



Sustainable Forestry Council

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Towson, Maryland 21204

Alberto Goetzi
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SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY COUNCIL

January 18, 2011

Minutes

Attendees:

Members

Gary Allen, Chair
Donald Outen
Connie Hoge
Alberto Goetzi
Kenneth Roberts
Gregory Purnell
Kim Finch

Members absent

Eric Sprague, Co-chair
Kirk Rodgers

Staff and guests

Donald VanHassent, DNR
Steven Koehn, DNR
Marian Honecny, DNR

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

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

Don VanHassent provided DNR's response to the legislative proposal introduced by the Partnership for Sustainable Forestry at the November 23, 2010 meeting. The proposal had 4 sections: rename the Woodland Incentive Fund to the Mel Noland Woodland Incentive Fund; add Program Open Space and Rural Legacy to easement programs that allow landowners to claim a credit against state income taxes and adds a claim against county income taxes; allows a claim against state and county income taxes for the development of a Forest Stewardship Plan and creates an annual 50% credit against property taxes for property under a Forest Stewardship Plan or is subject to a permanent easement under Program Open Space, Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation, Maryland Environmental Trust or Rural Legacy and authorizes counties to provide the same exemption through an ordinance. Due to the difficult budget times the State is experiencing, DNR cannot support any legislation that has a negative fiscal note (i.e. – will result in less revenue). The last three sections all have negative fiscal notes and therefore cannot be supported as written. The sections that have language that “enables” counties to pass local ordinances or statutes could be supported as it is giving the option to the counties. With

counties facing the same budget difficulties, it is not known if any would make use of such legislation. Connie Hoge made a motion, seconded by Gary Allen, to support the “enabling” portion of the legislation. The motion was approved unanimously. The renaming of the Woodland Incentive Fund would be supported by DNR.

Gary passed around a copy of a recent report by The Trust for Public Land on protecting the forests of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Gary also mentioned that Senator Middleton (Charles County) is part of an effort to include forest land in legislation that provides some type of exemption or other benefit regarding the estate tax for agricultural land. The legislation has not yet been drafted but will be provided to the Council when it is available.

Marian Honeczy, Supervisor of Urban and Community Forestry, provided an update on the implementation of the recommendations from the No Net Loss of Forests Task Force Report as they relate to the Forest Conservation Act. The legislation to make those changes was SB666 in the 2009 legislative session. All of the recommendations ultimately were passed with the exception of eliminating the FCA exemption for utilities. Although the FCA exemption for new vs. old vs. maintenance projects is under discussion, the number of proposed powerlines will be a major point of discussion in the effort to develop a no net loss of forest policy.

The Council began a discussion on issues and ideas regarding the charge to develop no net loss of forest definition, policy and strategies. An initial list is as follows:

- Categories of definitions – statewide, county, watershed; forest cover vs. tree cover
- What is cause of greatest loss of forest?
- Ecological services valuation
- Federal land ownership

Much of the next meeting will be spent discussing no net loss of forest. Links to other reports and documents to help the Council develop no net loss definition, policy and strategies are as follows:

The “Sutherland Report” -

<http://www.dnr.state.md.us/forests/pdfs/GCSF%20Recd%20Report%20-%20Final.pdf>

Maryland Statewide Forest Resource Assessment 2010 -

<http://www.dnr.state.md.us/forests/pdfs/sas/MARYLANDSTATEFORESTRRESOURCASSESMENT.pdf>

Forest Resource Strategy 2010-2015 -

<http://www.dnr.state.md.us/forests/pdfs/sas/MDForestStrategy.pdf>

The SFC will meet again on February 15, 2011 at a location to be determined.

Respectfully submitted,

Donald VanHassent