



Sustainable Forestry Council

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SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY COUNCIL

September 11, 2012

Minutes

Attendees:

Gary Allen
Eric Sprague
Don Outen
Kim Finch
Al Goetzl
Kirk Rodgers
Connie Hoge

DNR:

Don VanHassent

Called to order at 10:00 AM.

Chairman Allen provided a verbal summary of the meeting between Council members Allen, Outen and Sprague and 6 employees from several counties and Marian Honezcy, DNR-Forest Service to discuss enhancements to the Forest Conservation Act (FCA). He came away from the meeting discouraged because there was no consensus on what would be the best way to proceed. Each county has their own set of circumstances and their own way of handling things. What may work in some counties will not work for others. Flexibility for FCA implementers at the local level is the key to having a successful program.

The Council briefly discussed Article 66B. We need to try to persuade Maryland Department of Planning to develop new guidelines for forest protection and retention. Currently “forests” do not have their own section but are included in the Sensitive Area Element.

The question was raised – what do the recent major changes such as septics, WIP, tier 2 waters, PlanMaryland, etc. mean for forest retention? We need an assessment on the impact to forest retention as well as to rural development.

The question of “what would model guidance for no-net-loss of forest look like” was discussed. The most likely way to develop this model guidance would be for DNR (Forest Service and Office for Sustainable Future) to draft it in cooperation with the Department of Planning. Gary will write a letter to Secretary Griffin requesting this assistance.

Private land conservation will be an important part of achieving no-net-loss of forest. Maryland has a number of easement programs. We will ask DNR’s Land Acquisition and Planning section

to brief us at the next meeting (if schedules permit) on the latest easement statistics (number of easements, acres protected, acres of forest land, etc). Some of the counties have seen movement of acquisition funds to projects implementing Watershed Implementation Plan projects. We will ask LAP to comment on that issue as well.

Donnelle Keech, The Nature Conservancy - western Maryland, joined the Council by phone to discuss communication strategies. She presented on TNC's efforts to develop ways to train individuals to be facilitators to work with stakeholder groups. These individuals are able to work with various groups so informed decisions can be made. As we progress in our efforts to achieve no-net-loss of forest, we will need to communicate our message to many stakeholders in a clear, concise manner. Copies of her information are attached.

One of the duties of the Sustainable Forestry Council as written in the Sustainable Forestry Act of 2009 is "assigning a nutrient efficiency benefit to forest stewardship plans and other forest conservation management plans that can be measurably tracked and reported by the number of forested acres covered by the plans." Quantifying this value has proven very difficult and the system can be frustrating. No credit is given for retention of forest yet if forest is lost but then restored, credit is given for the restoration. How can high functioning forest be integrated into the Bay modeling process? Chairman Allen advises that this topic will be revisited in near future meetings. Don Outen indicates that Maryland Department of Agriculture says they have a baseline and farms that exceed the baseline can now trade credits.

Don VanHassent briefed the Council, in very general terms, on potential forestry legislation the Department is drafting. These have to be approved by a higher authority before we can share them with partners. As soon as is permissible the proposals will be distributed to the Council.

Christine Conn, DNR Office of Sustainable Future presented a powerpoint on the Department's Ecosystem Services Workgroup. General recommendations and observations are as follows:

- Promote use of mitigation banks
- Remove jurisdictional boundaries
- Integrate regulatory and voluntary action within a "one stop shop"
- Improve valuation of ecosystem services
- Target bank creation to:
 - Achieve multiple objectives
 - Focus on landscape scale benefits – bigger is better
 - Improve adaptation to climate change

A copy of the powerpoint will be posted on the SFC website.

The next Council meeting is tentatively scheduled for November 13.

Respectfully Submitted,

Donald VanHassent