



Sustainable Forestry Council

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

Tuesday, May 26, 2020

1 pm-3 pm

580 Taylor Ave., E-1 corner Conference Room, Annapolis MD 21401

Conference Call- google hangouts

Gary Allen
Center for Chesapeake
Communities
Annapolis, MD 21401

Kim Finch, co-chair
MNCPPC,
Prince George's Co.
Planning Dept.
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Kenneth Roberts
Verso Corporation
Westport, MD 21562

Alberto Goetzl, chair
Dream Catcher Farm,
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Adamstown, MD 21710

Bryan Seipp
Center for Watershed
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Ellicott City, MD 21043

Elizabeth Hill
Dorchester Forestry Bd.
Linkwood, MD 21835

Donnelle Keech
The Nature Conservancy
Cumberland, MD 21502

Bill Rees
Catonsville Tree Canopy
Committee
Catonsville, MD 21228

SFC members:

Al Goetzl
Kim Finch
Gary Allen
Donnelle Keech
Beth Hill
Bill Rees
Bryan Seipp

DNR Staff:

Anne Hairston-Strang
Kenneth Jolly
Dan Rider
Iris Allen

Guests:

Phil Gottwals, ACDS, LLC
Anna Jensen, ACDS, LLC

Action Items:

Kenneth send 2019 Annual Report to SFC
Gary distribute final Biomass White Paper
Anne send Forest Action Plan draft for comments

Al Goetzl, Chair, opened the Sustainable Forestry Council (SFC) meeting at 1:07 pm.
Gary moved that the January minutes be approved with any suggestions received by staff,
Beth seconded, and minutes were approved.

Kenneth Jolly gave a DNR update, including the abbreviated legislative session. The State of Maryland declared a COVID-19 state of emergency in mid-March. Forest Service staff switched to full telework or paid administrative leave, and received permission within 2 weeks to support contractor tree planting and firefighting, which were deemed emergency essential services. In early April, after providing information on how Covid-19 was affecting progress, all FS staff were deemed intermittent emergency essential and permitted to work in the field or office for 18-24 hours a week in support of forestry as state and national essential services. With the limits on work and expected revenue impact, dramatic budget reductions with a deficit of 1-4 billion were predicted. Cuts were not expected for the current fiscal year, ending soon June 30, and a 10% expected initial budget cut is proposed to come out of General Funds increased to pay back prior year transfers, so not requiring layoffs. Additional budget cuts for FY21 seem likely with the current economic trends. For personnel, there is currently a hiring freeze for state positions. There are 7 vacancies in FS (2 in urban program, which is already small), 1 vacant PIN has been lost already for FY 21 (Forest Planning position). A request was submitted to start hiring Federally funded positions, which would not be cut to meet reductions in General or Special Funds (1 long-term contractual, multiple seasonal positions).

Kenneth reviewed the Woody Biomass Webinar series starting in June, one element in strategies to expand forest product that SFC identified as a medium-term priority for their work. Thanks were extended to the SFC Biomass Subcommittee, Gary Allen, Donnelle Keech, Al Goetzl, Bill Rees, Bryan Seipp, and Beth Hill, for contributing so much to the effort and re-imagining the planned meeting into a webinar series, partnering with the significant technical capacity of the MD Clean Energy Center, led by Kathy Magruder.

Other updates included a briefing in June on the MOU with MD Dept. of Environment for DNR assistance with Forest Harvesting Operation Best Management Practices and site visits; with training delayed by COVID-19, the roll out is planned for October 1 rather than July 1. The out-of-state wildfire season is starting to heat up, and DNR has gotten an exception for out of state travel for firefighters subject to approval on a case by case basis, and is ready to respond to mutual aid requests. The Chesapeake Bay Forest Restoration Strategy has been updated and is going through internal review in Maryland; this is planned to be a basis for a shared stewardship approach and future Shared Stewardship Agreement with USFS.

