



Maryland

Department of the Environment

Larry Hogan
Governor

Boyd Rutherford
Lieutenant Governor

Ben Grumbles
Secretary

December 20, 2016

Dear WQTAC members:

Feedback from the last WQTAC meeting on December 12 has alerted me to the need to clarify how the Department of Environment is viewing the committee's role in developing a nutrient trading program in Maryland.

Over the last year, we have been actively seeking input from stakeholders on this and other regulatory initiatives, exploring different approaches and/or possible changes to regulations. We have purposely reached out prior to extensive internal deliberation and decision-making. The nutrient trading concept is so important to us that we worked with the Department of Agriculture (MDA) to establish this diverse committee to advise us on the many details that need to be addressed.

Along those lines, Jim George's presentation on the topic of Aligning for Growth at last Monday's meeting was intended to be a "strawman", squarely facing some tough details that prevented agreement in the first round of discussion of Accounting for Growth. Not wanting a decision to be stymied again, we laid out an interpretation, anticipating challenge and hoping for useful feedback, specific ideas on how to modify the calculations or simply an alternative approach. I cannot urge strongly enough that Committee members submit thoughtful comments by January 13, as we think that will advance the discussion.

In our view, one of the fundamental questions with the States Aligning for Growth policy is how should the program reallocate the load when farmland and forest are developed. Stated another way, how much of the allocation assigned to the pre-development land is allocated to new development. How this question is answered will determine the level of offset required for new development. Any evaluation should be based on good data and sound analysis but also respect other important state policies such as MDA's policy of "no net loss of farmland". These are tough decisions, we want to find some common ground on this issue and we need the Committee to engage in the discussion without presumptions about the outcome.

Thank you again for your participation on this committee and for tackling this issue with MDA and us. We look forward to your continued focus and candor in creating a new program in Maryland.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lynn Buhl".

Lynn Buhl, Director
Water Management Administration

cc: Jim George, Program Administration, Science Services Administration