

MEETING SUMMARY
NC Mountain Resources Commission
1:00 – 3:00 PM, August 24, 2012
Historic Mitchell County Courthouse
Bakersville, 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, Barbara Volk, Julie Mayfield, Mike Butrum, Charles Vines, Jason Love, George Santucci, Robert Shepherd, Harris Prevost, Max Hopper, Jay Leutze

Others Present: Judy Francis, Bill Eaker, Eric Romaniszyn, Jim Fox, Rick Wooten, Marvin Hoffman, Paul Muller, Joel Bronstein, DJ Gerken, Andy Brown, Bill Slagle, Bob Henesley

Call to Order

Chairman Gantt called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM and welcomed all in attendance.

Comments from Guests & Local Officials

Chairman Gantt recognized Bill Slagle from Mitchell County. Mr. Slagle told the group about Mitchell County and the things that were important to the overall economy, such as the purest quartz in the world. He explained that residents of the county want to preserve the environment, keep slope development under control and keep water clean and free of run-off. Land use planning in the mountains is hard to do, so you have to demonstrate value. Another locally produced product is the world's best sand for golf courses - it's a by-product of quartz mining. One of the county's biggest concerns is the "brain drain" of young people. We're losing the next generation of leadership, so we have to find the way to provide jobs for them here. That is a problem in most rural counties. He closed his comments by inviting the members to stop by the local art galleries and the Penland School of Crafts.

Chairman Gantt then recognized Bill Eaker who made a comment on behalf of Bill Yarborough. He said that \$2.2 million from the Dept. of Agriculture will put \$800,00 to \$1 million towards purchase of the headwaters tract in Transylvania County. Jay Leutze said that the property will be purchased in phases using state and federal dollars.

Chairman Gantt then recognized Jay Leutze and his recently published book, "Stand up that Mountain." It tells the story of a local-driven conservation effort along the Appalachian Trail in the Roan Highlands.

Chairman Gantt then recognized Charles Vines, and told everyone how helpful he had been in getting signatures for the letter to keep the MRC intact, and he truly saved this group. He gave Charles a copy of Jay's book, "Stand Up That Mountain". Charles then thanked everyone for coming to Bakersville, and said he believed in the MRC and what the group is working on. He then mentioned that the town's water system was experiencing problems and he had to leave

early to talk to their contractor. He introduced Bob Henesley who was there to talk about the restored courthouse.

Bob Henseley said that the courthouse is 105 years old. The preservation and \$1.2 million (40% public, 60% private money) restoration was a citizen led effort. The building now has total wi-fi coverage and 24 computers available for public use. He provided each attendee with a packet of information about local galleries and other things to do in the area. Jay Leutze said that Mitchell County and Bakersville have been great conservation partners for the Roan Highlands.

Approval of April 20, 2012 Meeting Summary

Chairman Gantt asked the members to review the summary of the April 20, 2012 meeting and suggest any edits. Jason Love made a motion to approve the summary as presented. George Santucci seconded the motion which was approved unanimously.

Discussion & Approval of Strategic Goals & Objectives Update

Judy Francis explained that, as directed by the MRC at the last meeting, she consolidated the Commission's goals and objectives from the lengthy spreadsheet into a single page. That page can be used to pass out as an information sheet, and the shorter version will encourage more people to actually read it. The members reviewed the draft handout and discussed some proposed amendments. Julie Mayfield said that the fourth bullet under goal number 2 should be expanded to include a variety of groups – not just trade groups. She suggested that Goal #2 read as follows: "To help decision-makers at all levels understand issues that affect mountain resources," and amend the fourth bullet to read, "Secure funding, promote, and partner with trade and other organizations to develop and provide focused workshops and training opportunities related to mountain resource topics." Harris Prevost suggested that the second bullet under Goal #3 read as follows: "Ensure that funding for staff support and MRC initiatives continues through agency and foundation partnerships.

Julie Mayfield made a motion to approve the Strategic Goals & Objectives with the amendments discussed. The motion was seconded by Mike Butrum and approved unanimously.

Report from the Outreach & Education Committee

Chairman Gantt asked everyone to review a handout that was provided that outlined the Outreach and Education Committee's recommendations about an outreach strategy for the vitality index. Judy Francis provided an overview of the strategy that was comprised of three tiers. The first tier would focus on developing and conducting five hands-on workshops at the COGs to train planners and officials on how the index works and to garner feedback from them about its usefulness. The second phase would focus on targeted outreach to specific interest groups such as the NC County Commissioners Association, the League of Municipalities, the Chamber of Commerce offices throughout the region, Blue Ridge Forever, tourism development officers, etc. The final tier would be presentations to groups such as Rotary, community groups, clubs, etc. Upon approval from the MRC, she said she would develop a budget for workshops, printed materials, and technical support to begin the work. Mike Butrum said he and Judy have submitted a grant request of \$15,000 to the National Association of Realtors. Harris asked if the

local your realtor membership supports the request. Mike said he is working at high level with board right now and he is optimistic. Judy said this is the type of effort that gets out the technical information, and also brands the MRC and our partners. Jason Love said there is a need for a calendar of events so folks know who is doing what once the presentations begin to schedule. Marvin Hoffman said there will be a joint meeting in Durham on February 6 with city and county managers. We could do a panel there. Max Hopper said that we need to get links of the index on websites of other organizations. Chairman Gantt asked if the members were ready to adopt this as the outreach strategy. Bob Shepherd moved to adopt the Outreach and Education Committee recommendations about the outreach strategy for the vitality index. Max Hopper seconded the motion and it was approved unanimous unanimously. Jay Leutze said the MRC should keep the schedule flexible and subject to obtaining funds for the effort.

Legislative Update

Jay Leutze told the group that the General Session probably will not reconvene before January. As before, the conservation trust funds are very low. The Clean Water Management Trust Fund has only \$10.75 million which is a historic low. Charles Vines was recently appointed to that board which is a reflection of the innovative water quality techniques used in Mitchell County. The Natural Heritage Trust Fund and the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund both come from deed stamp revenue, so the funds are also very low due to the economy. Money has been diverted away for operations, but the diversions ended this year so that is good. The farmland preservation trust fund received \$2+ million for the coming year.

Julie Mayfield asked if the Boards & Commissions bill would resurface. Jay said if there was consensus between the Governor's office and General Assembly that the issue needs to be addressed, then it will probably come back again. He said the index can be used to build a base of champions for the MRC. Bob Shepherd asked if the MRC should follow up with another meeting with legislators? Jay said there will be turn over this election, so we should not embark on outreach with them during the election season. We are in "wait and see mode". Mike Butrum said the election results would mean changes in agency leadership as well.

WNC Vitality Index Work Session

Jim Fox gave a brief presentation on the status of the index and how the members could engage in outreach activities. There are a number of support resources on the web portal for presenters to make use of. Max Hopper said those who are asking for printed materials should be discouraged. Jim said that even in current days, many still want information in print format. should discourage printed, but some folks still want it. Max Hopper said that photos used by others should also credit the MRC.

New Website

Judy Francis reminded the members that their new website was up and running. The new web address is www.mrcnc.org . She explained she tried to get the URL ncmrc, but that was already taken by the Northern Colorado Model Railroad Club. The new website has a lot more potential to host resource materials, and it is much more attractive and modern than their previous page.

Future Meetings & Locations

October 19 at Lake Tahoma / McDowell County

December 14 at Chimney Rock SP / Rutherford County

Adjourn

There being no further business, Charles Vines made a motion to adjourn. Max Hopper seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously at 3:20 PM.