

**MOUNTAIN RESOURCES COMMISSION
PLANNING WORKSHOP AGENDA
Friday, May 14, 2010
NC Arboretum (Library Room); Asheville
9AM – 2:45PM**

The Planning Workshop for the Mountain Resources Commission was held Friday, May 14, 2010, at the NC Arboretum in Asheville, starting at 9 a.m. Participating were Commission members: Wayne Abele, Angie Chandler, Jim Coman, Maxine Dalton, David Gantt (Chair), Bill Gibson, Max Hopper, Tommy Jenkins, Jay Leutze, Tom Massie, Chuck McGrady, Harris Prevost (Vice Chair), George Santucci, Bob Shepherd, and Charles Vines; in addition, Judy Francis who serves as NC DENR staff, and Suzi Wilkins Berl, consultant, who facilitated the meeting.

After introductions in which attendees shared something about themselves that others might not know, David Gantt held a drawing for a piece of Handmade in America pottery, which was won by Maxine. Judy described the contents of the commission members' notebooks.

After reviewing the day's schedule, the group looked at the enabling legislation that established the commission. The group noted that the mandate they'd been given is broad and daunting, yet inspiring. Although the mountain's culture is inextricably woven in to its natural resources, the focus of the commission should be the region's natural resources in face of inevitable growth. The group acknowledged that one of its biggest challenges would be to communicate with and encourage the local officials and that it was important to balance and integrate growth with resource protection. Max noted that throughout the 25 WNC counties, there are 1,034 communities - each with unique cultural identities and opportunities for tourism.

In reviewing the survey compilation, the group noted the top resource concern is *slope development and ridge top protection*, with resulting water quality problems where regulations are poor or non-existent. Current regulations vary from country to county, and the group's consensus was that there needs to be some statewide controls or perhaps a regional authority. Short of that, providing strong sample regulatory models would help some counties; (e. g. Buncombe's steep slopes; Henderson's soil and erosion, etc.) Further, the group noted that even counties that have regulations may not have the money to enforce them. Perhaps, state funding would assist here.

The group noted that the commission should focus its efforts on policy work, which must be based on fundamental resource data and information. The group then discussed the formation of its Technical Advisory Committee, which should be appointed *after* the commission has settled on its priority resource focuses. The committee's composition can be changed, based on changing needs. Both volunteers as well as DENR staff can be tasked with this work.

Next, Judy reviewed the work of other efforts that can guide MRC. She began with Year of the Mountain and the subsequent achievements since 1995. MRC should likewise "think big," collaborate with others and refrain from "reinventing the wheel." The group agreed that using the carrot rather than stick would bring the most results. The commissioners agreed to focus on securing and providing planning seed grants and incentives to help local communities (such as was done by Sen. Jenkins with YOM). Here, working with the Association of County Commissions and the Rural Center would be wise. Perhaps, a land transfer tax or federal funds could provide an ongoing source of funding for an ongoing program. The commission may wish to look at the Coastal Program to determine how they have cobbled together funding for their work. The Region A Toolbox was commended for its work, which was truly a community driven process. The group should also look at Tax Reform & Urban Infrastructure recommendations and results.

It was noted that there is no consistency even within state agencies (e. g. forestry practices). It is critical to be able to enforce forestry and development BMPs. The group then noted that the WaDE Program that addresses straight piping – a critical issue in WNC – is being eliminated. A motion was made and seconded that the Commission supports the continued funding for WaDE. The motion was passed unanimously and will contain the points on the reasons for and the values of the program. A copy of the motion will be sent to each member of the western delegation, Speaker of the House and Senate Pro Tem.

