

Maryland Sustainable Forestry Council
Monday, May 13, 2024, 3:00pm – 5:00 pm
Virtual
Meeting Minutes

3:00 pm **Welcome** to members and guests- Bryan Seipp, Interim Chair

3:05 pm **Review and Approve Minutes** – Anne Hairston-Strang, State Forester

Minutes from the previous meeting approved by vote

3:10 pm **DNR Update** – Anne Hairston-Strang, JT Bowers, Ashley Triplett-Peltzman and Dan Rider
New Staff, Budget, WIP-funded staffing,
Forestry Board Summit 2024,
5 Million Trees planting,
Community Forestry Capacity Fund approved projects
new Urban Forestry Camp,
Northern Long-eared bat

Hiring updates throughout the state (Anne H-S)

- **3 Positions under Dan’s stewardship/utilization/health team: Stewardship and Utilization Foresters and a Forest Health position.**
- **Fire team - Dakota Albers, Community Wildfire Defense Grant Coordinator**
- **Admin Staff - Meredith House, Admin Specialist I in HQ and Jeneatra Savage - Eastern Admin. Officer - Salisbury Regional Office**
- **Seasonal Staff (summer)**
- **5MT specialists**
- **Foresters starting in June - Rachel Egolf (Somerset Co)**

Forestry Board Summit (Gary Allen)

- **Room and Board and some transportation will be provided for up to 2 members of each board. All boards are highly encouraged to participate.**
- **MFS staff and DNR Secretary will be in attendance.**
- **The registration period has been extended, updated as recently as Friday.**
- **Ability to provide discounted rooms at the hotel is extended to May 20th - registration is recommended before that time.**

5MT (JT Bowers)

- **Planted 90K trees this spring on state park land alone; utilizing ag leases to afforest more land on larger scales.**
- **Huge shout out to Tree Planting Supervisor, Isaac Whitmore for getting the tracking and organization/data collection of the 5MT program together in the past year. We have greatly scaled up our planting volume and outreach efforts since 2022 in Isaac’s leadership.**
- **New additions to the 5MT Team: Kaitlyn Paulchell (Central Region Tree Planting Specialist) and Ted Hoxie (Western Region Tree Planting Specialist).**
- **Still looking to complete hiring for open positions.**
- **Arbor Day Celebrations of MFS planting commitments:**
 - **HoCo (Calvin Ball) 300K dedicated to increasing tree canopy and planting with MFS - formalized partnership.**
 - **Springfield Hospital Center - planted __ trees over two years; tree campus certification**

Community Forestry Catalyst Fund (JT Bowers)

- **Cohort 1**

- Resilience Authority of Charles County
- Baltimore Green Space
- Baltimore City Recreation and Parks, Forestry Division
- Corazon Latino
- Audubon Society
- Temple X
- We are currently working to finalize our agreements with the grant awardees of Cohort 1. Creating partnerships between awarded and non-awarded applications where appropriate. MFS is also providing grant support and technical assistance to all applicants of Cohort 1.
- Next Cohort opens for applications Jul 15, 2024. Closes Sep 15, 2024.

New Urban Forestry Camp (Gary Allen)

- Scheduled to take place on July 7-13 2024. Open to a minimum of 25 students (max of 40 students) on UMD campus and run by university staff.
- Lead by Leslie Ritter. Logistic Coordinator - Joe Sullivan.
- Working with Green Schools programs and superintendents throughout the state, Casey Trees, Sustainable Maryland, DOT, and many other partners are involved. Specifically working with PG and Montgomery County.
- Year 1 - 1 week long
- Year 2-3 - 2 weeks long *potential to get college credit for this experience*
- Anne - Natural Resources Career Camp: July 22 - 27th 2024

Northern Long-eared bat (Anne H-S)

- Not many updates on this regard. Bryan Seipp (company Bat biologist) would be happy to participate in this conversation and meet with our foresters/WHS. He is interested in being kept in the loop on what we hear from this.
- More guidance is expected this year; what are the regulations and restrictions of the State management, how may these be modified in the future?

