Final Draft

Metropolitan Washington Regional Tree Canopy Workgroup

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
777 North Capitol Street, NE, Suite 300
Washington, DC
Friday, February 10th, 2012
Meeting Summary

Invitees Present
Alice Ewen, USFS Urban and Community Forestry Program
Katherine Nelson, M-NCPPC- MC
CJ Lammers, M-NCPPC- PG - Planning
Anne Hairston Strang, MDNR-Forest Service
Michael Knapp, Fairfax County Urban Forestry (Workgroup Chair)
Jim McGlone, Virginia Dept. of Forestry
Larry Finch Chair, NOVA Forestry Roundtable – Urban Forestry Commission, Arlington County
Gary Allen, Center for Chesapeake Communities
Monica Lear, DC UFA
Wayne Noll, City of Rockville
Steve Saari, DC DOE
Marian Honeczy, MDNR Forest Service
Emma Gutzler, Fairfax County
Laura Miller, Montgomery County

Invited, but not Present
Todd Bolton, Takoma Park
Ray Bahr, Maryland Department of the Environment
Ronald Tuttle, Fairfax County
Danielle Wynne, Fairfax County Stormwater Planning Division
Keith Cline, USFS
Erica Bannerman, City of Alexandria
Dan Barry, DC DOE

Council of Government (COG) Staff Present
Brian LeCouteur - DEP
John Galli - DEP
Jeff King - DEP
Steve Bieber - DEP
Amanda Campbell - DEP
Stuart Freudberg - DEP
Phong Trieu - DEP
Gareth James - DTP

1. **Welcome and Opening Remarks (Mike Knapp, Gary Allen, Brian LeCouteur)**

   The meeting began at 11:13 am.
   Michael Knapp welcomed members and thanked them for their participation, and thanked COG for meeting support.

2. **Group Introductions**

   All attendees introduced themselves.

3. **Discussion and Approval of December 7, 2010 Meeting Summary (Mike Knapp/All)**

   Mike Knapp, Brian LeCouteur, Gary Allen, Jeff King and Amanda Campbell briefly summarized agenda items and discussion at the December 7th, 2011 meeting. The group's work can support air quality, water quality, climate, and other parks and natural resources objectives. Desired outcomes were discussed, including structure of a plan, demographics to address, stakeholders, management issues, land development, data, and funding challenges. Within COG, the group's work is motivated by air quality through the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC) and the development of the State Implementation Plan (SIP), open space goals in Region Forward vision plan, National Capital Region Climate Action Plan, and the Climate, Energy and Environment Policy Committee (CEEPC). Water-related committees will also be interested in workgroup outcomes.

   The Meeting Summary was approved with the following correction: the amount of tree canopy gains needed for measurable improvement to modeled air quality is 5% *increase in existing tree cover* (not 5% of total land mass).

   Since the December 7th meeting, Charles County officially joined the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments.

   Jeff King noted that COG staff briefed CEEPC the on the formation of the Regional Tree Canopy Workgroup at CEEPC's January 25th meeting. Stuart Freudberg expressed the hope that the group could be prepared to present an outline at the next CEEPC meeting on March 28th, 2012. At a minimum, the status of the group's work could be presented. The first task is to establish current tree cover and policies in the region. The second task is to recommend strategies to increase tree canopy. As in Region Forward, the Work Group could decide to recommend certain goals or strategies be adopted voluntarily by COG member jurisdictions. This involves a commitment to best efforts by signing members. Recommendations should educate policymakers on viable strategies and how tree canopy addresses various concerns, such as stormwater and climate change. Chair Knapp said that he hopes to have a draft report prepared by May, 2012.

Gary Allen reported that the Baltimore Metropolitan Council is coordinating a parallel tree canopy planning effort. The Baltimore group is utilizing National Science Foundation ecological services studies and exploring innovative marketing practices. Marian Honeczy noted that one study in New York City researched needs of existing tree-planting groups to focus their marketing efforts.

The Work Group discussed member concerns related to achieving commitments to quantified goals from local governments. Brian LeCouteur advised that the Tree Canopy recommendations be consistent with local plans. CJ Lammers requested clarification on the COG policy approval process.

4. **Air Quality and COG Department of Transportation Updates (Gareth James and Jeff King)**

Jeff King shared that the region will likely be designated 'marginal' under the SIP, which means that the region is on its way to meeting air quality standards. 'Marginal' regions do not need to submit a full SIP. Air quality agencies are reluctant to submit voluntary measures for credit under the SIP since states must compensate if local jurisdictions fail to implement the measures. On the other hand, it is possible that in the future EPA will tighten air quality standards, which would necessitate that all measures are maximized, including tree canopy strategies. In addition, pollution transport from the region may spur representatives in Maryland to request that agencies voluntarily reduce transportation emissions by 10%. Tree canopy strategies may be helpful in this context.

Gareth James from COG's Department of Transportation Planning shared an update on the Transportation Planning Board's regional priorities planning process and how it integrates with Region Forward goals. A short list of twenty to thirty performance measures is being developed, with tree canopy among the measures. COG Transportation staff will continue to communicate with Jeff King (COG DEP staff) regarding the priorities planning process, and invite Chair Michael Knapp to participate in a listening session on the matter.

