

**Biodiversity Steering Committee Meeting**  
**Minutes**  
**April 3, 2002**

**I. Opening Remarks – Nick DiPasquale, Chair of Steering Committee and Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control**

Nick introduced Sherri Evans-Stanton, the new Biodiversity Coordinator, and gave a brief overview of her duties w/Biodiversity and other projects. Introductions were made.

**II. Team Reports (Phase I of Initiative)**

**Science Team** - Karen Bennett: The Team recently completed an assessment of data. A draft of the results from the workshop will be available soon. Karen reviewed a handout that lists specific tasks or steps that need to be accomplished in order of priority. The chart is coded to assess where we are on priorities (Green = on target; yellow = caution; and red = stopped or not started yet). The codes will flag those areas not making sufficient progress. The Science group will also participate in a more detailed presentation of Massachusetts' BioMap program this afternoon.

**Education & Outreach** – Mark Delvecchio: The last meeting of this team was in November 2001. The team is putting together a comprehensive list of all resources for the web. In addition, the team is assisting the other implementation teams to get their messages on biodiversity out.

**ACTION ITEM:** *Workgroup chairs suggested working on update/follow-up to folks that attended the symposium. The team will be meeting on 4/23 to identify additional phases and to develop a communication strategy and will report back to the Steering Committee at its next meeting.*

**Land Use Planning Team** – The team provided a written update on their activities and indicated many of their current priorities are being covered in the Governor's Livable Delaware Initiative. These include: 1) tracking progress made by the counties on adopting zoning ordinances within 18 months of adoption of their comprehensive plans; and 2) working with the counties as they go through the certification process to ensure that the plans are consistent with State policies. In addition, several Livable Delaware subcommittees are linked to biodiversity. These include: Transfer of Development Rights, Community Design,

**Resource Management Team** – Lori Spagnolo: Permanent funding for farmland preservation has been a top priority. Next year, they can look at Forest Protection (Sen. Cloutier has considered working on legislation) and the Endangered Species Protection Act. A forum was held in January on isolated wetlands to talk about the status of wetlands in Delaware and the need to protect them. Approximately 70 people attended. They are ready to help when needed to get the isolated wetlands legislation enacted.

The Nature Society held a forum on 4/2/02 to discuss isolated agricultural preservation. Approx. 20 attended including legislators and other groups. The forum resulted in good discussions about use of the funds from the cigarette tax bill and county efforts to move towards farmland preservation. County has set aside \$5 million for farmland preservation efforts. Rules for matching county funds have not yet been determined. Cigarette tax funds will be distributed as follows: 25 cents unrestricted for use in general funds, 10 cents for agricultural lands preservation, 2 cents nutrient management needs, 3 cents for cancer prevention, and 10 cents for children's & poverty level health insurance. MD and NJ are also raising cigarette taxes; DE will still be lower even with a 50% increase.

### III. **Legislative Update**

Develop strategy concerning farmland and forest land preservation (i.e., pair regulatory approach with incentives) Bob Zimmerman indicated that there have been prior discussions on the need to strategize with the Dept. of Agriculture on how to improve incentives and advance discussions about farmland preserve, forest & resource preservation. Those discussions did not take place due to the absence of a co-chair from DNREC. Bill Whitman has recently been asked to serve as the Co-chair with Lori Spagnolo. The programs need to be tied together with policies and incentives. In addition, regulations should be paired with incentives to have a balanced approach. Folks abiding by our policies should receive the money first. Programs funded should include management for other priorities (ex: nutrient management).

The Committee discussed the agricultural cost-share program and getting Conservation Districts involved w/the Resource group and Science team to work with them. The state cost share program has wide flexibility and will cover biodiversity research if it is on farmland. The initial focus should be on sharing those things that could be accomplished without legislative but through administrative process.

***ACTION ITEM:*** Resource Management team will be revising their incentive program information to include the Agricultural Cost Share Program. In addition,

coverage under the SWANCC decision. Delaware has 30,000 acres of isolated wetlands throughout state. Approximately 25% are in areas already protected. Category I wetlands represent 1500 acres throughout state. The emphasis on protecting isolated wetlands will be through incentive programs. The Department has recommended a tiered approach to managing isolated wetlands that provides higher levels of protection to ecological significance and lists specific activities that would be allowed in other classes. The Dept. hopes to get feedback from the Governor's Office within the next two weeks and may be able to do a substitute for Cathcart's bill. At that point, they will sit with the conservation community and mobilize the interested parties.

Delmarva Conservation Corridor – Steve Williams: Since the August meeting, the Department has been working in partnership with Maryland's Dept. of Natural Resources and Dept. of Agriculture and Delaware's DNREC and Dept of Agriculture to begin to identify conservation corridors. Ideally the states would agree to identify 2 corridors to focus on (Nanticoke Broadkill and Marshy Hope). Non regulatory approaches would be developed that includes as many programs as possible. John expressed concern that we needed to be clear on what the real priorities are with so many competing issues (ex: TMDL's, isolated wetlands, biodiversity).

Efforts to include corridors in the Farm bill were not successful. Steve was not sure of the current status of that effort. He said identifying the corridors would have enhanced our efforts, but would not necessarily be critical. The Dept. has also been working on a process to identify names for the joint steering committee to set policy for this effort. A memorandum of agreement between the four agencies in DE & MD is being drafted (to be completed in May/June timeframe).

***Action Item:** Committee requested we check with the Department (Kevin Donnelly) to see the previous incentive pamphlet that was used.*

#### **IV. Other Issues**

Alternative Financial Mechanisms– Bob Zimmerman discussed two alternate funding mechanisms to expand funding that were recently adopted in New York and Ohio. New York uses revolving loans and allows nonprofits to apply for low interest loans for land acquisition. Ohio allows funds to be used for dam modification, watershed protection and source water. The money is part of a discount of interest that covers the cost of projects (essentially a grant). Bob suggested that the Committee might want to request that the Whole Basin Restoration Team develop a list of priorities to see if Delaware could redirect funds. The Committee discussed whether they wanted to participate in looking at various options

suggested we include some sportsmen who were familiar with the Farm bill. John said it will be critical to work out the issues between the federal and state cost share money. The state provides significantly more flexibility.

Discussion of Priorities for Phase II – Sherri indicated that all teams would be meeting within the next 2 months and would be making recommendations for the Steering Committee for the next phase of priorities. Sherri also mentioned that each of the teams would be tracking their progress, developing measures and beginning to identify goals for the next legislative session. In addition, we will be tracking statewide accomplishments that include other agencies and nonprofit organizations on biodiversity issues.

Massachusetts BioMap Presentation – Henry Woolsey & David Szeszbak, Natural Heritage Program, Massachusetts Division of Fish and Wildlife– Henry and David were invited to give a presentation on the Massachusetts BioMap Program. The BioMap is used to promote strategic land protection by identifying and mapping the most viable rare species habitats and natural communities, referred to as “Core Habitat”. In addition the map includes “supporting natural landscape” which include large, minimally fragments areas such as buffer areas, and undeveloped areas that safeguard the Core Habitat. The BioMap is then distributed to local government, state agencies, regional planners and conservation organizations.

The BioMap project cost \$1.5 million dollars. In order to complete the BioMap, the Massachusetts Heritage program hired 15 additional staff including ecologists, botanists, zoologists, a project manager, a data management assistant and a geographic information systems (GIS) specialist. The BioMap used the 13 distinct ecoregions established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in assessing environmental resources.

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Having no further business, the Steering Committee adjourned.

Next meeting: Wed. June 12<sup>th</sup> 10:00 – 12:00. Location to be determined.