserves are on state lands as opposed to a blanket approach. That's it.

End Transcript