Forestry Workgroup Conference Call

October 3, 2012

**Participants**: Al Todd, Susan Marquart, Craig Highfield, Sally Claggett, Anna Stuart Burnett, Matt, Gary Moore, Judy Okay, Julie Mawhorter, Beth Burnum, Tracey Coulter, Susan Marquart, Sloane Crawford, Eric Sprague, Jen Powers, Anne Hairston-Strang, Rebecca Hanmer, Derrick McDonald

**Al Todd and Eric Sprague**: Facilitating Forest-based Offsets in Water Quality Offsets and Trading

This is an overview of a new Conservation Innovation Grant project that Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay is just commencing. They are using MD as ground zero because MD has a significant long term history of regulations that have forced the consideration of forest in the development process (e.g. Forest Conservation Act requirements to mitigate forest clearing, Critical Areas law, mitigation requirements for FIDS habitat, etc.). Under the Chesapeake Bay TMDL framework, by Jan 2013, states will have to have some provision for offsets for growth. There are a number of offset programs for stormwater growing out of MS4 requirements. This project will be focused on how to incorporate strong forest-based provisions (e.g. supporting forest conservation and restoration) in these emerging offset programs. Second part of project: how can we utilize and customize the tools that have been created under the Bay Bank and Landserver to create a center for forest offset crediting to be used by counties and landowners and developers. Trying to get forest based pilot projects into a trading system. The Chesapeake Bay Trust has been doing some aggressive outreach. They are facilitating tree planting projects. MD is the only state that has put forward a proposal so far. Hoping to transfer what they learn in MD to the other states. Bay Bank grew out of Forestry for the Bay discussion about the need for stronger incentives. This project brings the focus back to forests, and how we can use new water quality offset/trading programs to advance forest conservation and restoration goals.

**Questions**:

Sally Claggett: How can each of us support this project and spread the use of these tools and try to promote it at the state level?

Matt: Virginia DOF and partners are currently exploring some sort of crediting system for land conservation in Virginia

Sally: We will post the STAC “Crediting Conservation” report when it comes out (Note: report came out November 14)

Anne: See the policy documents sent out by Ann Swanson at GIT 4 meeting on CBC project for “Crediting Conservation.” (note: these have also been posted to the FWG for October)

Rebecca Hanmer: In the past, the FWG has discussed options for crediting forest management or conservation as a BMP in the Chesapeake Bay model. But science was not supportive enough at the time to determine a different loading for managed or conserved forests.

PA: Derrick: was involved in early efforts, but not recently. Not aware of any offset policy being created. Eric: some practices are better than others (such as forests) so trying to promote forest-based programs in offset/trading programs for restoration of the Bay.

Rebecca: There is difficulty in verifying many BMPs, but forests should be easier to justify in offset/trading programs because of their long-term nature. There is real interest in growth offsets and the element of permanence.

Anne: MD is trying to promote the idea that we need to have core elements of forest conservation in our WIP process and have land planning consider conservation of forest as a cheaper alternative to restoration.

Judy: has anyone done anything with longevity in terms of payments for different BMPs?

Sally: The FWG will be proposing that the length of time for the riparian forest buffer practice should be increased from 15 years.

Rebecca: many of these policies will be regulatory in nature.

Eric: Going to need a permanent easement attached to the project. Will see a strong push for permanent offsets for stormwater.

Al and Eric: the project is just getting started and organized. They will be contacting some members of the workgroup as an advisory committee and plan to be in touch with the workgroup again.

**Draft Midpoint Assessment Priorities**

Sally: WQGIT has asked the workgroups to suggest changes to the CB model in time for the next phase (model 6.0) to be ready for the mid-point assessment of the TMDL in 2017. Are we comfortable submitting the draft priorities to the Water Quality GIT? Top three recommendations:

1. Trying to distinguish true forest from other categories loosely categorized as forest (which also includes shrub, scrub, wetlands, and open fields). Need to pull out true forest from these other land uses. True forests would not be urban forest. Make sure we address harvesting BMPs.

2. Consider separate reporting of loadings from air deposition. Primary source of loading from forests. Forests are doing the best job of processing these pollutants than any other acre of land use receiving the same amount of deposition.

3. Refine the amount of forest land assumed to be harvested. Consider the number of acres harvested, or take another look at the rate at which they are harvested.

Tracey: are we considering BMPs? What are we going to count exactly? Sally: These recommended changes are to the land use categories used in the model, not BMPs. In regards to tracking BMPs, verification steps the FWG developed will be going in front of an expert panel.

Rebecca: do we need to bring this up again? Sally will do a revision based on what she heard.

Forward ideas to Sally or Anna Stuart Burnet by 10/10.

**Forest Restoration Strategy**

Management Board did approve the Strategy for PSC review at their next meeting in November. Will be a document from the CBP and the Forest Service.

**Next Meetings**

Looking for subject material and locations for field visits for future FWG meetings. Stroud workshop in Avondale PA on Nov 7th for our next FWG meeting? Need to invite agricultural counterparts to this meeting. How many would be interested in attending a meeting at Stroud? Would not be able to do the workshop and a meeting, we would just be attending the workshop. Might be better to have our own workshop/ meeting there. Derrick: need to have discussions with ag counterparts, so sounds like a reasonable idea.

DECISION: hold off on a Stroud workshop until 2013.

Sally: if there are other ideas, please come forward with them now. **Make Nov meeting a conference call. Dec 4-5 for possible two day FWG meeting.** All states have restrictions for overnight travel. Going to be reviewing some programs over the two day meeting for a watershed wide review.