The commission then looked at the empty niche it might fill. Currently there is no unified voice speaking out on behalf of mountain issues. (Note: here we need to make sure groups are willing to have the MRC speak for them; we should consider being a “servant-leader.”. There is a lacking of funding and incentives for local planning and improvement of local regulations. There is a lack of information that often results in opposition to change. There is a need to promote small sustainable agriculture efforts. (Several other entities are working on this issue, and MRC should work in concert with them, rather than competing with them.) Once we determine our priority goals and focus, we will need to identify what organizations are working regionally.

In thinking about long term vision of where the commission should go, the group looked at the history of the enabling legislation and its charge – to advocate for the natural resources of WNC – its land, water, slopes, air and culture. (By serving as a legislative advisor, the commission could “give cover” to the legislators.) There was a general consensus that if the commission focused on *land use*, that would result in benefitting most of the other resources. Using an approach such as Region A’s toolbox will allow local governments to look at various options and move ahead voluntarily. (The group noted that it needs to be careful not to be perceived as promoting zoning.)

Harris then noted 5 steps that will lead to success:

1. Identify issues.
2. Educate ourselves and others.
3. Take position.
4. Seek public support through outreach and media.
5. Seek local / state / federal backing and incentives.

Next, the commission thought about its mission statement. The group came up with some language:

#1: “To preserve and protect the values and integrity of Western North Carolina’s landscape for the long-term sustainability and economic viability of the mountain way of life.”

#2: “To protect the values and integrity of WNC’s ancient landscape for the economic and ecologic sustainability of our mountain way of life.”

#3: “To protect our WNC landscape to enhance our quality of life.”

Slogan: “Don’t kill the goose.”

Key words; sustainability, protect values and integrity, landscape

Harris, Bob and Angie agreed to work on this further prior to the next commission meeting (6/11). Judy will coordinate.

The group then looked at success. First, the group identified impediments to success:

- Money
- Local Government opposition
- Different opinions
- Fear of loss of land and property rights
- Resistance to change
- Mistrust of state government

To be successful, we need to:

- Provide education.
- Have early successes to build momentum.
- Get out in community w/ talking points & voices locals can understand.
- Develop a unified message that “doing nothing is worse than doing something.”
- Secure support and trust from community leaders.
- Insure funding sources from foundations and General Assembly & federal programs. (Note: George is willing to serve on fundraising committee.)
- Sustain MRC’s staffing and secure future funding, including sponsors for regional forums and tours of developments.
- Develop some educational materials (Power Point & speakers bureau). (Note: Harris has contact for PR assistance)

The commission next looked at its 5 Year Goals. (Please refer to the attached draft document which fleshes out those ideas.) Then, it identified priorities for the next 18 months – due to the nature of their timing or to secure “low hanging fruit.”

The commission then moved and seconded a motion to preserve the staff positions in DENR’s Office of Conservation & Community Affairs (OCCA). Motion passed unanimously. The members were encouraged to make calls first to appropriate senators and leadership. The Chair will distribute the resolution as appropriate, if needed.

Finally, the group looked at its future meeting schedule:

| DATE | TIME | LOCATION |
|-------------|------------------------|---|
| Fri. 6/11 | 2 - 5PM | Burke Co. Higher Ed Center; Exit 105 off I-40 |
| Fri. 8/6 | 12 – lunch; mtg. = 1-3 | Grandfather Mountain |
| Fri. 9/17 | 2 - 4 | Haywood Tech? |
| Fri. 11/19 | 2 - 4 | ?? |
| Fri. 12/10 | 2 - 4 | ?? |

For future meetings, the group expressed interest in learning more about: ASAP, air quality attainment (with proposed changes to federal law), and Mountain Landscape Initiative.

At the next meeting, the group agreed to review and adjust the goals and adjust the timeline; finalize the mission statement language, finalize the committee structure and composition and discuss procedural matter of sticking to only the MRC goals or responding to other issues as they arise. For its committee structure, the group suggested:

- Issues / Legislative
- MRC Governance bylaws, etc.
- Finance / Fundraising
- Education / Outreach
- Science /Data

The group adjourned at 2:45 p.m.