# MEETING SUMMARY NC Mountain Resources Commission 1:00 – 3:00 PM, May 20, 2011 Columbus Town Hall 95 Walker Street, Columbus, 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, Wayne Abele, Harris Prevost, Charles Vines, Rodney Locks, Tom Massie, Angie Chandler, Maxine Dalton, Bob Shepherd, Jay Leutze

Others Present: Jonathon Kanipe, Judy Francis, Juleigh Sitton, Ryan Whitson, Michelle Lovejoy, Valerie True, Mike Butrum, Juleigh Sitton, DJ Gerken, Rick Wooten, Paul Muller, Jim Fox

#### Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Gantt opened the meeting at 1:00 PM and recognized Jonathon Kanipe, the Columbus Town Manager. He also thanked the Town of Columbus and Polk County for hosting lunch. Mr. Kanipe welcomed the Commission to Columbus and thanked them for doing such a good job for the western region.

#### Comments from Special Guests & Public

Juleigh Sitton provided greetings from Governor's Office and thanked the Commission for all their work. Michelle Lovejoy said that Lynn Sprague has been instrumental in developing the Mill Spring Community Center with grants from the Clean Water Management Trust Fund, which has provided a number of grants on the Pacolet River for restoration activities.

#### Approval of March 18, 2011 Meeting Summary

Charles Vines made a motion to approve the summary of the March 18, 2011 meeting. Rodney Locks provided a second to the motion and it was approved unanimously.

#### Update from the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

DJ Gerken provided an overview of the final slope recommendations from the TAC. He gave a brief synopsis of the extensive process the TAC used to develop the recommendations as they were charged by the MRC. The recommendations are:

- The landslide hazard mapping program should be accelerated to accomplish mapping for two
  counties per year. Please note that NCDENR staff was not involved in deliberating this
  recommendation. There are a number of local governments using the information that has already
  been compiled by the program. We recommended an acceleration of the pace of the program,
  however it does not seem that there is legislative support for that.
- 2. Raise awareness of slope related issues in the development community and among landowners and homebuyers by disseminating the data generated through the landslide hazard program., The implications of losing the program are great, not just from the maps, but from emergency response as well.

- 3. Geotechnical analysis should be conducted for land disturbing development in high risk areas and on slopes greater than 40%. Details about who actually does the assessment and through what mechanism is not what we are here to recommend. That is where a more thorough investigation should occur.
- 4. Develop a resource manual for local governments in western North Carolina about slope development issues. Such a resource might include scientific data, best management practices, and other relevant information that would be useful for local governments, landowners, and developers.
- 5. Foster a best management procedures education program for builders, landowners, and local government. This could be done in partnership with many of the non-governmental organizations and private sectors firms in the region.

Harris Prevost asked why the legislature is cutting the program. DJ said he thought it was due to the budget shortfall and the lack of federal match money. Rodney Locks asked for an update on the current slope related legislation. DJ said a bill has been introduced, but the issue is just not getting traction. Maxine Dalton thanked the TAC for working on the recommendations and asked if the landslide program could be put back in budget. Bob Shepherd said that the program was specifically targeted to be cut, so it would probably not be possible to put it back in the budget. Mike Butrum said he worked on Land of Sky Regional Council slope report project and said the TAC report is a great summary. The budget is bad, but that does not eliminate the need. Why not have the MRC write a bill and let them fill in the blanks, then take it to the County Commissioners since the state legislature is not prepared to move.

