



Sustainable Forestry Council

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SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY COUNCIL

March 15, 2011

Minutes

Attendees:

Members

Gary Allen, Chair

Donald Outen

Connie Hoge

Alberto Goetzi

Kenneth Roberts

Gregory Purnell

Kim Finch

Kirk Rodgers

Members absent

Eric Sprague, Co-chair

Staff and guests

Donald VanHassent, DNR

Steven Koehn, DNR

Gary Allen welcomed Sustainable Forestry Council (SFC) members and guests.

Jeff Thompson, Maryland Department of the Environment, Non-tidal Wetlands, gave a presentation on MDE's wetland permitting process and their experience with "no net loss" of wetlands. The presentation will be posted on the SFC website. The main track of their program is avoidance, minimization and mitigation (i.e. – avoid wetlands if you can, minimize what you impact and mitigate for what you do impact). Links to non-tidal wetland regulations will be provided. The bottom line is that since 1991, 858 acres of wetlands were lost and a like amount has been created using various fund sources.

A general discussion on "no net loss" followed over several time periods through the meeting. Comments and questions raised are consolidated here rather than scattered through the minutes.

- The measured use of carrot and stick to achieve no net loss, or at least come close, may work for a generation or so (20 years). Eventually there will be no land available to plant to mitigate the loss of forest land somewhere else.
- What is success? Incremental success?
- When do we claim victory?
- We need a better handle on actual loss and what is the cause(s).
- Local zoning has the greatest impact. Should we place the greatest effort here?

- Some people or organizations may have the attitude of “we have plenty of trees – why worry?”
- Can/should we do anything about infrastructure exemptions (powerlines, generating stations, etc.)?
- What are trends in loss of agricultural lands?
- Strengthen the Sensitive Area Protection document – add forest and agricultural land.

Don VanHassent provided a legislative update. Of interest to the forestry community:

- SB 80 is the Department’s bill to alter the renewal period for Licensed Tree Experts. Current renewals are annual. The bill would allow the Department to set new periods by regulation. The intent is to make the licenses a 2 year renewal and stagger the start so our reduced staff has to deal with 600 renewals per year instead of 1,200. The bill has passed unanimously in the Senate and will now go to the House.
- HB 313 is a bill to rename the Woodland Incentives Fund to the Mel Noland Woodland Incentives Fund in honor of Mel Noland, a long time friend and champion of forestry in Maryland. The bill has passed unanimously in the House and will now go to the Senate.
- SB 783 would provide some estate tax benefits to “forest banking operations”. The definition of “forest banking operations” is not very clear. The Department will try to provide a better definition. The bill has had a hearing but has not yet received a vote.
- HB 1224 would reverse two sections of the Forest Conservation Law that were changed two years ago as a result of the No Net Loss of Forest Task Force. The sections deal with increasing the exemption level from 20,000 ft² of forest clearing on a single lot to 40,000 ft² and adds “grandchild” to the section that allows for building a dwelling house on the property. A hearing is scheduled for March 16.

Minutes were distributed. Motion to accept the minutes made by Greg Purnell and seconded by Kirk Rodgers. Motion was approved.

The SFC will meet again on April 28 - 29, 2011 at DNR’s Woodmont facility in western Washington County. Staff will develop an agenda, directions, facilitator information and supporting/background information and distribute to the council members prior to the meeting. The goal of this meeting is to develop an outline of the final product and begin fleshing out sections of the report.

Respectfully submitted,

Donald VanHassent