

Maryland Commission on Climate Change

Mitigation Working Group

March 12, 2019 10:00AM - 1:00PM

Meeting Minutes

Attendance: Secretary Grumbles, Brian Hug, Stuart Clarke, Elizabeth Bunn, Jana Davis, Audrey Lyke, Tom Ballentine, Mike Remsberg, Gerald Jackson, Colleen Turner, Chris Rice, Elliott Campbell, Susan Payne, Tom Walz, Les Knapp, Nancy Kopp (MD State Treasurer, Commission member), Hans Schmidt (MDA, panelist), David Tancabel (DNR/PPRP, panelist), Jason Dubow (MDP, panelist), David Costello (Energize MD), Paul Berman, David Effross (MEA), Kytson McNeil (MEA), Gary Greening (MDOT), Bihui Xu (MDP), Ken Choi (MDP), David Smedick (Sierra Club), Drew Veysey (Georgetown Climate Center), Jeff Silva, John Kumm (EA Engineering, ECO Liaison), Mike Siers (RESI), Catherine Menking (RESI), Cara Martin (Optimized Thermal Systems), Bill Davidson, Lisa Nissley (MDE), Jess Herpel (MDE), Chris Hoagland (MDE), Megan Ulrich (MDE), Joe Lutz (MDE).

Phone: Tom Weissinger, Jim Strong, Joanne Ivancic (Advanced Biofuels USA)

10:00AM MWG Meeting Called to Order

1. Welcome and Introductions

- Stuart Clarke opened by noting the recent discussions at the Commission Steering Committee meeting; how the S.C. hopes to focus the time and attention of the Commission, providing a small number of agenda items for 2019. These include: (1) the draft 40 by 30 Plan; (2) following up on 2018 recommendations; and (3) transportation. He clarified that the 2018 recommendation follow-ups were a request to determine the status, not to pursue the work itself. All three of these priorities will be reflected in the MCCC S.C. response to the working group work plans. He also noted that the minutes of MCCC S.C. meetings are always available on the MCCC website.
- Secretary Grumbles provided two brief updates. (1) Related to this year's emphasis on the transportation sector, MDE and MDOT are continuing to work with the Transportation Climate Initiative (TCI) and Earl Lewis (of MDOT) has recently been selected to be the vice chair on the leadership team. (2) At a recent discussion between the US, Mexico, and Canada, there was a lot of good energy surrounding natural and working lands, and working on solutions with this focus, so today's topic is clearly growing in momentum internationally, and is well-timed.

2. Public Comment

- David Smedick (Sierra Club) - Thanked the State for signing onto the TCI agreement in December, noting that he was looking forward to the upcoming work described. Stated that the absence of a draft GGRA 40 by 30 Plan is concerning, and suggested that the MCCC should be pushing to see it. His main concerns were that (1) if it is released after the General Assembly session, the chance to steer decision-making is lost, as there are multiple climate bills ongoing currently; and (2) we are losing time for input from the public before the final plan is released, depending on the timing of that release.
- Jeff Silva (unaffiliated) - Regarding Topic A2 (metrics to support land-use decisions), suggested including CO₂ emission projections for any development that includes land-use changes, including State contracts. Regarding Topic C (solar power generation facility siting), referenced a Washington Post article, noting that it was a great way for farmers to augment their income; noted that energy storage needs to be built up as well; suggested favored tax status and a focus on providing sources of power to local communities.



3. Panel Questions and Discussion on GHG Emission Reductions from Land Use and Conservation

Panel expert introductions:

- David Tancabel (DNR, Director of PPRP) - Power Plant Research Program (PPRP) does radionuclide monitoring, coordinates socioeconomic and environmental analyses of any new large generation facilities, with many agencies. The Public Service Commission (PSC) makes ultimate decisions on certificates of public convenience and necessity (CPCN). The Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) interim report that PPRP put out last year, three emerging issues were identified as needing to be addressed in the RPS, one of which was land use.
- Hans Schmidt (MDA, Assistant Secretary of Resource Conservation, family farmer) - Provided some statistics: the largest growing sector of new farmers are women; there are 2 million acres in Maryland but 2/3 are rented; the average cost of property is \$6,500, and size 166 acres; average age of farmers is 58. As older farmers are aging out of the business, there's a challenge for new farmers to get land and invest in equipment. MDA and USDA have a variety of programs that offer loans, counseling, etc., including the MALPF and CREP preservation and easement programs.
- Jason Dubow (MDP, Resource Conservation Planning) - MDP is focused on implementing various Maryland laws and executive orders that fall under its purview. They are paying attention to smart growth issues. A Better Maryland initiative focused on a variety of community needs, with the final plan coming out by July. In this plan there is some focus on solar siting and preservation of community needs.

