



Martin O'Malley, Governor
Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor
John R. Griffin, Secretary
Eric Schwaab, Deputy Secretary

December 15, 2008

Jon Hall
State Conservationist
USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
John Hanson Business Center
339 Busch's Frontage Road, Suite 301
Annapolis, MD 21409-5543

Dear Jon:

I am writing to follow-up on discussions and written correspondence that have occurred over the past few months between your office, the Maryland Forest Service (MFS), and the USDA Forest Service (USFS), on actions to strengthen and expand forest conservation work in Maryland. More specifically, I would like to propose that we collectively take some initial and immediate actions in the following two areas:

1. Your offer to establish a Forestry Subcommittee to the NRCS State Technical Committee is much appreciated. I support the immediate establishment of this subcommittee and recommend the following individuals and organizations as initial core members:
 - Environmental Defense Fund
 - Maryland Forestry Association
 - Chesapeake Bay Foundation
 - U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
 - Delmarva Poultry Industry representative
 - Maryland Forest Service
 - Maryland Wildlife & Heritage Service
 - Forest Landowner(s)
 - USFS
 - NRCS

I also recommend that the initial meeting of this group be arranged and facilitated by your office, and that, at its initial meeting, the core group could select a chairperson and decide on other operational guidelines and objectives.

2. To facilitate formal State support and future investments in increased collaboration of the farm and forestry sectors in Maryland, I believe a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) involving key State and Federal partners is very important. Over time, the existence of an MOU will carry more credibility and be of greater significance to the State than other, less formal cooperative arrangements. A draft MOU has been sent out for initial review and comment to a small group of key staff in your office, the USFS, and MFS, including:



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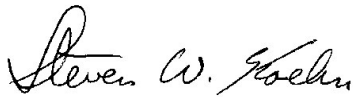
- NRCS -- Mark Rose
- Maryland Forest Service -- Dan Rider
- USFS -- Karen Sykes (facilitator)

We will expand this group to include representatives from the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts and the Maryland Department of Agriculture.

When an MOU is finalized, MFS will be better positioned to advance proposals within the State to further expand work related to Farm Bill programs and forest conservation.

I believe that the above actions will provide a sound basis for expanding our cooperative on-the-ground work in forest conservation for the citizens of Maryland and to advance the forestry related provisions of the 2008 Farm Bill. Even as the State faces critical budget issues common to many State and local governments in the current economic climate, there are also many possibilities and opportunities in forest conservation to pursue. I look forward to working with you and all our partners to advance this important work.

Sincerely,



Steven W. Koehn
Director / State Forester

SWK/

Enclosure: 1