

MEETING SUMMARY
NC Mountain Resources Commission
1:00 – 3:00 PM, February 17, 2012
Bent Creek Experimental Forest
1577 Brevard Road, Asheville, NC

The mission of the NC Mountain Resources Commission is to take care of our natural resources to enhance and sustain quality of life and ensure the long term health of our region and our people.

Members Present: David Gantt, Harris Prevost, Mike Butrum, Jim Coman, Jay Leutze, Max Hopper, Charles Vines, Bob Shepherd, Barbara Volk, Jason Love, George Santucci, Julie Mayfield, Angie Chandler

Others Present: Judy Francis David Ray, Rep. Rapp, Forrest Gilliam, Rick Wooten, Karen Smith, Jim Fox, Eric Romaniszyn, Susan Fox, Bill Eaker, Linda Giltz, Todd Cherry, Marvin Hoffman, DJ Gerken, Mary Carol Koester, Michelle Price

Welcome and Comments from Special Guests

Chairman Gantt opened the meeting at 1:15 PM and welcomed all in attendance. He recognized Rep. Ray Rapp who mentioned that the transportation committee meets next Tuesday to discuss license plate issue. He is also looking for ways to save money and keep facilities open at the same time.

Forrest Gilliam, Governor Perdue's western field officer, thanked the MRC members for their work and offered to assist them in any way he could.

About the Bent Creek Experimental Forest

Susan Fox from the U.S. Forest Service, gave brief overview of facility and the research agenda that is being conducted here. She also spoke briefly about the Forest Sustainability Report Card project, and thanked the MRC and TAC for their work to expand the project.

Approval of December 9, 2012 Meeting Summary

Chairman Gantt asked everyone to review the summary of the December 9, 2012 meeting. Jim Coman made a motion to approve the summary as presented. Max Hopper gave a second to the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Discussion & Approval of Strategic Planning Work Session Outcomes

Chairman Gantt asked everyone to look over the summary of the January strategic work session. Judy pointed out the three focus areas that the break-out groups reached consensus on.

The three focus priorities are: branding the MRC, Complete the index project and promote the tool to local and state elected officials, and investigate the feasibility of establishing a partnership with a western 4-year college to develop a course about planning and development in the mountain region.

In addition to the three focus areas for the current work year, there were a couple changes to the five-year goals that were agreed upon at the work session. Those changes included: remove references to the WADe Program since that no longer exists, and develop a “Shade Your Stream” initiative to inform landowners about the benefits and techniques to protect riparian areas. Max Hopper said he would like to have the numbering system of the five-year goals clarified to make them easier to follow. Judy will change the numbering system and resend the spreadsheet to the members.

Bob Shepherd mentioned that there needed to be a correction in the summary. He was referring to the Mountain Area Legislative Caucus (MALC), not the Mountain Area Caucus (MAC). They are actually two different groups. Bob Shepherd made a motion to approve the summary with the correction noted. George Santucci gave a second to the motion and it was approved unanimously.

The group then discussed how the three identified priorities could be achieved, and there was strong consensus in the group that working through committee structure would be the best approach. Harris Prevost said that the legislative committee will coordinate with Judy and the staff at Grandfather Mountain to plan the event for legislators on June 15. Bob Shepherd said all members should make personal contacts and outreach personally with legislators they knew to ensure good attendance from elected officials. Harris said the Speaker of the House and President Pro Tem should be invited. Judy said she would contact the members of the legislative committee and set up a conference call to they can begin planning for the event.

The group discussed how they could enhance awareness about the MRC through presentations about the report card project. Mike Butrum said it would be possible to apply for \$15K from National Board of Realtors. He said he and Judy could develop a proposal and apply. We may be able to get the money to develop a logo. Angie stressed that the group just needs a very basic logo and color scheme for PowerPoint frames. Judy will circulate logo designs previously rejected so they can be reviewed again. Judy will coordinate with each committee Chair to schedule timeline for their meetings and arrange logistics.

Jay Leutze said he would like to reword Goal B on the first page of the five-year goals to have it read more logically. He will bring revised language back for approval at the next meeting.

Committee Assignments

Chairman Gantt asked everyone to review the handout provided that listed the proposed committee assignments. Judy reminded everyone that Wayne Abele had to reign from the MRC due to health issues. The Western Piedmont Council of Governments will be appointing Merlin Perry from the City of Lenoir to replace him. Jim Coman asked to be taken off the Outreach Committee and placed on the Legislative Committee. Chairman Gantt agreed to the changes and Judy said she will contact the chair of each group to set up meetings for each of them.