Topics:

- Interrelationship of land use and other forces or factors: What are the roles of market forces, land supply, transportation, and land preservation in influencing land-use patterns?
 - Jason: Growth projections are showing an expected 33 thousand people per year coming into Maryland, with the question being how they are coming and where they will go. Different residents prefer different types of communities and that impacts density and land consumption. Key components tend to be affordable housing near jobs, and affordable transportation; while listening sessions show a lack of affordable housing. All of this affects land-use patterns. New transit, new highways, etc. are all interrelated in these decisions. That is why MDP is focused on working with all other agencies and local government.
 - Hans: In the agricultural community, markets and local infrastructure are what influence land use. There are tight profit margins, and individuals are looking at some of these preservation programs for supplemental income: MALPF, "buy local", roadside stands, etc. Many of these programs additionally have good participation because we live in an environmentally sensitive area.
 - David: Most of the time when PPRP hears about utility-scale solar moving in on agricultural land, it's all about the economics. Land preferred by the developers is open (undeveloped) and therefore readily available for solar siting, and also provides direct access to a transmission line with capacity; characteristics which are found in some agricultural communities. Developers will seek this out and make direct requests to the land-owners.
 - Stuart Clarke asked Jason what opportunities there were to connect local government land-use goals to the State's climate goals, noting particular interest in how their decision-making process can be informed by GHG goals.
 - Jason stated that modeling has been done to analyze regional plans, and there are certain metrics that pick this up.



- Stuart followed up by asking what MDP is doing to ensure that regional planners are familiar with this; and Jason replied that currently nothing is required by law regarding such analyses, but there is more that could be done via law or executive order.
- Stuart asked whether there was more that could be done voluntarily and Jason suggested that possibly something with modeling but he is not sure whether the capability exists currently.
- Audrey Lyke asked about biofuels.
 - Hans stated that there was no specific plan currently and it also depends on whether we are talking about corn into ethanol, or which specific type. For example, animal waste technology projects are currently being developed, both for combustion and anaerobic digestion. UMD Eastern Shore is also researching sugar beets, which have the additional benefit of extracting excess phosphorus from the soil.
 - Chris Rice noted that there were some incentives for biofuels but they have since expired. The RPS does include crop residue in Tier I.
 - Susan Payne mentioned that switch grass was also examined as an option but didn't pan out.
 - Elliott Campbell stated, in response to a follow-up from Audrey, that algae biofuels are currently an unproven technology but there is research being done. Algae do not grow as well in Maryland as they do in Georgia or Florida.
- Tom Weissinger requested more detail on the CO₂ modeling that goes into transportation planning, such as land capacity analysis. Jason stated that some resource planning is done but he is not sure how many jurisdictions are doing it.
- Tom Weissinger asked what needs to be done to fix CREP's declining participation. Hans stated that some landowners who are aging just don't want to handle it possibly being part of the property's sale, in addition to maintenance concerns. They have had internal discussions to see if the State should have their own programs.
- Tom Weissinger asked about how price-sensitive the model was for solar siting. David stated that they have not really done specific analysis but there's no land for which the developers have not been able to meet a price to his knowledge.
- Interrelationship of land use and other forces or factors: What additional metrics are needed to support local government land-use decisions?
 - Jason: There is a need for better information, to inform good planning, such as a database to compile all resources from the state agencies and inform local decisions. This decade we are achieving about 75% compact development.
 - David: We are working to incorporate ecosystem services into energy-development decisions. He clarified, based on a question, that marginal agricultural land is not included in the tool that considers potential agricultural value, but prime land is.
 - Hans: "Down-zoning", or removing local development potential, takes some equity away from the land-owner; this is always an issue among the agricultural community. Land preservation programs are emphasized as an alternative with the opportunity to supplement income, and they have been very popular; the more funding that is available, the more requests they can meet.



