

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is initiating the development of a rule proposal to promulgate a New Jersey Forest Stewardship Program in its Forestry rules at N.J.A.C. 7:3. As a stakeholder with potential interest in this rule proposal, you or your designee are cordially invited to a stakeholder meeting to discuss the rulemaking. The meeting will be held in the Conservation Center at Assunpink Wildlife Management Area in Robbinsville, New Jersey, on Wednesday, April 13, 2011, at 10 a.m.

For some years now, DEP foresters have been providing technical assistance to landowners who choose to participate in a federally-sponsored forest stewardship program that promotes long-term active management of forestlands for non-commodity benefits, such as wildlife, recreation, aesthetics and water quality as well as traditional commodities like timber and wood products. Information about this federally-sponsored program is available at:
http://www.state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/forest/stw_inc_prog.html.

This rulemaking would build on the experience with the federally-sponsored forest stewardship program, but would establish a State program under State law. The intent of the rulemaking will be to implement the Forest Stewardship Program provisions recently enacted at N.J.S.A. 13:1L-29 *et seq.* The State's Forest Stewardship bill may be found on the NJ Legislature's website at:
http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2008/Bills/PL09/256_PDF; or
http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2008/Bills/PL09/256_HTM.

We will provide an overview of our plans for the rulemaking. We will include topics such as how to ensure that forest stewardship plans will promote the long-term active forest management, what the standards for plan approval should be, what monitoring/recordkeeping/reporting requirements will be needed, and what the composition and role of the Forest Stewardship Advisory Committee might be. We will invite your comments.

All attendees will be asked to sign a sign-in sheet. This meeting is not a public hearing and no formal record will be generated. However the sign-in sheet and a brief summary of the meeting will be posted afterwards on the Department's website. You will be able to offer additional comments by email during the two week period following the meeting. No formal comment and response document will be prepared either for issues raised at the meeting or for those submitted afterwards.

The invitation list for this meeting has been limited in order to ensure the group is small enough to allow for good discussion. Please contact Vicky Young of my staff at vicky.young@dep.state.nj.us or 609-292-2520 to confirm whether you or a designee will be attending.

Sincerely,
Lynn E. Fleming, State Forester
New Jersey State Forestry Services