5. **Overview of DC UFA & COG Regional Tree Canopy Analysis Mapping Project**

Mr. LeCouteur provided an overview of COG's work on a regional tree canopy analysis project under a grant from the District of Columbia's Urban Forestry Administration through the U.S. Forest Service. The analysis will use National Agricultural Imagery Program (NAIP) imagery for the study and will include the Anacostia Watershed, portions of DC, Arlington and Alexandria at 1 meter resolution. Data will be comparable from 2006 and 2011 with an expected project completion date of late fall of 2012. Each jurisdiction in the study area will have its own separate report. COG is also funding a 30 meter resolution Landsat imagery analysis for the entire COG region to update its 2000 regional green infrastructure map.

6. **Discussion of the Elements for a Proposed Regional Tree Canopy Strategy Report (All)**
   The group utilized the Anacostia Watershed Forest Management and Protection Strategy report outline as a starting point for discussion. The following topics were discussed:

   CEEPC Needs:

   - Baseline tree canopy and tree canopy policy information
   - Broad recommendations, with a performance metric attached
   - Education on tree's ecological, social and economic benefits
   - Explanation of how strategies tie into different regulatory arenas

   Audience:

   - COG Committees: CEEPC, MWAQC, ACPAC, Water Resources Technical Committee, possibly the TPB and Region Forward Coalition
   - General: policymakers, senior staff, foresters, stormwater specialists, climate action planners, planners of land use, transportation, parks and natural resources

   Suggestions for Workgroup's Activities Purpose:

   - Overall: Preserve, enhance, restore
   - Stabilize forest loss
   - Justify the need for funding to support forest maintenance
   - No specific goal: identify management techniques and a variety of recommended strategies, based on existing conditions.
   - Specific goal: based on existing conditions, define a specific numerical region-wide goal that jurisdictions would agree to meet.
   - Coordinate tracking databases and routine data gathering
   - Produce something valuable and grounded in reality

   Suggestions for Format, Timeframe, and Process:

   - Length of report: Shorter executive summary or policy document verses longer technical report
   - Feasibility of developing a full plan given available resources: A full plan, although potentially beneficial, is not required
   - Level of detail needed: Less for policymakers, allowing implementation by multiple jurisdictions
   - Staging: a more detailed plan could be developed at a later date
   - Present baseline to CEEPC and ask for direction, such as whether or not to produce a plan
   - Create baseline, suggest goal to jurisdictions for feedback on implementation options
   - Whether or not we will pursue the feasibility of increasing tree canopy by 5% as a major focus

Suggestions for Content/Research/Data:

- Background/Introduction
    - Enumerate broad ecological benefits
    - Identify principle drivers
- Existing conditions (baseline)
    - COG current information on land use pattern change
    - Species, age, condition etc. Are trees 50 or 20 years old?
    - Are forests regenerating?
    - Which forest categories to include (upland, riparian, mature hardwood, urban): are categories relevant for policymakers?
- Addressing issues and challenges
    - Forest health and technical management issues: Asian longhorn beetle, walnut cankers, invasive plants, deer
    - Differentiate stormwater specific recommendations
    - Form strategies without concrete numbers or goals—ex. Highlight best practices instituted in each jurisdiction underway
    - Describe available management and policy tools to stabilize loss.

- Implementation, outreach, and funding
    - Work with tree-related stakeholder groups to determine needs

- A mechanism to track progress over time
- Identify which maps, tables, analyses to include

Other Attributes Suggestions:

- Not to duplicate current efforts, such as AWFMPS
- Provide guidance to jurisdictions, but allow jurisdictions develop the details of implementation
- Define 'where we are, where we'd like to be,' set a goal, and articulate how that might be achieved through annual steps
- Not too long, but include important forest management components
- Broad enough to get agreement from jurisdictions
- 20 to 30 year planning horizon with interim milestones

Suggestions for a Regional Goal:

- All jurisdictions adopt a tree canopy goal
- All jurisdictions adopt a prioritization strategy for tree protection
- All jurisdictions engage in green infrastructure planning
- All jurisdictions have some type of urban forestry program

Two types of documents were proposed. The first is a policy briefing with recommendations for CEEPC. The second is a more detailed management strategy for practitioners. An extensive report could provide the foundation to identify management needs and implementation strategies.

Participants generally agreed to at least develop a policy document. A more technical report could follow, with careful scoping given available resources. Participants voted unanimously to identify strategies that support tree canopy protection due to the complexities and cost of developing a target-specific percentage goal.

7. **Update on Available Resources (All)**

   Postponed for future discussion due to time constraints.

8. **Discussion of Workgroup Membership & Stakeholder Participation (All)**

   Postponed until next meeting due to time constraints.

9. **Next Steps: Review of Action Items**

   Homework assignment for the Workgroup:

   1. Available resources
   2. Comment on parts of the sample outline and submit to Brian LeCouteur (blecouteur@mwcog.org) by Mid March 2012.

10. **Adjournment: 2:35pm**