



Western Regional Forest Conservancy District Board Meeting Minutes

Address: MFS Western Regional Office, 14110 Pleasant Valley Road, Flintstone, Maryland 21530

Date: Thursday May 14th 2026

Time: 2:30pm

DNR Executive Secretary: Anna Twigg

1. Call to Order

- JT Bowers, MFS Deputy Director, calls the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.
- JT provides a welcome and DNR leadership address.

2. Roll Call

Ex-Officio Members:

- Will Williams, Garrett (in person)
- Marie Perrin-Miller, Allegany (in person)
- Mary Jo Bartles, Washington (virtual)
- James (Jim) Arnold, Frederick (virtual)

At-Large Members:

- Steve Resh, Allegany (in person)
- **Not in attendance: Tom Anderson, Frederick**
- Vacant
- Vacant

Guests:

- George Eberling (in person)
- JT Bowers (in person)
- Emma Beck (in person)
- Dawn Balinski (in person)
- Champ Zumbrum (in person)
- Daniel Coy (virtual)
- Anne Sandbek (virtual)
- Alfred Bascom (virtual)
- Aaron Cook (virtual)
- Dakota Durcho (virtual)

3. Approval of the Agenda

- The agenda was approved with no amendments.

4. Icebreaker Activity: Self-introductions: What motivated you to join your county board and what accomplishments are you most proud of? (2-3 minutes per person)

- **Steve Resh:** Steve taught in the Allegany College of Maryland Forest Technology program for over 30 years, and originally got involved with forestry boards through introduction by Mel Noland. Mel requested Steve's assistance with the Natural Resources Careers Camp (NRCC), and Steve stepped



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in to update curricula and modernize the camp. Steve has remained involved with the Allegany board ever since.

- **Will Williams:** Will met Mike Minnick, the former Garrett Board Chair, at a community event. Mike and Will shared an interest in environmental education, and Mike requested Will's assistance with NRCC. After Will had joined the Garrett Board, he worked to continue and enhance NRCC and build up the Garrett Board. Will is proud of the Garrett Board's many traditions and strong community partnerships.
- **Marie Perrin-Miller:** Marie works as the Director of the Allegany College of Maryland Forest Technology Program. Marie's primary motivator behind joining the board was enhancing the forestry education opportunities in Allegany County. Marie enjoys serving on the board with other individuals that are passionate about forestry and community engagement.
- **Mary Jo Bartles:** Mary Jo enjoyed a long career with Maryland DNR, both with the Wildlife & Heritage Services and with the Maryland Parks Service. In retirement, Mary Jo and her husband Greg Bartles, a retired NRP officer, enjoy serving on the Washington Board. Mary Jo is new to her role as the Washington Board chair, and looks forward to being a part of the changes to the board structure.
- **Jim Arnold:** Jim has served on the Frederick Board since the early 2000s. Jim joined as an interested local landowner who saw the merit in trees and forestry based on his experience in planting trees on his own land. Jim has a goal of boosting the membership of the Frederick Board.

5. Maryland Forestry Foundation Updates, Q&A

Emma Beck, MFF Field Officer & Dawn Balinski, MFF Treasurer

Supporting documents provided: Bank Account Transition Steps & Chapter Agreement

- Dawn provided an update on the Chapter Agreements, stating that 10 county boards have submitted their signed agreement forms as of 5/14/26.
- Dawn urged that county board chairs should submit the signed agreements as soon as possible, as getting the signed form is simply the first step in a relatively long process in getting each county board formally incorporated as a chapter in the Maryland Forestry Foundation (MFF).
 - In Western Region, the Allegany and Frederick boards still need to submit their signed agreements.
- Dawn shared that once the chapter agreement is signed and the trade name agreement has been approved for a county board, the bank transitions would take place.
 - The Calvert board in southern MD is the first to undergo this transition, and while time consuming, it went smoothly.
- Question: Will Williams asked whether, in light of the MFF chapter transitions, the DNR MFS staff secretary for county boards would still be permitted to be a signer on county board checks and bank accounts.

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anna.twigg@maryland.gov
(240) 910-6740



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- George Eberling confirmed that while DNR MFS staff secretaries would still be providing equal levels of support to their assigned county boards in their professional capacity, it is preferred that the staff secretaries not be directly involved with county board banking.
- **Question:** Champ Zumbrum asked how payments such as checks should be received and processed by individual county boards moving forward. Champ used the Liberty Tree program as one example of the Allegany Board receiving multiple checks for one of their individual board programs.
 - Dawn Balinski answered that individual county boards will still be expected to manage the intake and tracking of checks and donations related to their own board. She reminded Champ that county boards could no longer use state offices as their mailing addresses.
 - Dawn also offered that down the line, MFF could assist in setting up a PayPal for each individual county board.
- Dawn shared that as of now, NRCC was underfilled. She urged county boards to continue to advertise the camp. As of 5/14/26, Frederick is sending 3 campers, Allegany is sending 3, Washington is sending 1, and Garrett is sending 1.
 - Will Williams expressed interest in assisting in funding additional campers from other counties, if the Garrett Board does not receive more applications this year. Will also expressed his opinion that all campers must be interviewed so they are fully prepared of what to expect from NRCC and the Urban Forestry Career Camp.
 - Champ Zumbrum expressed interest in hearing how other county boards have successfully advertised for NRCC.
 - Jim Arnold shared that he'd had success in directly sharing NRCC information with Frederick County Public Schools administration.
 - Steve Resh expressed concern in an observed trend of some counties consistently failing to send campers to NRCC
 - Dawn mentioned that travel to NRCC may be a barrier for some prospective campers.
- Dawn mentioned that MFF is working on creating templates for county board outreach flyers/brochures geared toward new member recruitment.
- Dawn mentioned that there is a Virginia Tech study seeking landowners as a focus group, and encouraged board members to share this information across their networks.

