

Notes from meeting of MET's Land Committee
Wednesday April 19, 2023
1:00 pm

Attending Committee Members: M. Benjamin, A. Jones, M. D'Arcy, C. Wells, J. Jikoff,
Attending MET Staff: J. Turgeon, J. Markline, J. Chapman, M. Mingus
Attending OAG staff: R. Medoff, T Kovacs, D. Ballard

Next meeting: Wednesday, April 19, 2023, at 1 pm

1. Stewardship Program

A. Program Updates-J. Chapman provided the following updates

i. Monitoring Summary

1. 639 Monitoring reports generated and processed since start of fiscal year on July 1; equivalent to just under 50% of our entire portfolio (1136 interests).
2. 380 or 59% completed by MET staff, volunteers or paid contractor and interns.
3. Majority (77%) of MET's reports derived from Aerial (LENS) reports, conducted by Paid Contractor and Interns. Balance (76) primarily by volunteers (26) and Monitoring Specialist Wendy Foster and Josette Markline (Stew. Planner).
4. In contrast, 83% of Coholder reports were done on Ground, but a quarter (26%) were supplemented by use of a Drone. LLTs produced 259 reports, or 41% of all done in this time period. Only Lower Shore Land Trust and The Manor Conservancy are regularly using LENS with their own licenses; ESLC is using a Drone.
5. Michelle Grafton (LTAC Manager) continues to do yeoman's work soliciting Local Land Trust (LLT) reports, entering reports not submitted in spreadsheet form, reviewing all the LLT reports for completeness and accuracy, and flagging issues for Stewardship Staff's attention.

ii. Stewardship Activities

1. Staff continue working to process multiple amendments approved last year, ones with complex language and/or title situations (Hidden Waters, Hale, Altstatt, IWL 3rd, Duemling).
2. Updated GIS for CY2022 recorded easements, assisting DNR's Land Acquisition and Planning unit with preparing its GIS information for use in LENS. Engaging surveyors to provide CAD files when surveys/plats are done for new easements.
3. Continue working with DNR Forest Service in outreach to easement landowners regarding Five Million Trees funding opportunity and other planting initiatives.

4. Continue cooperating with restoration consultants to guide to potential restoration sites and to guide through approval process if large enough (>5 ac) to require review.
5. Working with DNR's Coastal Resources Service to obtain an updated analysis of Land Use and Land Cover on easement properties, and also Ecosystem Services benefits deriving from those Open Space land uses and covers.
6. Supervising and directing our Contractual employee, who after completing LENS reviews was tasked to enter primary residence of all easements into Trulia real estate website, so that we get notifications if the property is listed for sale, and any status changes and especially if and when it sells.
7. Worked with DNR IT to develop processes to send reminders to verify status of properties listed for sale and tagged in the database, and to track new owner engagement activities following notice of transfers, reminding us to reach out to the new landowner within 3 months following when we learn of a transfer, tracking when we actually make contact and set a date for a site visit, then when the site visit and new owner introduction meeting is done.
8. Continue working with MD Dept of IT and their consultant to refine the beta version of the field data collection tool so it can be implemented. Is a linchpin to start training staff and volunteers how to use it. The old tool (KOBO) and desktop management software continue to present problems, but will be replaced with new tool.
9. Coordinating with Land Trust Assistance Manager (Michelle Grafton) to develop legal documents and guide assignment of Central Maryland Heritage League coheld easements to MET, and hopefully in turn to Catoctin Land Trust.
10. Supporting Local Land Trusts with provision and exploration of MET policy language regarding Ecosystem Services, amendment acceptance, etc.
11. Developed draft FY '24 stewardship private funds budget, work plan and succession plan, as well as recruitment documents, in anticipation of my July 1 retirement.
12. A. Jones asked about clarification on the Trulia property management website.
13. Proposal to get the status of an easement onto SDAT did not go through, T. Kovacs asked what level of staff J. Chapman spoke to and more details. J. Chapman stated that there is a cost associated with this type of request because of contractors. J. Turgeon and A. Jones spoke of the legislative attempt and failure to enact this in the legislature. J. Jikoff suggested to go through the realtors to get this information to the public.

B. Stewardship Program Projects

- i. Request to exercise reserved right on MET ID #0955RIV08.CECI: M. D’Arcy motioned to approve. J. Jikoff seconded the motion. **The Committee unanimously voted to put it on the Consent Calendar.**
- ii. Proposal regarding reassignment of coheld easements and associated stewardship funds: **The Committee supported the proposal in concept but did not approve pending more details and review from the executive and finance committees.**
- iii. Request for Amendment of MET ID #0496WHI99.TALB: M. D’Arcy motioned to deny the proposal. C. Wells seconded the motion. **The Committee unanimously voted to deny this request.**

2. Easement Program

A. Program Updates: M. Mingus provided the following updates

- i. Thus far in FY 2023 we have recorded 10 conservation easements protecting 1222.7463 acres
- ii. Since the last Land Committee, the Crownsville Conservation easement was recorded. This was a 158.62 acre easement protecting forest. The easement was given by Anne Arundel County as part of the state's transfer of the larger property to the county. MET co-holds with SRLT.
- iii. This is tax season, thus A Carlson and M Mingus have read tax forms and appraisals for easemen donated in 2022.
- iv. A Carlson and M Mingus have attended several LTA webinars in the last few weeks.

B. Easement Pipeline Report

- i. Update on a Garrett County project: The Scheig conservation easement was reviewed by this committee at its April 2022 meeting and approved by the board at the May 2022 meeting. The approval was conditioned on the mineral rights issue being resolved to the satisfaction of the Office of the Attorney General prior to MET signing the conservation easement. The Scheigs own 84.26 acres of land but do not own their mineral rights. They hired a geologist engineer who conducted a study of the minerals beneath the property and the likelihood they could be extracted. This minerals assessment report demonstrated that the probability of surface mining is “so remote as to be negligible”. The AAG was satisfied and we're moving forward to complete the easement.
- ii. We have 24 active projects that we are following.

C. Conservation Easement Projects

- i. 340.767 +/- ac in Talbot County with Eastern Shore Land Conservancy, Inc.: M. D’Arcy motioned to approve. J. Jikoff seconded the motion. **The Committee unanimously voted to put it on the Consent Calendar.**
- ii. 32.36 +/- ac in Baltimore County: C. Wells motioned to approve. J. Jikoff seconded the motion. **The Committee unanimously voted to put it on the Consent Calendar.**
- iii. 450.91 +/- ac in Somerset County with Lower Shore Land Trust: M. D’Arcy motioned to approve. C. Wells seconded the motion. **The Committee unanimously voted to put it on the Consent Calendar.**

Meeting adjourned at 2:51 pm.