



Sustainable Forestry Council

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

SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY COUNCIL

May 12, 2015

Tawes State Office Building, C1A, Annapolis, MD

Minutes

Eric Sprague
Alliance for the
Chesapeake Bay
Annapolis, MD 21403

Donald Outen, co-chair
Natural Resource
Manager
Baltimore County DEPS
Towson, Maryland 21204

Gary Allen
Center for Chesapeake
Communities
Annapolis, MD 21401

Kirk Rodgers
Private landowner
Woolford, MD 21677

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

Kenneth Roberts
Verso Corporation
Westernport, MD 21562

Alberto Goetzl, co-chair
Dream Catcher Farm,
LLC
Adamstown, MD 21710

Bryan Seipp
Center for Watershed
Protection
Ellicott City, MD 21043

Attendees:

Al Goetzl
Don Outen
Gary Allen
Bryan Seipp
Kim Finch
Kirk Rodgers
Eric Sprague

DNR and Guests:

Mark Belton, DNR Secretary
Anne Hairston-Strang, MFS
Don VanHassent, Acting State Forester

Don opened the meeting at 10:05, reviewed the agenda, and asked for additions. The minutes of the March meeting were reviewed; Kirk moved the minutes be approved as revised, Gary seconded it, and all approved.

Gary gave an update on the new Forest Preservation and Woodland Incentive Workgroup, reporting to the MD House of Delegates Environment and Transportation Committee. The Committee will build on work from the Woodland Incentive Fund Workgroup in 2014, work with a broader group of stakeholders and funding sources to address future funding for the Woodland Incentive Fund. Don moved that Eric Sprague be the representative for SFC on the new Forest Preservation and Woodland Incentive Workgroup. Kim Finch seconded and all approved. DNR Forest Service will staff the workgroup, and a final product will be due in December 2015. A private landowner, Rich Abend, was suggested. Kirk Rodgers agreed to be backup if needed.

Mark Belton and Don VanHassent joined at 10:50, with a round of introductions. He conveyed the Governor's interest in stakeholder involvement and fairness to all constituents, and having all voices heard. The Forest Service has been tasked with catching up with timber harvest rates while maintaining dual certification on State Forests. The Legislature has a new effort to review land acquisition programs with DNR, MDA, MDP, legislators, and land conservancies, and whether programs can meet all Bay and other goals, funding, and ability to manage all lands well. Report is due Dec. 1, and will be meeting this summer.

The committee discussed priorities with Secretary Belton, including Forest Service funding and reducing barriers to forest management and timber harvests. Don Outen reviewed the charge of the SFC, the effort to summarize past efforts, and willingness to be a voice for varied constituents. Gary Allen raised several issues based on observations from the past 5 years: 1) issues with Forest Service funding, reduced staffing, reliance on Special Funds, and expanding number of landowner; 2) need for increased use of forest management plans, 3) harvest

permitting process to be streamlined for private landowners, and 4) better long-term maintenance to support tree planting program. Gary said that planting a tree is the cheapest and easiest way to restore the Bay, and we want to have better support systems in place. Kirk addressed the need to encourage timber harvests and take advantage of hunt revenue (5-yr lease, graduated increases annually), and noted the unique status of Maryland with the only No-Net-Loss of Forest law in the U.S. Don pointed out the need for reliable data for assessing forest cover. Al brought up the global nature of forestry and how to make Maryland a forest-friendly state. Don Outen brought up the challenge of parcelization and noted that PA has a new Center for Private Forestry. Eric explained the new approaches for patch management to improve forest management and allow opportunities for aggregation of services and harvests. Eric noted that Maryland is different because it has to be, with high fragmentation and development. Gary explained the new legislative committee for Forest Preservation and Woodland Incentives Workgroup, to look at broadening a funding base from ag tax to real estate transfer tax, and consider effects on other land conservation efforts, not looking at woodland landowner cost-share in isolation, and encouraged coordination with efforts to review land conservation programs.

Mark Belton noted that DNR has a large reliance on special funds, and all are declining, with most varying depending on the economy. Gary mentioned providing landowners with a simplified process for harvest permits. Mark Belton described the new Customer Service team, giving DNR training and identifying permitting processes that can be improved, shortened, and improved for the customer. Don Outen said that UM Extension recently updated permitting process. Gary described another potential items- grey vs. green infrastructure, and lack of attention in local budgeting process capital projects for using GI to improve community quality of life and meet common sustainability goals, and use ecological services assessment. Don described lack of use of forests in WIP, even though forests are most cost-effective approach. Mark Belton suggested having a GI plan informing capital budgeting as a Best Practices. Gary described the Chicago Wilderness effort coordinating park and open space across jurisdictions, and the new effort begun in Baltimore to address coastal resiliency, environmental justice, equity, and access. Mark Belton said that Joel Dunn had spoken to him previously and described lack of access from City youth, and relationship to Chesapeake Bay Management Strategies and two-year milestones, and DNR needs to be part of it. Gary said the opening event is June 1.

