



## ***Rural Economies Workgroup***

**To:** Jon Laria, Chairman, Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission

**From:** Greg Bowen, Rural Economies Workgroup Chair

**Subj:** Status Report on Rural Economies Workgroup Activities

**Date:** November 23, 2015

The Rural Economies Workgroup met on November 13<sup>th</sup> to review the progress of its subcommittees (Sustainable Food and Food Production, Sustainable Forestry, Land Preservation and Protected Open Space, Rural Development and Recreation, and Sustainable Fisheries). It was reported that as a result of the recommendations from the Workgroup and its Land Preservation & Open Space and the Sustainable Forestry Subcommittees, the Chair of the Growth Commission has signed and transmitted letters regarding: (1) the Sustainable Forestry Subcommittee Work Plan, and (2) land preservation and the need to safeguard the preservation funding.

The Workgroup's focused most of its discussion on the Rural Development Subcommittee's investigation of the Priority Funding Area (PFA) and its impact on rural communities. Mr. Boyd reported to the Workgroup that MDP staff, with the assistance of Assistant Attorney General Paul Cucuzzella, went back and researched the existing PFA law and how it has changed over the years since its adoption in 1997. Because of all the changes that have occurred with PFA law, MDP determined it was important to prepare a decision matrix that could be used in determining what land qualifies as a PFA, noting the different conditions and criteria which need to be considered. Because this matrix is so complex, MDP staff is now working on a communication tool that will help explain how the law applies in terms the general public could easily understand. Mr. Boyd stated that it was important to first establish a sound basis in the current law before evaluating its impact on rural communities. Mr. Boyd stated that once the communication tool is prepared, he would present it to the Rural Development Subcommittee for suggestions on how to improve the tool's effectiveness. The Workgroup members suggested the next step of the investigation should involve reaching out to local governments and organizations and ask them how the PFA law is impacting them and hear what is working well and not working.

The summary of the Workgroup's discussion follows. The next meeting of the full Workgroup is November 13.

<b>Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission – Rural Economies Workgroup Agenda and Notes Document</b>	
<b>Meeting Notes For:</b>	
<b>Rural Economies Workgroup</b>	
Date and time:	November 13, 2015 @ 1 pm
Called by: Greg Bowen	Facilitator’s Name: Chuck Boyd
Attendance:	Tonya Allen, Greg Bowen, Chuck Boyd, Deborah Carpenter, Jason Dubow, Colby Ferguson, Charlotte Lawson Davis, John Leocha, Les Knapp, Steve McHenry, Jim Mullin, David Umling, Duane Yoder
Notes Taken By:	Chuck Boyd
<b>Agenda and Notes:</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Attendance – 13 members attended in person or by conference call.</li> <li>2. Mr. Boyd provided the Workgroup an update on the recommendations that the Workgroup made to the Growth Commission in September. Mr. Boyd informed them that the Commission supported their recommendations to send letters regarding Land Preservation funding to the Governor and the Joint Chairman’s Land Preservation Workgroup, as well as sending letters to the organizations and agencies that are needed to help the Sustainable Forestry Subcommittee pursue its work plan. Jon Laria, Chair of Growth Commission, has signed those letters, and they have been sent.</li> <li>3. Status Report on the five (5) Subcommittees by each facilitator highlighting items discussed and future actions:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Rural Development and Recreation Subcommittee (Chuck Boyd facilitator)                   <p>Mr. Boyd acknowledged that this subcommittee had not met since June because MDP staff has been investigating the impact of Priority Fund Area (PFA) law on rural communities, among other things. Mr. Boyd explained that MDP staff, with the assistance of Assistant Attorney General Paul Cucuzzella, went back and researched the existing PFA law and how it has changed over the years since its adoption in 1997. Because of all the changes that have occurred with PFA law, MDP determined it was important to prepare a decision matrix that could be used in determining what land qualifies as a PFA, noting the different conditions and criteria which need to be considered. Because this matrix is so complex, MDP staff is now working on a communication tool that will help explain how the law applies in terms the general public could easily understand. Mr. Boyd stated that it was important to first establish a sound basis in the current law before evaluating its impact on rural communities. Mr. Boyd stated that once the communication tool is prepared, he would present it to the subcommittee for their suggestions on how to improve its effectiveness. The Workgroup members suggested the next step would be to reach out to local governments and organizations and ask them how the PFA law is impacting them and hear what is working well and not working. Mr. Boyd concurred that this would be good next step in the process.</p> </li> <li>B. Sustainable Food and Food Production Subcommittee (La Verne Gray facilitator)                   <p>Mr. Boyd reported for La Verne Gray that this subcommittee has not met since the Workgroup’s last meeting. The subcommittee is focus on the theme "What is working – What are the Impediments?" Ms. Gray is contacting agricultural professionals/agricultural marketing professionals who can assist the subcommittee with its investigations. These interviews with agricultural experts are expected to continue through May. In June, Ms.</p> </li> </ol> </li> </ol>	

Gray anticipates the subcommittee will come to some conclusions that can be presented to the Rural Economies Workgroup.

- C. Land Preservation and Protected Open Space Subcommittee (Dan Rosen facilitator)  
 Mr. Boyd reiterated that the letters, signed by the Growth Commission Chair, had been transmitted to the Governor and the Joint Chairman’s Land Preservation Workgroup regarding the importance of a dedicated, fully funded Land Preservation Program to the help advance the economic viability of Maryland farms. No subcommittee meeting has occurred during the past two months. A follow-up subcommittee meeting will likely occur once the Joint Chairman’s Land Preservation Workgroup report is published and after the MDP’s Transfer of Development Rights Ad Hoc Committee Study is completed.
  
- B. Sustainable Forestry Subcommittee (Jason Dubow/Elliott Campbell facilitators)  
 Jason Dubow reported that the Forestry Subcommittee will be following up with the agencies and organizations that received letters from the Chair of the Growth Commission to discuss their involvement and to identify specific contacts that can assist with the subcommittee’s work plan. Greg Bowen requested that the forestry committees in each county also be informed of the subcommittee’s work plan. Jason Dubow stated that he would get with Elliott Campbell and Dan Rider on how best to inform the county forestry committees. Colby Ferguson inquired whether the work plan addressed a concern raised by southern Maryland loggers that changes to MDE regulations appear to have created uncertainty in enforcement of stormwater requirements related to logging operations. Jason Dubow stated that he would check with Dan Rider to make sure he is aware of this problem and confirm whether this issue is included into the subcommittee’s work plan.
  
- E. Sustainable Fisheries Subcommittee (Chuck Boyd facilitator)  
 This subcommittee still needs to be organized. Chuck Boyd noted that due to staffing limitations this subcommittee is awaiting allocation of sufficient staff resources to move forward.

4. Next Workgroup meeting is January 8, at 1 pm at MDP’s Olmsted Conference Room in Baltimore.

<b>Key Actions (and who has agreed take on)</b>	Describe action and indicate when action is due
1. MDP staff -	Once a draft communication tool on application of the PFA law has been developed, shared it with the Rural Development Subcommittee and discuss opportunities to improve its effectiveness
2. MDP staff -	Work with DNR staff on how best to inform local county forestry committees about the Sustainable Forestry Subcommittee’s work plan efforts.
3. MDP staff -	Contact Dan Rider of DNR about concerns that MDE’s stormwater regulations may have changed and are impacting loggers, and see if this issue is addressed in the Sustainable Forestry Subcommittee’s work plan.
<b>Resource Materials used and draft documents</b>	- Subcommittee Meeting Notes - -