WNC Vitality Index Project

Jim Fox provided a PowerPoint presentation to update the MRC members on TAC activities. He thanked the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area and the U.S. Forest Service Southern Research Station for funding the project. Jay Leutze said he would like the TAC to be active with the MRC committees to develop outreach presentations about the project. Some information that was covered in the presentation included the following points:

- 162 metrics are included
- The print copy is 165 pages
- The on-line screen size is scalable to smart phones, tablets, computer screen
- The interactive map viewer is quite easy to use
- 95 maps are included in the project
- The project is delivered on time and within budget
- Provided employment for two UNC-A students

Jim also displayed select information on employment figures, housing affordability, public health, workforce statistics, education attainment, water usage, and income levels. He also discussed how the data was being used in the Land of Sky project, and how data could be downloaded and depicted in poster format. The MRC “logo” is depicted in bold letters to brand the product as theirs.

He then explained there were still some questions / issues to be resolved, and the MRC responded in the following ways

- How do you want to link to main website? – With a link from the MRC webpage
- Contact information? – anonymous link to RENCI staff for technical issues. Policy questions could be routed to Judy or the Legislative Committee.
- Tracking usage – Utilize Google analytics tool.
- Update frequency – Varies by metric. Some will not need any updates, and others will need annual updates.

Jim also discussed that there needs to be a decision about the name of the project. There was consensus to name the project the Western NC Vitality index. Leaving the word sustainability out of the title and preliminary pages will prevent misunderstanding and erroneous associations with issues receiving negative political influence at this point.

Max Hopper asked if there will be a FAQs section or tutorial section to teach people how to use the index. Jim said the best way to get people using this is to put presentations together and do demonstrations of how the tool can be used. The tool has no “solutions” or “policies” – it is just data that people can use to make their own decisions. So how do we “judge “ if we’re doing good or bad? Grades are value judgments, and the TAC can’t do that. That information has to come from the MRC itself.

Julie Mayfield asked if the members should be drawing people’s attention to certain findings as part of the presentations that will be developed? Jim said yes, and the presentations can be

tailored to be “topic-focused” or “place-focused”. Most in the audience will absorb this through storytelling.

Mike Butrum said the word “vitality” begs the question, what is it? Also, what are the threats? What is in trouble? How can we make them better and “alive”. Jim said these points can be partially addressed in presentations, but those topics may be viewed differently by various audiences.

Bob Shepherd asked if the index can be shown to legislators on June 15. Judy said that would be part of the agenda for the meeting.

Max Hopper stated that the data is all from legitimate and from reliable sources. Why can't we make value judgments? Put this out there and make sure people are ok with the data. Once that has been accomplished, then we can draw some conclusions and talk about it at that point, as a separate step. He mentioned he had discussed the index AS PART OF A regional forum presentation last week. The audience was very impressed. Other people want a tool like this. The NC Association of County Commissioners wants to work on a tool like this. They could potentially fund it as well.

Jim focused on a county to show as an example. Harris said he thought that it would be good to package several counties to show legislators. They would be able to relate to it more that way. George Santucci said the tool can also show regional scope to local decision-makers. Multiple scales can be demonstrated. Julie Mayfield said the legislative and outreach committees need to meet with TAC members to begin developing presentations.

Chairman Gantt asked the MRC members if they had any other comments for the TAC, and if they were ready to approve their efforts and formally accept the product. The committees can begin developing the roll out process and place-specific presentations. Jay Leutze mentioned that the tool could be used to discuss the need for model ordinances in some cases.

Jim said the TAC could assist in developing some initial presentations for April 20 meeting. The outreach and education and legislative committees will meet prior to that to guide presentation development. Judy will arrange for the committee to meet and / or conference call. She will share the information with Jim so they can have drafts ready for the April meeting. Those committees will also attend the April TAC meeting.

Bob Shepherd made a motion to accept the index with the refinements discussed, and to direct the TAC to assist with draft presentation preparation with directions from the legislative and outreach committees. Draft presentations will be reviewed at the April meeting. The motion received a second from George Santucci and was approved unanimously.

Other Business

Judy said the locations of the August and October meetings will be switched. The August meeting will be in Bakersville, and the October meeting will be at Lake Tahoma. This is necessary because the Lake Tahoma facility does not have air conditioning.

Chairman Gantt explained that Harris Prevost has asked to step down as Vice-Chair of the MRC due to some personal issues. He said that he would like to place Mike Butrum's name out for consideration as Vice-Chair. Jim Coman made a motion that Mike Butrum be the new Vice-Chair of the MRC. Bob Shepherd gave a second to the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Judy reminded the MRC that the Chairman must approve leadership positions according to the recently approved operating procedures. The TAC has asked that Jim Fox be reappointed as the TAC Chairman and that Eric Romaniszyn be approved as Vice-Chair. The recommendation was approved.

Future Meetings & Locations

April 20 in Brevard / Transylvania County

June 15 at Grandfather Mountain / Avery County

August 17 in Bakersville / Mitchell County

October 19 at Lake Tahoma / McDowell County

December 14 at Chimney Rock SP / Rutherford County

Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:25 PM