

**GREEN MOUNTAIN DIVISION
NEW ENGLAND SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FORESTERS
POSITION STATEMENT
WILDERNESS DESIGNATION IN VERMONT**

ISSUE: The Vermont Wilderness Coalition (VWC), is asking Vermont's congressional delegation to move forward with the designation of additional Wilderness areas in the Green Mountain National Forest. The request comes at a time when the GMNF has started the planning process for the revision of the Forest Plan. Wilderness is one of many important benefits that the GMNF provides to society. The Forest is also a critical resource for recreation, wildlife habitat, timber production and biological diversity. Active forest management activities are necessary to provide these benefits. The designation of additional Wilderness at this time could seriously restrict the ability of the Forest to meet an ecologically and socially sustainable output of benefits to society.

BACKGROUND: The last designation of Wilderness on the GMNF was in 1984. This designation caused substantial negative response from local communities and other forest users. The 1987 forest planning process suffered from the impacts of this process, resulting in the appeal of the Forest Plan. Many new initiatives have been established since 1984 which have great bearing on the need and practicality of new Wilderness. Landscape level planning, ecosystem management, ecoregional approach, natural community based management, ecological reserves and the Vermont Biodiversity Project are all related and interconnected. The role of Wilderness in National Forest management must be coordinated in a broad scientific and social context and not by a strictly political designation.

POSITION: The Green Mountain Division (GMD) supports Wilderness designation as a component of multiple use management on National Forests. The GMD strongly supports the forest values Wilderness provides to society. The designation of Wilderness on the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF) should be done within the context of the forest planning process. Congressional designation of any new Wilderness should be based on the progress made on the forest plan to meet a broad array of multiple use benefits. Any new resource base allocation should favor the output of benefits most lacking under the current and projected forest plan accomplishments. Based on the record of accomplishment of the existing Forest plan, the Green Mountain Division is strongly opposed to any new Wilderness designation at this time.

EXPIRATION: This position shall expire five years from the date of approval.

Approved 11/8/01

Re-adopted by the Executive Committee on November 29, 2006 for a period of five years.