

MAYOR NARKEWICZ

Stop the Hypocritical Logging of “Progressive” Northampton’s Publicly Owned Drinking Water Supply Protection Forests



March 3, 2014, Northampton Publicly Owned Drinking Water Supply Protection Forests, Conway Road, Whately MA

On March 11, 2014, an informational walk, in a completed logging job, was scheduled with city councilors to contrast the damage caused by *large diesel trucks entering and cutting* our publicly owned drinking water supply protection forests, with scientifically unsupportable claims by Mayor Narkewicz that commercial logging will “help” the forest.

Roughly an hour before the scheduled tour, a threatening letter was sent from the city legal department explicitly prohibiting *walking* in the watershed to allegedly “protect the public water drinking water supply”.

The walk had to be cancelled. Large diesel trucks cutting down the forest continues.

Additionally, in his form-letter response to concerned citizens, the mayor continues “project spin” with counter-claims that MFW was given documents about the logging, including an exhibit letter with boilerplate logging propaganda. But access to documents was never the issue. The issue was that our multiple efforts to **meet with the mayor** to resolve this problem were ignored, then dismissed, then ignored again by Mayor Narkewicz.

Please see more photos and information in the following pages

The Problem:

Mayor David Narkewicz is allowing and defending aggressive commercial logging of Northampton’s most precious and important publicly owned drinking water supply protection forests. The logging contracts went out for bid Jan 2013, under his watch. 401 acres are targeted for logging in just the first 2 years of a ten year program.

This aggressive commercial logging of Northampton’s watersheds **is occurring at financial loss to Northampton citizens, and has cost water ratepayers \$102,000 over the past 2 years. The logging program has also cost Massachusetts taxpayers \$42,000.**

The only ones benefiting from the commercial logging of Northampton’s public water supply protection forests are a few foresters and loggers. The financial, ecological, and potential public health costs of a degraded watershed will be borne by Northampton’s 30,000 citizens, most of whom have no idea their public treasure is being looted.

Mayor Narkewicz is also either wittingly, or unwittingly, misleading Northampton citizens about the reasons for the logging, and the mayor would not meet with citizen groups concerned about this logging.

In response to concerns voiced by citizens, the mayor points to a forest “stewardship” plan, written by vested interests, with boilerplate timber industry propaganda, that spins reality on its head by claiming forest “stewardship” requires aggressive logging. The intention of this logging plan is to confuse a well-intentioned public who object to being forced to subsidize selling off their best public forests to low bidders.

“It’s hard to sell New England Forestry Foundation memberships on the notion that we harvest trees. We have to frame it that we protect land — we have to go at it obliquely.”

~Whit Beals for the New England Forestry Foundation, May 2010

www.maforests.org/FF%20Notes%20May%202010%20-%20NEFF.doc

The forest “stewardship” plan even recommends using herbicides in the drinking water supply watershed to control invasive species, which is commonly caused and exacerbated by logging.



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Background:

Because a large portion of private forestlands have been "high-graded" where they have already “taken the best and left the rest”, timber interests have targeted town conservation land and public watershed forests for logging because these lands still have high value timber.

Threats of impending catastrophe if the forests are not logged (and promises of income) are used to convince town managers into handing over these public forest treasures at bargain prices and for softening up the public who resist the private exploitation of their public treasure.

To sell the logging, foresters also create manufactured or exaggerated threats, for example that the forest is too crowded, diseased, the wrong age, “needs more vigor”, etc. etc., or that a hurricane will come and blow it down if we don’t cut it now. Some of these excuses are laughable, and others make sense for timber production, but rarely does logging “help” the forest or water quality.

Some of the threats are convincing to the layman, but when examined by independent experts, the justifications almost always turn out to be false, exaggerated, or situations that will get even worse with more logging.

It is important to remember that many foresters have a vested interest in logging and are in the business of producing timber, not protecting the ecology of the forest. This may be appropriate if your goal is to produce timber by carefully logging private forests to minimize the damage, but for public water supply forests where forest values such as carbon sequestration, water filtration, etc. are most important, credible science states the obvious, that logging degrades the forest and water quality and is counterproductive.

Appendix A in this report (page 14) documents 22 justifications given by DCR’s Chief Forester for a timber sale in Robinson State Park in Springfield, MA. The justifications were all proven false by independent experts brought in at citizen expense, the financial motive was uncovered, and the sale was cancelled.

http://www.maforests.org/Timberspeak-Timber_Industry_Propaganda.pdf



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I. Logging Threatens The Water Supply, the Forest Ecology and Public Health:

United States Environmental Protection Agency:

“Local impacts of timber harvesting and road construction on water quality can be severe, especially in smaller headwater streams.” “These effects are of greatest concern where silvicultural activity occurs in high-quality watershed areas that provide municipal water supplies or support cold-water fisheries.”

<http://water.epa.gov/polwaste/nps/czara/ch3-1.cfm>

Dr. Eric Chivian, Director, Harvard Center for Health and the Global Environment:

“The loss of nutrients by removing the harvested timber, the changes in temperature and moisture levels in the soils from opening up the canopy, the compacting and destruction of forest floor organisms by the heavy equipment and the creation of roads, the inevitable spilling of gasoline and oil from the heavy equipment, these and other stresses resulting from logging operations all will have drastic effects on soil organisms, both in terms of complexity and abundance, including the mycorrhizae and other soil microbial life, affecting soil fertility, water retention and flow, water filtration, gas exchange, nutrient cycling, the flow of aluminum, nitrates, calcium, and other ions into surface waters, and other soil processes.”