Maxine Dalton asked how the education programs would actually be used. Mike Butrum replied that he tried to do it through AB Tech, but they are busy with other priorities. He said that nobody is actually developing now, so we need local governments to "push people" through it via the permitting process. Most developers want to do the right things, though there are a few rogue developers. It is individual homeowners that are the real problem. They often don't know what they are doing. Tom Massie said the recommendations are very positive and should be adopted. We could modify the first bullet point to include comments about when economic conditions improve. Jay Leutze said that there are a number of action steps that could be considered and this should be more thoroughly discussed at the next MRC meeting once the legislative issue is further clarified. Harris Prevost agreed, but said he did not want this information to sit on the shelf. Maxine said she thought now is the time to move forward because there is still a slim chance the landslide program could be put back in the budget. Wayne Abele said he did not think it will be anything the legislature will focus on because they have so many other issues they are dealing with. Jay said the timeliness issue is not pertinent because no bills would come out of these recommendations anyway. Tom Massie disagreed and said that Jackson County is now part way through the mapping process and they need the information because it's a public safety issue. Rodney Locks pointed out that no one wants to see the TAC members themselves get caught up in the politics of the issue. We should accept their recommendations and then amend or act of them as the Commission sees fit. Jay Leutze said that the TAC provides excellent information and adds legitimacy to the MRC. David Gantt said that local governments need to have the information also. Charles Vines said not every recommendation could be acted on now, but others actually could be. Angie Chandler said the MRC could accept the recommendations and then charge the legislative committee with determining the best way to proceed. It is not necessary to directly involve the legislature now. Rodney Locks made a motion to accept the recommendations. Charles Vines gave a second to the motion and it was approved unanimously. David Gantt said there needs to be some wordsmithing on a couple of the recommendations. Maxine asked when she could circulate the recommendations to local governments. Jay Leutze said we can share the information and remind them we a resource for them once the

wordsmithing is completed. Bob Shepherd made a motion to have the legislative committee suggest amendments to the recommendations and place the issue on the next Commission agenda. Angie Chandler gave a second to the motion. Chairman Gantt called the question and received 10 ayes and 1 nay (Dalton). The motion was approved.

Jim Fox next gave an update presentation on the report card project. He said that the product was not being developed to give ultimate answers, but rather it is a "road map" for how to find the best courses of action. A schedule has been developed and a first draft will be ready in the Fall. Angie Chandler said it will look at the health of cultural resources, including five focus areas that are agriculture, craft, music, natural resources, and Cherokee heritage. It will also have information about the economic impact of tourism on the region. This will help us assess impacts of budget cuts too. Harris Prevost said we should invite the legislators, both state and national, to the October meeting so they can see what we're working on. Maybe we could have the meeting at the parkway destination center in October. Angie Chandler and David Gantt will work with the report card technical committee.

### **MRC Activities**

Judy Francis briefly recapped the accomplishments of the MRC during the last 12 months. They are: orientation for members, obtained grants from the Community Foundation, the Blue Ridge National heritage Area, and the U.S. Forest Service Southern Research Station, organized four working committees, developed Commission webpage, submitted all required documentation to the state ethics board, held strategic planning work session, developed mission statement, selected TAC members, undertaken review of the slope development issue, passed resolutions of support for purchase of conservation land in Transylvania County and continued funding for NC's conservation trust funds, and developed / delivered information presentations to four of the five Councils of Government in the region and other interested civic groups and organizational conferences.

#### **Committee Reports**

Fund Raising Committee: George Santucci was unable to attend the meeting and there is no report.

Administrative Committee: Max Hopper has sent out a draft of the Internal Operating Procedures and has requested comments. David Gantt asked everyone to look at the rules and prepare to discuss them at the next meeting.

Outreach & Education Committee: David Gantt said the outreach presentations have gone well. All the COGs have been visited except Region C. Bob said he will call Jim Edwards and coordinate with Max Hopper to get that presentation done.

Legislative Committee: Jay Leutze provided an update on legislative activities in Raleigh. The House budget passed. In it, NCDENR facing significant cuts and layoffs and they will probably be facing major structural changes. The Senate budget is not out yet. The House budget also has minimal appropriates for the state's conservation trust funds. There is also a consolidation bill introduced that would put all the trust funds together. That is probably headed for a study commission. Funding for Advantage West has also been eliminated.

## **NEXT MEETING**

David Gantt announced that the next meeting will be on August 26, 2011 at a location to be determined in Ashe County.

# <u>Adjourn</u>

There being no further business, Rodney Locks made a motion to adjourn. Maxine Dalton gave a second to the motion and it was approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 3:10 PM.