6. Approval of Minutes

- Not applicable; this was the first meeting of the Western Region Forest Conservancy District Board

7. Reports of Officers

- Not applicable; this was the first meeting of the Western Region Forest Conservancy District Board

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8. Committee Reports

- Standing Committees
 - **Big Tree:** Emma Beck shared that there are updates under development to the Big Tree Program, including a new volunteer form and policy handbook.
 - **Membership Council:** Emma Beck shared that the Membership Council is now full, with Will Williams serving as the representative from Western MD.
- Special or Ad Hoc Committees
 - none

9. Report from Agencies

- none

10. Unfinished Business

- n/a

11. Annual Work Plan Discussion

See supporting document excel sheet: WRFCDDB_Compiled_County_DraftAWP

Discussion questions below:

- Each board briefly presents their draft Annual Work Plan. (3-5 minutes per person)
- What has your board done well, and how could that work be replicated by other boards?
- What consistently limits your board's effectiveness?
- Has your board worked with another board? What worked, and what didn't?

Garrett County Forestry Board (GCFB)

- The GCFB enjoys longstanding traditions in attending/assisting with local events
- The GCFB enjoys long-lasting partnerships with community partners
- The GCFB is concerned about their membership dwindling and aging. They are eager to find more members.
- The GCFB collaborates with other county forestry boards mainly on forestry education events including Envirothon and NRCC.
- The GCFB would like to see how the WRFCDDB could be a resource hub on educational materials and table displays.
- Will Williams requested that western Maryland county forestry boards consider donating forestry-related books to campers this year at NRCC.

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Washington County Forestry Board (WCFB)

- The WCFB has many annual traditions, including providing a seedling for every 2nd grader in Washington County Public Schools, and running a booth at the Hagerstown Community College Flower and Garden Show.
- The WCFB aims to host at least one educational workshop fundraiser every year. This year, they are co-hosting an invasive plant workshop with a local environmental nonprofit called the Antietam-Conococheague Watershed Alliance.
- Mary Jo Bartles expressed that the WCFB is a small group with an aging membership. The WCFB is seeking new members.

Allegany County Forestry Board (ACFB)

- The ACFB focuses on environmental education, including engaging directly with local students and hosting training workshops for educators. Examples include:
 - Project Learning Tree workshops at Frostburg State University and with Allegany Public Schools teachers
 - The ACFB expressed interest in assisting other boards in expanding the Project Learning Tree Workshop beyond Allegany County
 - Direct outreach for the statewide Arbor Day Poster Contest
- Marie Perrin-Miller expressed concern about an observed declining trend in young folks getting involved in forestry careers. She believes that forestry boards need to engage with students from a young age to let them know about forestry careers.
- The ACFB runs a legacy tree program, namely the Maryland Liberty Tree Program, which aside from being a great funding source for the ACFB, it helps to bring more visibility to the forestry board while engaging more partners in seeing how forestry intersects with our state and nation's history.
 - Champ Zumbum, the ACFB Treasurer, suggested that other county forestry boards might consider starting their own legacy tree program using seed/scion from their own local historically significant trees.
- The ACFB enjoys longstanding community partnerships. For example, they are invited to judge the forestry photo contest at the county fair.
- The ACFB is proud of their consistent support of NRCC and Camp Hickory, and they often partner with the GCFB to support the camp.

Frederick County Forestry Board (FCFB)

- The FCDB hosts 1-2 educational workshops each year, to great success. Past topics include invasive plants and sawmill demonstrations. The FCDB is looking into hosting a tree health workshop in Fall of 2026.
- The FCDB has a goal of hosting 4 tree ID walks per year.

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- The FCDB participates in local green fests by running a table and handing out free tree and shrub seedlings.
- The FCDB is fostering a partnership with a local environmental nonprofit called Mobilize Frederick (MF). This partnership includes participating in MF program steering committees, providing training to MF staff, and assisting in MF programs such as the City Nature Challenge.
- The FCDB is concerned about membership, and is looking into strategies to encourage more young people to participate.
- The FCFB collaborates annually with the WCFB on the Public Agency Pesticide Refresher event, which serves as a good fundraiser for both boards. The two boards have also collaborated on educational workshops, including a workshop about spotted lanternflies.
- The Frederick County Government expects the FCFB to review and sign off on timber harvest reviews. In practice, this review is led by Dakota Durcho, the DNR MFS staff secretary for the FCDB.
 - JT Bowers stated that the Frederick County Government ought to be informed that the FCDB was changing its name as a result of the MFF chapter incorporation
 - Marie Perrin-Miller expressed concern about volunteer-based county forestry boards being tasked with reviewing timber harvest review. Miller noted that this review ought to be carried out by a licensed forester.

12. New Business

- none

13. Announcements

- JT Bowers announced that in future Western Regional Forest Conservancy District Board meetings, members will need to elect officers. State statute requires the board to have officers. Regional board officers will include a Chair and a Vice Chair. JT recommended that the current regional members consider whether they would like to serve as an officer.
- Anna Twigg will be in touch to schedule the next quarterly regional board meeting, which will likely occur in August of 2026.

14. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

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