



Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission
Rural Economies Workgroup Report
July 28, 2014

To: Jon Laria, Chairman, Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission
From: Greg Bowen, Rural Economies Workgroup Chair
Subj: Status Report on Rural Economies Workgroup Activities
Date: July 28, 2014

I have been asked to serve as chair of the Rural Economies Workgroup. On June 9th, I met with MDP staff (Joe Tassone, Dan Rosen and Chuck Boyd) and together we drafted the following agricultural and forestry Workgroup proposal, containing an overall goal, three objectives, six strategies and associated actions to pursue. It is important to note that this is a draft proposal that has not been vetted with the Workgroup. Prior to discussing this draft proposal in detail with the Rural Economies Workgroup, MDP has contacted the Departments of Agriculture, Business & Economic Development, Health and Mental Hygiene, Housing & Community Development, and Natural Resources to identify key staff that could work with the Workgroup on the issues identified in the draft work plan, as well as suggest additional areas of investigation that may further the Workgroup's efforts. At this point, the State agencies have identified key staff and are listed at the end of the proposal. A meeting of state agencies will be scheduled in early August to confirm agency resources devoted to the initiative. A meeting of the full Rural Economies Workgroup will be scheduled in late August or September once state agency resources have been confirmed. At that time, the draft proposal will be discussed, refined, work priorities established, and detailed work plans developed.

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Rural Economies Workgroup Proposal

Draft Objectives, Strategies, Priority Actions, & Work Plan

(June 18, 2014)

Goal: Stabilize and improve the business environment and opportunities for agricultural, forestry and other rural resource-based and compatible industries

Objectives:

- A. Land Preservation: Advance Maryland's official goal to permanently preserve 1,030,000 acres of land in production by 2020 (through MALPF, Rural Legacy, local PDR/TDR programs).
Currently 56.6%, or 583,132 acres, are under easement.
- B. Sustainable Food Supply System: Develop a vision for a healthy, sustainable local food supply for Maryland, including policy recommendations for state and local government. The food system, for our purposes, comprises production, processing, marketing, distribution, consumption, and waste management.
- C. Sustainable Forestry: Develop a vision for a sustainable local supply of wood fiber and energy for Maryland, including policy recommendations for state and local governments.

Strategies

1. Identify opportunities to streamline and improve the regulations that govern the production, processing, and distribution (including sales) and waste management of food and wood products in Maryland.

Actions to Pursue

- a. Review recommendations from the Governor's Intergovernmental Commission for Agriculture (GICA), responding to concerns expressed by farmers.
 - b. Examine prevailing zoning and land use regulations, and easement conditions and restrictions, that impede or accommodate local production, value-added processing, and distribution of farm and forest products.
 - c. Other Steps?
2. Identify national and regional trends that are affecting the agriculture and forestry industries in Maryland.

Actions to Pursue

- a. Examine the 2012 Census of Agriculture to find any shifts in agricultural production: more horticulture and fruit/vegetable? Less livestock and grain? Determine if there are regional or county differences and identify possible best practices that can be promoted.
 - b. Examine opportunities to promote agri-tourism and complementary recreation activities that can support agriculture and forestry industries.
 - c. Other Steps?
3. Identify new opportunities and enhancements to value-added food processing sectors.

Actions to Pursue

- a. Research the top 10(?) value-added food products in Maryland to identify existing impediments in production and/or sales, and identify recommendations to improve production/sales.
 - b. Other Steps
4. Identify opportunities to improve local food distribution and sales through the promotion of food hubs and other regional distribution systems that allow farmers to better access institutional and retail markets.

Actions to Pursue

- a. Review the existing and planned food hub operations in Maryland. Identify best practices and recommendations to address impediments to the effectiveness of food hubs.
 - b. Other Steps?
5. Identify a healthy, sustainable agricultural footprint for Maryland.

Actions to Pursue

- a. Examine existing food availability data to determine existing food consumption for Marylanders, and associated farm acreage needed to produce this food.
 - b. Explore healthy, sustainable diet scenarios for Marylanders and associated farm acreage needed to produce these food diets.
 - c. Develop recommendations to promote a healthy, sustainable agricultural footprint.
 - d. Other Steps?
6. Identify a sustainable forestry industry for Maryland

Actions to Pursue

- a. Assess Maryland's Forest Action Plan to identify opportunities for collaboration with the Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission and the Rural Economies Workgroup.
- b. Other Steps?

Work Plan (To be developed in concert with Workgroup)

Workgroup Participants

MSGC Commissioners:

- Greg Bowen, Chair, Commissioner representing Southern MD
- Duane Yoder, Commissioner representing western MD
- Sandy Coyman, Commissioner representing MACO
- Diane Chasse, Commissioner representing MDA
- Charlotte Lawson Davis, Commissioner, Executive Director, Maryland Rural Council
- Matt Hollaway, Commissioner representing Agricultural Community
- Daniel Colhoun, Commissioner representative of the Rural Community

Previously Involved Workgroup participants:

- Les Knapp, MACo
- Jon Kessler, Deep Creek businessman
- Dave Umling, City Planner, City of Cumberland, MD
- Brenda Smith, Executive Director, Greater Cumberland Chamber of Commerce,
- Jim Mullin, Former President, Board of County Commissioners, Cecil County
- Amy Owsley, Deputy Director, Eastern Shore Land Conservancy

Additional Workgroup Participants will be identified/invited following the next Workgroup meeting

State Agency Resources Identified

- Elliott Campbell, DNR, Resource Economist
- John Papagni, DHCD, Division of Neighborhood Revitalization
- Dr. Donald Shell, DHMH, Center for Chronic Disease and Prevention Control
- Alan Brench, DHMH, Center for Food Defense and Emergency Response
- Heather Gramm, DBED, Regional Growth & Retention
- Richard Higgins, DBED, Office of Secretary
- Dan Rosen, MDP, Planning Services
- Joe Tassone, MDP, Planning Data & Analysis
- Chuck Boyd, MDP, Planning Services
- Additional MDA staff to be identified based on Workgroup strategies & tasks