



Martin O'Malley, Governor
Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor
John R. Griffin, Secretary
Joseph P. Gill, Deputy Secretary

SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY COUNCIL

September 23, 2010

Minutes

Attendees:

Members

Gary Allen, Chair
Eric Sprague, Co-chair
Donald Outen
Connie Hoge
Alberto Goetzl
Kirk Rodgers
Kenneth Roberts

Members absent

Gregory Purnell
Kim Finch

Staff and guests

Kristin Saunders-Evans, Assistant Secretary
Donald VanHassent, Associate Director, Forest Service
Dan Rider
Bill Miles
Olivia Campbell
Amanda Mock
Steve McHenry

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

Don VanHassent distributed a report on the Woodland Incentive Fund (WIF). This report provides a summary of activity in the Fund for State FY10 and is required by the Sustainable Forestry Act of 2009. A copy of the report will be posted on the Sustainable Forestry Council website.

Gary Allen led a discussion on what appears to be an inequity in the amount of woodland transfer tax collected and credited to the Woodland Incentive Fund. Background – when the Agricultural Transfer Tax is paid upon the sale of an entirely wooded parcel, the tax is credited to the Woodland Incentive Fund. Reports over the years show very little or no tax credited to WIF in counties in which one would think wooded parcels have changed hands and been subject to the tax. It was suggested that counties may need help understanding the

process. Gary made a motion to write a letter to the Department of Assessment and Taxation and the Department of Legislative Services requesting clarification and review of the process to ensure revenues are credited properly. Connie Hoge moved the motion, seconded by Don Outen. Gary will draft the letter.

Jim Conrad, Executive Director of the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) gave a presentation on the status of MALPF. A copy of the presentation will be posted on the Sustainable Forestry Council website. The Council was interested in the amount of forest land protected by MALPF easements. Although the database is still under development, Jim estimates approximately 80,000 acres are forested. There was interest by Council members regarding the eligibility of Class IV forest land and the overall parity of forest land to agricultural (crop and pasture) land. A soil survey for Maryland is currently being redone. Changes to eligibility may be made after the soil survey revision is completed and will require revisions in regulation.

The Sustainable Forestry Act of 2009 also required the county Forestry Boards and the county Ag Boards to meet annually to discuss items of mutual interest and concern. It is unclear if those meetings have actually taken place. Jim Conrad stated that the meetings will be part of the annual review for each county Ag Board. Gary will draft a joint letter for Secretary Griffin (DNR) and Secretary Hance (MDA) to send to their respective county boards on the meeting requirement and will include a draft agenda of items to cover in said meetings.

Meredith Lathbury, Director of Land Acquisition and Planning, gave a presentation on DNR's efforts on land conservation and the amount of forest land protected. A copy of the presentation will be posted on the Sustainable Forestry Council website. During FY10, 77% of acquisitions were forested. A good source of big picture land conservation efforts can be found at www.green.maryland.gov.

Kristin Saunders-Evans, Assistant Secretary, gave a presentation on the recently released draft Watershed Implementation Plan and the implications for forestry. The draft includes a proposal to eliminate the fee-in-lieu option for the Forest Conservation Act and place more of an emphasis on mitigation banking. The draft plan can be viewed at:

http://www.mde.maryland.gov/programs/Water/TMDL/Pages/Programs/WaterPrograms/tmdl/cb_tmdl/tmdl_bay_wip_process.aspx. Of particular interest to forestry are portions on pages 5-4 through 5-16 and 5-27 through 5-31.

The Forest Conservation Act statute can be found at:

<http://michie.lexisnexis.com/maryland/lpext.dll?f=templates&fn=main-h.htm&cp> and click on Maryland Code, then Natural Resources, then Title 5, the Sub-title 16.

The Forest Conservation Act regulations can be found at:

http://www.dsd.state.md.us/comar/subtitle_chapters/08_Chapters.aspx#Subtitle19

Gary Allen and Don Outen will draft a document for review by the Council regarding mitigation banking and fee-in-lieu.

Don VanHassent gave a brief presentation on the status of efforts by the Forest Service to obtain third party certification of our forest management efforts on all our State Forests. Certification by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) has been received for our Chesapeake Forest Lands and the Pocomoke State Forest on the Eastern Shore. Compilation of pertinent documentation and revision of the management plans for our three western State Forests (Green Ridge, Savage River and Potomac-Garrett) are underway. The timeline calls for an initial audit by the certifying organizations and the beginning of the public participation process in spring of 2011.

Marian Honecny, Urban and Community Forestry Program Manager, gave an update on the status of Urban Tree Canopy (UTC) efforts across the state. Urban trees can provide a great deal of environmental benefits. Chesapeake Bay Program goals include the having cities and towns commit to a goal to increase their urban tree canopy. Significant progress has been made in having cities, and recently counties, conduct an assessment to determine their existing coverage and identify potential areas to plant. The next step is to have these jurisdictions adopt a goal and appropriate the funds to begin to be able to reach their goals by their target dates.

Dan Rider, Forest Stewardship and Utilization Program Manager, gave a presentation on the current status of biomass projects in Maryland. A copy of the presentation will be posted on the Sustainable Forestry Council website.

The SFC will meet again on October 26 and again November 18th. The location of these meetings will be announced as soon as the determination has been made.

Respectfully submitted,

Donald VanHassent