Maryland Forest Service prepared an annual unit report for 2019, which is still in internal review. SFC members requested a copy and Kenneth said it will be shared with the SFC. The Legislative season was shortened, but some bills made it through. A Task Force has been approved to look economic future of western MD and forestry will be involved. There were some changes to license tree expert law to allow Master Loggers to sit for the licensed tree expert test without specific apprenticeship or formal training. The Woodland Incentive Fund proposal was withdrawn. Another recent issue regarding Chesapeake Forest Lease issue was resolved, allowing 10-year leases rather than all terminating with lottery renewals starting June 30th; this is a significant result, particularly since the value over 10 years is about \$6.5 million.

Phil Gottwals and Anna Jensen of ACDS, LLC introduced their work on the Maryland Economic Adjustment Strategy, designed to reposition the Maryland forest products industry. ACDS, LLC is a consulting firm for resource based industries, mostly in agriculture, seafood, and forestry. The project goal is to identify opportunities and barriers for forest products sector in Maryland, including new products, international markets, and woody biomass. They are conducting a gap analysis based on industry feedback, and are summarizing status and opportunities for biomass. Europe has transitioned from coal to wood, and the UK is a primary consumer of pellets. Over 95% of US wood pellets are exported, but there seems to be limited potential for MD to access the international export market. ACDS is exploring where domestic consumption in biomass energy, especially with the higher efficiency associated with combined heat and power projects, might be a fit for MD. The approach would be to look for sustainable regionalized, local supply chains, and incorporating biomass sustainability standards. Experimentation with a hydrophobic pellet could change storage options and associated costs. Al asked about potential for using wood chips with coal-fired plants, and Phil explained that there is good technical potential but costs can be limiting with abundant natural gas and the coal sector is declining.

Urban wood waste was identified as another important segment; opportunities will differ depending on the area of MD. Challenges in the domestic market for woody biomass include people concerned about possible impacts on MD forests, lack of acceptance of commercial forestry, variability and uncertainty about how forest harvesting standards are applied at the state and local levels (e.g.,

different processes in every county), lack of acceptance or understanding of wood boilers and wood supply chain by engineers and architects, and policy barriers in the renewable energy credits. Sustainable sourcing was identified as a positive marketing element, noting that current acreages of certified forest is relatively low, and costs for achieving it are high for the many landowners with smaller acreages of forest. Gary emphasized connections to local governments in developing strategies. Bankers who might evaluate loans for wood biomass systems were suggested as another target audience for biomass webinar followup.

There is a linkedin page for the economic adjustment strategy -

<https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/maryland-forestry-economic-adjustment-strategy/?viewAsMember=true>

Gary provided an update on the Woody Biomass White Paper contracted with Dovetail Partners. The White paper was distributed to the SFC biomass subcommittee for comments, and Gary sent feedback to the writers, with the final edition expected by the end of May.

Anne provided an update on the Kirk Rodgers memorial, which is finally moving forward as the Engineering and Construction project for the Historic Fire Tower reconstruction and display is being put out for bid through the State process. MD/DE SAF continues to hold and track the donated funds that will pay for the memorial/display work.

Anne Hairston-Strang discussed the State Forest Action Plan (SFAP). The goals for the SFAP are to emphasize keeping forest, forest health, water issues, importance of urban trees, and climate change. With the effects of COVID-19 restrictions, the Action Plan is now due in December 2020 rather than June 30th. The Assessment and Strategy are currently being reviewed internally at DNR. A link to the plan will be distributed to the SFC, with comments encouraged by the next meeting. A planned addition is a short list of top priorities for action over the next five years, with suggestions from the SFC welcomed.

Anne requested any suggestions for the vacant SFC position.

SFC members discussed possible legislative options for the million and trillion tree initiatives currently under consideration at the state and federal levels. Beth summarized the planned MAERDAF grant application (letter of intent) that MFA is submitting to create a public perception campaign on forestry. The effort will put a face for forestry in every county state-wide, building local understanding of the relevance of forestry, and develop talking points for people to be better advocates for forestry. Gary indicated that MD Forestry Foundation also would be submitting a letter of intent for next steps on biomass policy.

Al Goetzl adjourned the meeting at 3:01 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Hairston-Strang
Forest Service