



Sustainable Forestry Council

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SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY COUNCIL

November 23, 2010

Minutes

Attendees:

Members

Gary Allen, Chair

Donald Outen

Connie Hoge

Alberto Goetzl

Kirk Rodgers

Gregory Purnell

Kim Finch

Members absent

Kenneth Roberts

Eric Sprague, Co-chair

Staff and guests

Donald VanHassent, DNR

Steven Koehn, DNR

Olivia Campbell, DNR

Richard Norling, DNR

Katie Beecham, Baltimore County intern

Gary Allen welcomed Sustainable Forestry Council (SFC) members and guests. Gary introduced Steven Koehn, Director/State Forester, who has returned to full-time duty after serving a year as the President of the National Association of State Foresters. Steve briefed the members on the Department's efforts to obtain information from the Department of Assessments and Taxations (DAT) on the collection of transfer taxes on entirely wooded parcels. The initial request will be made from Assistant Secretary Saunders to her contact at DAT. If that request is not met we will pursue the original option of a Secretary to Secretary request.

Gary Allen introduced draft legislation prepared by the Partnership for Sustainable Forestry. The proposed bill, titled "Sustainable Forestry Act of 2011", contains sections on renaming the Woodland Incentives Fund to the Mel Noland Woodland Incentives Fund; expanding the income tax credit for perpetual easements conveyed to the Maryland Environmental Trust (MET) or the Maryland Agricultural Preservation Foundation (MALPF) by adding credits to the county income tax and easements conveyed Program Open Space (POS) and Rural Legacy (RL); adding an income tax credit equal to the cost of developing a forest stewardship plan, not to exceed \$500.00; and adding an annual 50% credit against property tax for properties under a forest stewardship plan or subject to an easement that is permanently conveyed to POS, MALPF,

MET or RL. After much discussion a motion was made by Don Outen – “move that the Council support the Mel Noland Woodland Incentives Fund name change.” Connie Hoge seconded the motion and the Council voted affirmatively on the motion. Further action on the remainder of the proposal was tabled until the next meeting to allow DNR time to review and respond.

Don VanHassent briefed the Council on one bill DNR is introducing this year concerning Licensed Tree Experts (LTE). Currently, there are approximately 1,200 LTEs in Maryland who renew their licenses every year, all coming due at the same time. Part of the renewal process includes verifying insurance, checking for outstanding tax liens and several other steps that take time to complete. The proposed bill would allow the Department to use the regulations process to increase the renewal period and modify the renewal fee accordingly. We are looking to increase the renewal period to two years, phased in so we have approximately 600 renewals per year. The consensus of the Council was to support this legislation.

The subject of “no net loss of forests” was discussed as it pertains to the Council’s charge to address that issue. At the January meeting there will be a briefing on the “No Net Loss of Forest Task Force Report” including updates on implementation of recommendations.

There are several new tools available that could help with the no net loss issue. The Council briefly discussed each:

- Resource typology – landscape functional value assessment overlaid with zoning to determine areas that are threatened. Helps determine dollar value of ecosystem services versus value of development.
- Urban Tree Canopy (UTC) assessments done with the University of Vermont. Could extend statewide but need cost estimates. Baltimore County is using their UTC assessment to target tree deficient census defined areas (CDAs) of which there are 29 in the county.
- “I-Tree” has 5 tools that are available on-line with more under development.

Items for members to think about for future meetings:

- What areas do we need further information on to make viable recommendations – (ex. mitigation requirements, residential right-of-way tree removal, biomass utilization, etc.)?
- What other sources are there for loss of forest that are not associated with the Forest Conservation Act?
- Who are friends of forestry in the Maryland legislature?

The SFC will meet again on January 11, 2011 at a location to be determined.

Respectfully submitted,

Donald VanHassent