

**MEETING SUMMARY**  
**NC Mountain Resources Commission**  
**1:00 – 3:00 PM, December 9, 2011**  
**Blue Ridge Parkway Headquarters**  
**Parkway Mile Post 384, 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 in Attendance: David Gantt, Harris Prevost, Jay Leutze, George Santucci, James Coman, Julie Mayfield, Charles Vines, Rodney Locks, Barbara Volk, Max Hopper, Bob Shepherd, Wayne Abele, Bill Gibson, Jason Love, Angie Chandler. Mike Butrum

Others: Linda Giltz, Jim Fox, Susan Weatherford, Carolyn Dougherty, Rick Wooten, Bill Yarborough, David Ray, Marvin Hoffman, Forrest Gilliam, John Mitchell, Ryan Sherby, Karen Smith, Ray Rapp, Phil Francis, Robb Bell, Rep. Ray Rapp, Judy Francis, Freddie Harrell

**Welcome and Comments from Special Guests**

Chairman Gantt welcomed all in attendance and asked everyone to introduce themselves. A special welcome was extended to the three new appointments to the Commission: Julie Mayfield, Mike Butrum, and Jason Love. The Chairman also recognized Rep. Ray Rapp and John Mitchell from Sen. Burr's office.

**About the Blue Ridge Parkway**

Chairman Gantt then recognized the Superintendent of the Blue Ridge Parkway, Phil Francis. He said there was a lot going on with parkway activities. He said he has no idea of what is happening in Washington, DC. The parkway budget had a 3% cut last year, and more is expected this year. They will probably have to close some facilities. There is now a draft General Management Plan that is in the comment period. It's the parkway's first general management plan. The most controversial part is erroneous information out there about cycling on the parkway. He anticipates losing more staff positions, so they are not looking to add more activities. The preferred alternative focuses on working with local communities, and has a 20 year time horizon. They have a \$16 million budget and are the catalyst for \$2+ billion in local revenues and economic development. He said there is a need to make sure that the integrity of the parkway watershed is maintained, because inappropriate development hurts us and you.

Chairman Gantt said that the superintendent is a visionary and we're glad he's here. He has a lot of tough calls to make these days.

Rep. Rapp commented briefly about the pending legislation regarding specialty license plates. The eventual outcome is still unknown. The discussions have been very convoluted and it's a very sticky situation.

### **Approval of October 21, 2011 Meeting Summary**

Chairman Gantt asked the Commission members to please review the summary that was circulated earlier and state any changes they would like to see. James Coman made a motion to accept the summary as presented. Barbara Volk gave a second to the motion and it was approved unanimously.

### **Discussion of Legislative Contacts**

Jay Leutze, the Chair of the MRC Legislative Committee, began the discussion by stating that the MRC is still in its infancy and working to establish communication channels with General Assembly. There is a lot happening on the federal level. Sen. Burr was recently at the Roan Highlands and has stated his support for conservation many times. The federal budget has been operating under continuing resolutions for some time. The Land & Water Conservation Fund is getting full support from Sen. Burr and now Sen. Hagan. The state budget has changed dramatically with the leadership transition. The next budget bill will move quickly. It will probably be presented in May. We need to see an increase in funding for conservation and the trust funds. There is not much support for combining trust funds, as was discussed previously.

Chairman Gantt asked members who have spoken directly with legislators to comment on what they may have found out. Mike Butrum said he was told to talk through Bruce Goforth to get information to House Speaker Tillis. Charles Vines spoke with Rep. Gillespie and Sen. Hise. They told him that meetings of the western delegation would be the best place to disseminate recommendations. It would be best to do it all at once so the particulars are clear. Rep. Gillespie said he will help the MRC set that up. Jay Leutze said that's great news and we should be engaged in constructive discussion like that on a whole range of issues. George Santucci said he had spoken with Rep. Jordan who told him that meetings of the western delegation would be preferable to disseminate information from the MRC. Chairman Gantt said he had spoken with Rep. McGrady. There used to be a mountain caucus that needs to be revitalized. Rep. Ray Rapp cautioned the group to make sure recommendations are clear and firm before having open-ended discussion. Keep the agenda limited to what is feasible. Jay Leutze said it might be better to go to Raleigh to have the meeting. Harris Prevost asked if the group would just include the MRC or would this be part of a larger group meeting? Jay said he thought it should just be the MRC now and maybe add more later when relationships are established. Max Hopper said he was concerned about diffusing the issues while waiting for the western caucus to reinvigorate itself. Jay reminded everyone that the MRC was created to develop constructive dialog. Chairman Gantt said he will work with Jay Leutze and Jim Fox to develop a presentation about our recommendations that is concise and direct. Rep. Rapp said the MRC should not try to restart the western caucus, but should just focus on the mission statement and not get caught up in the conflicts in the legislature. Chairman Gantt concluded the discussion by saying he would work with Jim Fox, Judy Francis, and Jay Leutze to develop a strategy for this discussion and will report back to the MRC at the January work session.

### **Update on WNC Sustainability & Vitality Index**

Jim Fox, Chairman of the TAC, provided a background of the report card project and PowerPoint presentation for the MRC members. The intent behind the project is to support the MRC

mission statement by providing information about regional resiliency and vulnerability. This is an MRC product, so the TAC needs to get honest feedback from MRC members. There are four primary sections: Natural, Human, Built, and Economic environments. He provided an over view of the various metrics. There are approximately 100 of them incorporated into the report. The MRC needs to write a 200-300 word Executive Summary. Jim Fox said that the TAC members and his staff have put together some very interesting data that is relevant to measuring sustainability in the region. Chairman Gantt said it would be good to have more specific economic data about each product if that information is available. Quantify what can be quantified. Angie Chandler said the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area is working with the NC Department of Cultural Resources to begin doing that for the arts. Rodney Locks and Max Hopper both mentioned the need for dollar amounts to quantify the metrics. That is what local decision makers are looking for.

Rob Bell said there is a study going on now regarding the region's music heritage. He is also working on breakdown of creative occupations. Jim Fox said that not everything can be described in dollars and cents. He gave the example of working for a smaller salary in order to live in a beautiful place. Max Hopper asked if a tutorial or a wiki will be one of the component of the website because there is so much information there to go through. Jim Fox said that monitoring a wiki would be difficult. A tutorial may be doable, but neither was planned for this first release. Harris Prevost said that the MRC should identify the top five regional issues and point out the information related to them in this report card that decision makers should consider. Judy Francis said that could be incorporated into the executive summary. Mike Butrum asked Jim Fox if there were any issues that stood out unexpectedly while the report was being developed. Jim said that poverty rates were higher than he realized they were. Energy usage by type was also much different in the west than in the rest of the state.

Chairman Gantt concluded the discussion by reminding every member to review the website at: <http://dev.nemac.org/mrc/> Susan Weatherford told the members to include "what they need" into their critique. The last deadline to get comments in is Friday, January 6, 2012. Members should send comments to Judy Francis who will forward them to the NEMAC staff.

### **Other Business**

Judy Francis reminded the MRC members that their strategic planning work session will be held on Friday, January 20, 2012 from 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM. The meeting will be in the Asheville area. She will provide a survey and more specific details when they are available.

Bill Yarborough said that \$80K was awarded from the Pigeon River Fund to continue the landslide hazard mapping in Haywood County. They still need \$50K to get the program underway.

### **Adjourn**

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