Prescribed Burns (Anne H-S)

- Good year for our prescribed burns; wildfires have been kept in control thus far.

Forest Conservation Act changes – JT Bowers

3:50pm

- Updates from last year were very robust; a casualty of this leg modification was the implementation provisions. Specifically some requirements of the unit (updates to state tech manual; changes that affect local ordinance regulation in practice).
- 1 year for the state to update the regulations, Technical Manual must be updated by December 2024.
- Our process has included assembling a team of industry professionals to redefine and clarify the terms in the bill modification; informing implementation in the future.
- Kim Finch - completed passed their ordinances for **Prince George's County**.
 - Working on their new technical manual.
 - Will share with us once fully executed.
- Anne - trying to provide the support to local ordinances on FCA interpretation and how it should be implemented. Consideration for private landowner incentives will be the next priority.
- Dan Rider has been looking into how to “re-think” forest stewardship to this aim.

Forest Markets Strategy, implementing the Economic Adjustment Strategy – Dan Rider

Including Wood energy - Supply analysis and June 20 TGCC Biomass 101 workshop/field tour

4:00 pm

- Dan Rider - EAS under the new administration. “Same concepts but with different branding”
 - Feedback has been that the existing document is too specific towards industry; it should be more focused on the economic benefits and the communities it involves.

- Anne - Coalition to be formed between Commerce, Dept of Agriculture and DNR to make a path forward on this.
- Highlighting how this really addresses equity and climate? Brining forestry jobs to the table. Addressing and understanding how ecosystem markets play together.
- Anne - Shock to the WR wood market with the closing of Allegheny Wood Products.
- Dan - No real updates other than that the saw mill and pellet mill were sold. AWP had the largest effect on the economy with the most production and employees.
- Anne - Consider the policy environment that we have in MD for people to utilize and harvest wood products. These are up for discussion at the Forest Market's Council meeting. Policies that facilitate the running of good businesses that utilize good forest management.
- Anne - we are in a period of change, invisibility and uncertain market conditions; we can do what we can on the policy side to support this economy to the best of our ability.

Legislative Session events and possible legislation – JT Bowers and all

2024 Legislature outcomes (HB561 SB683 Tree Expert Licenses - Application and Renewal Fee Alterations and Insurance Requirements, Whole Watershed Act)

4:20pm

- **HB561/SB683 Tree Expert Licenses - Application and Renewal Fee Alterations and Insurance Requirements. Internal audit of this program (JT)**
 - Bill removes the fee cap and puts this program in line of more of the Forester Licensing model
 - Fees will increase from \$30 currently, possibly up to \$100
 - We hope to be able to fund a whole position with new revenue
- **Whole Watershed Act (Anne H-S)**
 - Anne - selecting 1 urban, 2 suburban, 2 agricultural, and 3 across state boundary watersheds _____
 - More holistic restoration
 - Proof of concept model to see if we can have improved restoration efforts.

Roundtable

4:35pm

- **MFS more involved in the assessment of what 'forested land' is.**
 - Frederick Johnson - trying to convert park (undeveloped land) → forested land
 - Would like to see the language from Gary to help him with this
- **Wash/Metro areas: Urban tree canopy goal has been increased! Affirmed a 50% goal for the entire metropolitan area. A detailed report accompanies this. (Gary)**
- **Anthony DiPaolo - Easements in the lower shore**
 - Permitting CREP Easements that require a soil and water quality plan.
 - These make the programs look bad because the requirements are unreasonable when they promote thinning and then the plans don't allow it.
 - Anne - can the forest management plan be the stand in for a soil/water quality plan
 - Anthony - this type of policy hurts the whole program because people promote that it's not useful or helpful to landowners

Future meeting planning - 2024 – All

4:45am

- **Gary proposed a retreat - needed because there was not one last year, many new people on the council and we all need to be on the same page, create infrastructure for the council to provide timely, useful information; the council provides meaningful input on upcoming topics as well.**
- **Can Anne create a schedule and coordinate staff for this?**

Adjourn – Bryan Seipp

5:00 pm