Anne presented an overview of Maryland's Forest Action Plan (presentation posted). Gary offered several comments:

- Outreach with the revised plan is very important;
- With urban health, emphasize health benefits of forest cover;
- Include goals for biodiversity in urban green infrastructure, build on EPA emphasis; and
- Assure diverse impact, addressing environmental justice, minority recruitment.

Don Outen suggested that the Relationship to National Trends could reference the 2015 National Sustainable Forestry Report, and Gary Allen said there was a new report from the National Urban and Community Forestry Council.

Eric Sprague introduced a potential candidate for a vacancy on the SFC. Eric proposed that the SFC recommend that Christine Cadigan for membership, bringing expertise on the Farm Bill and other private forest issues. Gary seconded the motion. The SFC reviewed and discussed the resume and background. Don Outen brought the motion to a vote and all approved. Don Outen said a letter will have to be written, and Don VanHassent will assist with the template. The SFC discussed the need to have full participation on the committee and filling vacancy in a more timely fashion. They noted that the statute did not include term limits, but had a policy

addressing unexcused absences. The committee suggested that members should not miss more than 3 consecutive meetings without excused absences moving forward. Gary proposed the motion, Kirk seconded, all approved, and none opposed the motion.

Don VanHassent provided updates for the recently completed State Legislature, where DNR provided informational reports only this year. The bill requesting per acre payments instead of 25% payment in lieu of taxes on State land timber harvests, a \$15 million impact, passed the Senate but not the House. Another bill asked for Licensed Forester information on the website; the bill was withdrawn after learning that the consulting foresters list was posted. SB862 will be a problem for MFS, since it requires 60%, 80%, 100% in FY16/17/18 of Park receipts go to Parks, in addition to the transfer fund money for Parks, creating a significant problem following the earlier loss of general funds for the Forest Service. A bill changing due dates for reporting and eliminating unnecessary reports passed. The bill extending FCA exemption for airports to smaller airports received an unfavorable vote in committee. The biomass bills did not pass, following changes to support anaerobic digestors for poultry litter, increasing fiscal impact from \$1.20/year to \$50/yr/ratepayer to generate subsidy for nutrient removal. The bill moving tree expert licensing from DNR to DLLR did not pass.

Don VanHassent gave the MD Forest Service update, starting with the Voluntary Separation Program with a goal of reducing State government by 500 positions. VSP candidates received payments for leaving State service and the position could not be refilled. Of the 33 applications in DNR, 5 were in Forest Service and 2 were accepted. Two positions are expected in the new budget, for existing contractual employees. Upcoming retirements include Ernie Metz in Garrett County and Wade Dorsey at Savage River SF, and permission to refill the positions has been requested. John Zipfel, ranger in Baltimore County retired in December and hiring is underway. The current FY15 budget is on track, and the FY16 has a 2% cut for general funds, unit-specific cuts aren't yet known. Plans to cut more timber under the certified plan are underway.

Eric Sprague discussed the new USFS competitive grant for coordinating projects in the Prettyboy Watershed, supporting efforts to improve forest management on patches and priority. Bryan Seipp asked what experience they were looking for in the new hire, and Eric replied that project coordination skills would be important. EQIP funding is allocated for some Prettyboy projects. The challenge of getting cost-share processed expeditiously continues, limited by some financial and national database requirements. Don explained that another grant from MD Center of AgroEcology is supporting a research RFP is on the street. One third of private landowners have given permission to allow forest stand data collection.

Don Outen proposed that everyone send in additions to matrix via email prior to July 14, the next meeting. Gary asked where request to MDP to add forest section to Sensitive Areas Element and Don responded that is under Smart Growth and Forestry.

The next priority was discussed, including: new committee for Woodland Incentive Fund, increasing expectations for tree planting maintenance, data on tree survival and maintenance issues, progress matrix, how to better coordinate with MDP Smart Growth Awards for Green Infrastructure/forestry, and Woodland Fund Task Force

Al Goetzl adjourned the meeting at 2:08pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Anne Hairston-Strang