“It is well studied and documented that the fragmentation of forests increases the risk of human Lyme disease.”

“There are significant potential risks from DWSP’s planned logging operations for the Quabbin and other watersheds—increased greenhouse gas emissions, a decline in the populations of many deep forest species, massive damage to the forest floor and to forest soil ecosystems and their functioning, the spread of invasives, a greater risk of human Lyme disease, and a potential loss of the ability of the forest to filter pollutants from air and water.”

“The only mandate of DWSP is to provide clean drinking water. There is no evidence that the harvesting plans as recommended by the STAC Report or by the “Response” document will accomplish this, and a vast literature to support just the opposite conclusion, that undisturbed watersheds, compared to those that have been harvested, are best able to provide the highest quality drinking water.” www.maforests.org/Dr_Eric_Chivian_Water_Supply.pdf

II. There Is No “Need” To Log In Northampton’s Public Water Supply Protection Forests

Harvard Forest:

“All evidence suggests that harvesting exerts greater impacts on ecosystem processes than leaving disturbed or stressed forests intact. A conservative alternative hypothesis for the long-term management of watershed lands might be proposed: the elimination of harvesting and its associated impacts (e.g., soil compaction, road development and improvement) will yield forest and landscape conditions that maintain and improve water quality in the face of ongoing disturbances and stresses.”

“Although intuitive support exists for the development of “protection forests” through silvicultural approaches to increase the resistance and resilience of forests to pests, pathogens, and natural disturbances, empirical data to support the approach are lacking. Not only is there sparse evidence that such approaches achieve their goals of increasing resistance and resilience, little evidence suggests that natural disturbances yield negative functional consequences. Therefore, current management regimes aiming to increase long-term forest health and water quality are ongoing “experiments” lacking controls. In many situations good evidence from true experiments and “natural experiments” suggests that the best management approach is to do nothing.”

http://harvardforest.fas.harvard.edu/publications/pdfs/Foster_ConservationBio_2006.pdf

III. We Are Paying To Cut Down Our Own Forests

The timber program operates at a financial loss and costs the citizens of Northampton and Massachusetts.

Based on the numbers provided by the city, over roughly the last 2 years, the logging program on Northampton's public water supply protection forests has cost Northampton water ratepayers \$102,000. It has also cost taxpayers statewide \$42,000.

Forestry Consulting:	\$126,358
Direct City of Northampton Labor Costs, 2 years:	\$ 44,000
Indirect Labor Costs, 2 years: $\$44,000 \times 15.86/33.51$	~\$ 20,800
State Grants:	(\$ 42,002)
Timber Receipts:	(\$ 46,534)
Net Loss to Northampton:	\$102,622

IV. For The Climate: An Unlogged Forest Sequesters & Stores Much More Carbon Than A Logged Forest

<http://www.maforests.org/Keeton.pdf>

V. The Logging Plan is Very Aggressive

There is no good reason to log these important forests at all, but even worse, the aggressive current plans call for logging 401 acres of all 3000 acres of Northampton public water supply protection forests in *just the first 2 years*.



How can the city of Northampton keep a straight face as it prohibits citizens from walking in the forest to allegedly protect the water quality, and then turns around and allows large diesel logging trucks and equipment to enter, build roads, and cut down the forest, at a financial loss to citizens?

How can a “progressive”, relatively wealthy city like Northampton, with widespread sentiment for protecting public forests, and a desire to do something about global warming, force its citizens to subsidize cutting down its own important public forests while expecting poor third world countries to protect *their* forests for the global benefit?



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Logging is very carbon intensive. One of the best ways we can help reduce our “carbon footprint” is to leave our public forests alone to continue growing in order to absorb and store more carbon from our carbon overloaded atmosphere.



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The wood is not even milled locally for local benefits.
Much of the logs, probably most, are sent straight to Quebec.



March 10, 2014, Northampton Publicly Owned Drinking Water Supply Protection Forests, Conway Road, Whately MA

Au Revoir Northampton!

Northampton citizens are being forced to subsidize cutting down their best and most important publicly owned water supply protection forests and sending the logs to Canada. There is no “need” to log these forests, and many good reasons not to. What is wrong with this picture?

It is hypocritical for relatively wealthy, supposedly “Progressive”, “Green” “Climate Concerned” Northampton to cut down their most important public forests while expecting poor third world countries to protect *their* forests for the climate health and the global benefit.

The citizens of Northampton have nothing to gain, and much to lose, by logging these important publicly owned forests which are the most intact blocks of forest in the city and represent our best chance to preserve and protect wilderness areas, fish and wildlife habitat, clean water, clean air, carbon sequestration, and scenic beauty.

Please Help Protect Them by Contacting Mayor David Narkewicz and Tell Him to Stop the Hypocritical Logging of “Progressive” Northampton’s Most Precious and Important Publicly Owned Water Supply Protection Forests

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