



Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission
Rural Economies Workgroup Report
September 22, 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: September 22, 2014

Since reporting on the progress of the Rural Economies Workgroup in July, several Commission members have expressed interest in participating in the workgroup and suggested the involvement of others. Based on the comments received, the draft proposal (see attached) has been revised to include these recommendations.

Through our initial investigations to advance land preservation strategies that couple farming with promoting healthier diets by eating locally grown food, the work of the Food Solutions New England (<http://www.foodsolutionsne.org/>) was identified as a compelling approach that New England used to promote sustainable farming and integrate healthy food into the policy decision-making, as report in "A New England Food Vision." The draft proposal explores many of these concepts. The draft Workgroup proposal also incorporates silvaculture with the promoting outdoor recreation and agri-tourism as a means to improving the statewide economic value of rural areas, increasing the viability of farming, and decreasing the likelihood of some Maryland farms being subdivided into large lot subdivisions. .

As a first step in reconvening the Rural Economies Workgroup, MDP staff (Joe Tassone, Jason Dubow, Dan Rosen and Chuck Boyd) conducted an organizational meeting of state agencies on September 15 to identify specific strategies in the draft proposal that may align with existing state agency initiatives. State agencies were also asked if there were other strategies that they would recommend the Workgroup consider and if there agency resources available to participate in any subsequent research efforts associated with the workgroup. The following is a summary of agency observations made at this meeting:

DNR – DNR is currently working on the valuation of “ecosystem services,” which is a follow up on the *ECOSYSTEM SERVICES WORKING GROUP FINAL REPORT* released by the Governor O’Malley in October 2011. This work has direct applicability with several of the strategies identified in the draft proposal, in particular, strategies #5, #6, and #7.

DBED – Many of the draft proposal strategies align with DBED’s interests, particularly #1 (streamlining of and improving regulations that govern the processing and distribution of food products). Agri-tourism (Action #1b) and recreational tourism (Strategy #7) focus on objectives that are similar to efforts of DBED’s tourism staff in marketing tourism statewide. Based on the *New England Food Vision* approach, it was also suggested that the fishing industry, which is important to both the Eastern Shore and Southern Maryland, may be another strategy that should be considered in the proposal, given the economic impact of fishing in Maryland.

DHCD – DHCD has been asked to coordinate state effort to promote food hubs and is currently involved in helping establish two food hubs in Maryland, so Strategy #4 is particularly relevant to their activities. Similarly, DHCD sponsored legislation this past legislative session to expand opportunities for Neighborhood BusinessWorks funding to areas identified as “food deserts” outside of designated Sustainable Communities.

MDP – MDP noted that “food deserts” can occur in both an urban and rural areas and that addressing the problem of food deserts improves access to healthy local food which could benefit Maryland farmers. MDP, through its Data Center, is involved in reporting and analyzing the 2012 Census of Agriculture, which aligns with Strategy #2.

The agencies at this organizational meeting confirmed their interest in participating with the Workgroup and willingness to lend staff resources toward the work plans that will be developed from the Workgroup’s identified priorities.

A meeting of the full Rural Economies Workgroup will be scheduled in October to review the draft proposal, revise and refine possible strategies and actions to pursue, and determine priorities and next steps of the Workgroup. Detailed work plans will be developed after the Workgroup meeting.

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Rural Economies Workgroup Proposal
Draft Objectives, Strategies, Priority Actions, & Work Plan
(August 26, 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.
- D. Sustainable Rural Recreation: Develop a vision for a sustainable rural recreation economy for Maryland, including policy recommendations for state and local governments. (Rural recreation economy includes activities such as hunting, fishing, tourism, bird watching, hiking, and biking.)

Possible 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?
7. Identify a sustainable rural recreation industry for Maryland

Actions to Pursue

- a. Assess funding options for rural recreation land acquisition, in particular the adequacy of Public Open Space (POS) funding.
- b. Evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy to target funding to support rural recreational activities, examining POS, MALPF, and Rural Legacy funding in conjunction with DNR's GreenPrint and with local zoning, Priority Preservation of Agriculture, and land acquisition strategies.
- c. 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
- Dru Schmidt-Perkins, Commissioner, 1000 Friends of Maryland
- Sandy Olek, Commissioner representing DNR

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

Suggested Participants:

- Ann Jones the director of Partners for Open Space (recommended by Dru Schmidt-Perkins)
- Agricultural Marketing Professionals (see attached list)

Interested Participants:

- Keith D. Hall, Salisbury/Wicomico County, Chief of Long Range and Transportation Planning
- Kurt H. Fuchs, MidAtlantic Farm Credit

State Agency Resources Identified

- Elliott Campbell, DNR, Resource Economist
- John Papagni, DHCD, Division of Neighborhood Revitalization
- Cliff Mitchell, DHMH, Environmental Health Bureau, Prevention & Health Promotion Admin.
- Dr. Donald Shell, DHMH, Center for Chronic Disease and Prevention Control
- Nancy Servatius, DHMH, Environmental Health Bureau
- 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

AMPS (Agricultural Marketing Professionals)
February 2014

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