- Land practices for preservation/conservation: What approaches/sources of support exist, or need to be developed, to accelerate the adoption of healthy soil practices?
 - Hans: In 2016, this was a joint initiative with the MWG and the ARWG of the Maryland Commission on Climate Change, as well as through the Healthy Soils Consortium. The goal was to create an awareness of the important role that soil health plays in many of our State goals. The bill that passed didn't come with funding, but MDA has gotten a USDA grant focused on the upper eastern shore, where there will be a pilot project to build up roots and sequester carbon (almost 50 thousand acres in that project this year). They are looking to incorporate this into the cover crop program. They have also been working with Dr. Sara Via to determine how much carbon has been sequestered and what the potential is. In particular, they are considering mindful practices with co-benefits. There are a number of ideas/projects in the works which will require additional funding, research, and outreach and education: expanding the healthy soils program, combining GHG reduction goals with WIP goals, carbon/nutrient trading tool, etc. He also clarified, in response to a question, that no specific price has been determined sufficient to incentivize certain measures.
- Land practices for preservation/conservation: Given Maryland's growth projections, what more can we do to plant trees and protect forests while preventing sprawl development and the loss of farmland?
 - Jason: One main thing learned at listening sessions is that we have to strengthen existing communities. The "Reinvest Maryland" toolkit has a variety of best practices listed. There is also a webpage on forest resource planning, as well as zoning tools/planning/tax incentives available.
 - Hans: CREP buffers boarder forest ground, and we also encourage riparian buffers. There is ample opportunity to look more closely at horse-industry best management practices, such as silvopasture.
 - Stuart Clarke asked how close are we to better understanding the scope of possibility on soil carbon sequestration. Hans referred him to the supplemental material (posted under meeting materials on the MCCC website); noting that they are close to getting the report finalized.
 - Dr. Sara Via added that they estimated 7 million megatons (MMT) already sequestered, but there is not always enough money to pay people to engage in the practices. There is a natural and working lands group which will be working with Howard County specifically. She also clarified, after a question from Stuart, that they project more than 10 MMT over 2020-2030, including some continued benefits from existing projects.
- Solar power generation facility siting: What approaches exist, or need to be developed, to accommodate solar generation within both urban and rural settings?
 - David: There's a lot that exists, and there's a process that counties and the public have a lot of input into, looking at what the PSC has to review. Conditions can be put on projects but they need to be defensible and reasonable, meaning there must be laws, policies, or county regulations to point to.
 - Hans: We need to be mindful of not reducing the productivity of agriculture, and sensitive to land-owners' rights to make decisions about their land.
 - Jason: Maryland should try to learn more about what other states are doing for urban solar energy.



- Secretary Grumbles noted that there are a lot of opportunities to balance and manage these tradeoffs, and that is important; there's a bill pending currently in the General Assembly which has a lot of support.
- Stuart asked whether there are any obvious areas on which the State needs to speak more clearly.
 - David responded that the PPRP follows the confines of the State law, and the PSC has to give due consideration to compatibility with a county's comprehensive plan. County involvement is key to ensuring that this happens, by engaging and keeping their plans updated.
 - Les Knapp noted that everything touches on local government, such as via MACo and MML. (1) There has been a lot of good information brought up here but we're barely scratching the surface. The planning process needs to be *flexible, effective, practical* and *sustainable*. (2) Regarding solar siting, it seems to be that there is a utility-scale gold rush, perhaps a solar bubble? Development is great as long as local government is consulted and involved.
- Solar power generation facility siting: How can we best achieve our renewable energy production goals at various levels of power generation, especially via other means than large-scale energy-production facilities?
 - David: It all comes down to the economics; and incentives could be an important way to balance unfavorable economics. Maryland has a net metering program currently, as well as other incentives, but there's still more to be done. Other things to look at include the capacity market at PJM, and transmission.

4. Continued/New Business – MWG Members – 25 minutes

- Brian provided information on the additional summer meetings which have been reserved, and stated that the order of the meetings that has been set currently is Buildings in April, GGRA in May, and Transportation in June.
- There was no additional business from MWG members

1:00PM Meeting Adjourned

