



## Sustainable Forestry Council

580 Taylor Avenue – E-1 • Annapolis, Maryland 21401 • 410-260-8531

October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Google Meet and in person -- 2pm – 4pm

### SFC Members

Bryan Seipp  
Tony DiPaolo  
Donnelle Keech  
Beth Hill  
Gary Allen  
Fred Johnson  
Kim Finch  
Steve Resh  
Bill Rees

### DNR Staff

Anne Hairston-Strang  
Ashley Triplett-Peltzman  
Dan Coy  
Rob Feldt

### Other Attendees

Bryan Seipp, Chair  
Ecotone  
Forest Hill, MD 21050

Kim Finch  
MNCPPC,  
Prince George's Co.  
Planning Dept.  
Upper Marlboro, MD  
20772

Gary Allen  
Maryland Forestry  
Foundation  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Elizabeth Hill  
Maryland Forests  
Association  
Linkwood, MD 21835

Donnelle Keech  
The Nature Conservancy  
Cumberland, MD 21502

Bill Rees  
Catonsville Tree Canopy  
Committee  
Catonsville, MD 21228

Steve Resh  
Allegany College of  
Maryland (Retired)  
Cumberland, MD 21502

Tony DiPaolo  
Pixelle Specialty  
Solutions  
Delmar, Maryland 21875

### Action Items:

#### - Minutes Approval

- The June 2025 meeting minutes had not yet been approved. Bryan proposed that members review and approve them via email. Ashley will resend the minutes to all members; reviews are requested by Friday, October 17.

Chair Bryan Seipp called the meeting to order at 2:00 pm.

### DNR & Maryland Forest Service Updates – Anne Hairston-Strang

- The federal government shutdown has impacted some Forest Service operations, particularly coordination with federal partners under State, Private, and Tribal Forestry.
- Despite uncertainty, most major federal grants were processed before the end of the fiscal year, with approximately 30 active grants underway and six pending.
- The Maryland Forest Service Annual Meeting will take place next week, where they plan to launch the IRA-funded Stewardship for Underserved Landowners program, supported by two \$4 million funding pools for cost-share and staffing.
- This initiative will support forest resilience and carbon benefits, including invasive species management and timber stand improvements.
- The revised Chesapeake Bay Agreement maintains strong goals for buffer and canopy restoration, albeit at slightly reduced rates for realism and achievability.

- The 5 Million Trees initiative continues, and MFS staffing remains high, supporting delivery of state-level tree planting and restoration targets.

#### **Forestry Foundation Update – Gary Allen**

- The Foundation continues to receive funding from the Chesapeake and Coastal Bay Trust Fund, though allocations have been reduced this year.
- For the 13th consecutive year, the Foundation will implement planting at 58 sites, totaling approximately 88,000 trees over the next three years.
- Two new Foundation staff have joined:
  - Emma Beck, formerly of the Chesapeake Bay Program, will lead the development of a Forestry Board Handbook (first revision since 1989).
  - Nicole Mehmedovich will serve as Finance Officer, supporting Treasurer Dawn Balinski.
- The Foundation will also continue to support Urban and Natural Resources Camps, which saw strong participation this summer (40 students in Western Maryland; 34 at the University of Maryland).

#### **Forest Conservation Act Updates – Dan Coy**

- A new priority Urban Forest Map is now available online, designed as a development tool to encourage mitigation and reforestation in priority areas.
- The mitigation ratio will increase to 1:1 by July 1, 2026, except for transit-oriented development and multifamily housing, which retain lower rates to promote smart growth.
- Local jurisdictions are required to update ordinances by the 2026 deadline, with formal compliance reviews in 2028.
- MFS is assisting jurisdictions proactively to ensure smooth adoption and avoid compliance situations.
- The map is versioned and relies on state and local data sources (not federal), ensuring continuous operation even during shutdowns.

#### **Northern Long-Eared Bat (NLEB) Updates – Rob Feldt**

Rob presented new mapping data showing NLEB hibernation and roosting sites statewide:

- Buffers of ¼ mile are being applied around known locations to protect critical habitats.
- DNR's Wildlife and Heritage Service is collecting additional data to refine protection zones.
- Discussion emphasized balancing forest management flexibility with species protection, ensuring landowners and state foresters can operate effectively under new federal guidance.

**Land Protection and Carbon Projects – Donnelle Keech** reported on The Nature Conservancy’s forest carbon work:

- TNC closed its first federal-funded carbon project in Western Maryland earlier this summer, acquiring 1,300 acres near Kitzmiller and Jennings Randolph.
- The project supports permanent conservation and long-term forest carbon storage.
- While no acquisitions are being made specifically for bat habitat, this work contributes to statewide conservation priorities.

#### **Retreat Planning & Future Meetings**

- A Council retreat was postponed in 2025 due to budget uncertainty but will be revisited in 2026.
- Members discussed potential locations, including Remington Farms (Queen Anne’s County) and state park facilities as cost-effective venues.
- The group agreed to hold the next SFC meeting on **Tuesday, December 9, 2025** (afternoon), focusing on legislative priorities.

#### **Roundtable and Closing Remarks**

- Members reflected on the challenging year, balancing expanded federal funding opportunities with administrative hurdles.
- Anne expressed appreciation for the group’s patience and collaboration through ongoing changes and delays.

Meeting adjourned at **3:45 PM**.

Respectfully submitted,

*Ashley Triplett-Peltzman*

Associate Director – Policy and Planning