



Governor's Commission for Protecting the Chesapeake Bay through Sustainable Forestry

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David Sutherland, Chair
The Conservation Fund

**The Honorable
John Astle**
Senator

**The Honorable
Karen S. Montgomery**
House of Delegates

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MD DNR Forest Service

October 17, 2006

The Honorable Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr.
Governor, State of Maryland
State House
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Governor's Commission on Protecting the Chesapeake Bay through Sustainable Forestry – Final Report

Dear Governor Ehrlich:

On October 1, 2004, you appointed the Commission on Protecting the Chesapeake Bay through Sustainable Forestry – Executive Order 01.01.2004.53 – whose singular mission was to go where no Gubernatorial Commission had gone before to set forth a bold vision for advancing creative ways to help protect the Chesapeake bay through sustainable forestry. For those of us who served on this Commission, we humbly thank you for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and commend you for your Leadership. The Commission herein submits for your consideration the following three documents intended to comply with your bold challenge:

1. Forest Legacy – Assessment of Need: Executive Summary
2. Maryland's Strategic Forest Resource Plan 2006
3. Commission Recommendation Report

The Commission stands prepared to help achieve the realization of the recommendations contained in these documents, and respectfully requests that you: (1) adopt the strategies set forth herein; (2) direct requisite funds to implement the proposed recommendations; (3) direct appropriate State Agencies to continue to work in partnership with Maryland's forestry community; (4) utilize the work of the Commission in the goal-setting process to implement the recently issued State of the Chesapeake Forest Report, and (5) advance a bioenergy policy for the 21st

Century that utilizes biosolids consistent with your Administration's 10% "green goal" which is so important to the future of our energy needs.

This Commission strongly believes **sustainable forestry** should be the cornerstone of Maryland's environmental policy. Forests protect the water, purify the air, provide fiber, shelter wildlife, support rural economies and bestow serenity. Every individual, group and organization who participated in our proceedings agreed that forestry is the #1 preferred land use. We cannot over-emphasize the importance of this finding and its importance to Maryland's environmental policies.

Consequently, we had to ask ourselves: Why are over 100 acres of forest land within the Chesapeake Bay area being converted to a non-forestry land use every single day? The Commission had to face some candid realities. Among other things, we found that, unlike agriculture, (1) forestland owners are not offered comparable public financial incentives to

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improve the management of their lands or diversify their forest holdings; (2) silvicultural management is not supported by public opinion; (3) forestry faces burdensome state and local regulations; (4) forest land conservation easement protection under the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) is virtually non-existent despite clear statutory intent to the contrary; and (5) Maryland's vast abundance of biomass – forestry residues -- are not being maximized for renewable energy purposes.

The Commission's Final Report provides a number of strategies to address these realities. Absent a reliable road map – like that currently afforded agriculture --, Maryland's forest community and the forest products industry face an uncertain future. The difference is lack of "coordinated priorities", representation and education/outreach. Being the #1 preferred land use within the Chesapeake Bay, sustainable forestry deserves our utmost attention...comparable with that of agriculture. One only needs to review the Agricultural Stewardship Act of 2006, peruse the 2006 Statewide Plan for Agricultural Policy and Resource Management, or assess funding under Maryland's nationally acclaimed MALPF program, to see that forestry takes a back seat to agriculture from every possible land-use, policy-related perspective. We simply do not understand why this is so? More importantly, we believe this must change.

None of this Commission's statements or recommendations are meant to mitigate the support of or progress made via past agricultural-related initiatives. To the contrary, it is to emphasize the importance of both as equal partners to Maryland's rural, resource-based economies and their combined contribution to the health of our coveted Chesapeake Bay.

We envision a "New Agro/Forestry Alliance" and strongly believe the recommendations we have submitted will advance this Alliance and improve the public understanding of the overall environmental and economic importance of forestry to the Chesapeake Bay.

Governor, all of us on the Commission have become more aware, informed and humbled by serving on this Commission. Please know we will work with you, your Administration, the Maryland General Assembly and all impacted communities to help fulfill your vision of protecting the Chesapeake Bay through sustainable forestry. We applaud you for your vision and unprecedented commitment to Maryland's forest community...indeed, Governor, "Forests are the Answer."

Respectfully submitted,



David M. Sutherland
Chairman

cc:

Members, Commission on Protecting the Chesapeake Bay through Sustainable Forestry
The Honorable Ron Franks, Secretary, Department of Natural Resources