

December 10, 2010 MEETING SUMMARY
NC Mountain Resources Technical Advisory Council
RENCI Engagement Center in the Grove Arcade, Asheville, NC

Members in Attendance: Jim Fox, Walter Clark, Karen Smith, DJ Gerken, Eric Romaniszyn, Bill Eaker, David Ray, Paul Muller, Marvin Hoffman,
Others in Attendance: Judy Francis, Linda Giltz, George Santucci

Call to Order

Jim Fox called the meeting to order at 9:40 AM and welcomed all in attendance. He asked that two items be added to the agenda: a presentation regarding the recent landslide event in Henderson County (Rick Wooten) and a regional erosion control issue (Eric Romaniszyn).

Approval of November 19, 2010 Meeting Summary

Jim Fox asked everyone to review the summary of the November 19th meeting. Bill Eaker made a motion to approve the summary. The motion received a second from Karen Smith and was approved unanimously.

Discussion of Slope Issue

Karen Smith discussed the recent sub-committee meeting to begin formulating suggestions and recommendations for the Commission. She provided handouts highlighting the work of the sub-committee to date and provided a PowerPoint presentation that described the process of sorting out categories and prioritizing the various related issues. Conservation strategies are included in new section entitled "Support Policies / Programs Benefiting Steep Slopes, including preservation issues. Top 5 strategies are:

1. Establish a notification system for identified landslide hazard areas in combination with recommendation PS-6.
2. Develop a local model ordinance for steep slope areas.
3. Develop a comprehensive public education program about landslide hazards and issues associated development in the mountains.
4. Advocate for appropriations from the NC Legislature in the amount of \$580,000 per year to accelerate the landslide hazard mapping program and to complete the mapping process for all WNC counties by 2016.
5. State and local governments should require geotechnical analysis of steep slope areas over 40% as a minimum.

Comments from the council members in attendance included taking out a specific dollar amount and just indicating that we want to double the funding. Show how long it will still take to get the mapping completed. Jim asked if the council was comfortable telling the MRC that these are the five main categories of recommendations we're working on. There was consensus that these are the five top priorities. There was also consensus that the council is not prepared to offer specific wording at this time. The next step is to flesh out these priority points for presentation as top five recommendations to be presented to MRC in January. DJ asked what will happen to the rest of the recommendations. Second tier priorities need to be captured as

well though not necessarily prioritized. They could be presented as items that should be addressed. Bill Eaker offered one correction on the draft spreadsheet. Merge white area w/ yellow area under Best Practices category.

Jim Fox updated the status of the slope map. He reported that a student from UNCA is working on this. It is finals week, so it is still not ready, but should be available shortly.

Karen Smith will brief the MRC at their meeting today.

Landslide Presentation

Rick Wooten provided the group with a short PowerPoint presentation regarding the recent landslide event in Henderson County on Holiday Drive. He had graphics that indicated the “before and after” building footprint, debris flow outlines, and the landslide area of approximately 200 feet. It was a fairly small event, but the house was completely ruined. It was preceded by a very intense rainfall event – close to 8” in 24 hours in that area. It occurred on a modified slope, average 20 degrees – not real steep. The house did not slide. It was knocked off its foundation. There were springs located on bedrock and a ditch flowed over the road. This may have been a contributing factor.

Discussion of Regional Sustainability Report Card

Judy Francis provided an update on the presentation to the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area (BRNHA) Board. She and David Gantt and Greg Dobson from NEMAC spoke to the board last week about the project and invited them to participate as a funding partner with the MRC and the US Forest Service in expanding the report card as per the MRC strategic objectives. The US Forest Service has already made a financial commitment to the project and the MRC members have made the commitment to provide outreach and education channels to ensure that the report card is put into the hands of local and regional decision-makers. The BRNHA Board asked for specific dollar amounts once that has been formulated and seemed very interested in being involved as it also accomplishes their strategic objectives as outlined in their management plan.

Jim Fox stated that the geographic scope of the existing WNC Report Card on Forest Sustainability is proposed to be expanded to cover all of the counties in the MRC region. The scope of the data layers will also be expanded to include additional indicators relevant to the MRC’s work such as farmland, economic development, tourism, etc., and any others that the TAC might suggest.

Regional Sedimentation and Erosion Control Initiative

Eric Romaniszyn described an effort underway by various groups working on watershed issues in the seven western-most counties of the state (Region A, served by the Southwestern Commission) to combine efforts to provide erosion and sedimentation control training to the development community. The program would try to target equipment operators as well as engineers and other land development professionals.

There is a high demand for such training, but there are issues regarding the frequency of offerings, the consistency of the curriculum and the affordability of the programs. Those who have been meeting intend to apply next year for a Clean Water Act Section 319 grant to hire a contractor to develop training modules, some of which will draw from other programs (the Clear Water Contractor program, the NC Division of Land Quality Green Dozer program developed NC State University, etc.). The training program is envisioned to have two components, one that covers basic information and another which would be composed of modules dedicated to specific topics. Eric said that the group would like to offer incentives of some sort to those who attend the training. The biggest issue is finding a sustainable funding source. Participants would pay a registration fee to cover items such as materials.

The program is proposed to start in Region A but those involved would like to see it spread statewide. Rick Wooten stated that his office had done talks on landslide hazard mapping and erosion control at similar trainings conducted by NC State University and suggested the topic could be a module. DJ Gerken suggested incentives such as training participants being eligible for streamlined permitting processes or reduced fees.

Eric said that the training program ties into the education strategy being considered for the TAC's steep slope recommendations. Jim Fox said it was important for the TAC's recommendations to reflect a cohesive voice and message and suggested packaging the proposed training program with the steep slope recommendations. Regarding the recommendations the TAC will make on steep slopes, David Ray proposed that general points be supported by specific examples, possible solutions, etc. For example, the recommendations could mention that a certain program is working but it needs funding.

Rick Wooten said that he will send the TAC the numbers regarding the percentage of the land base in each county of the MRC's region that is public versus private to aid in discussions related to the development of local ordinances.

Schedule Next Meeting

The next TAC meeting was scheduled for January 21, 2010, at 10:00 A.M., preceding the meeting of the MRC (location to be determined). Jim Fox said that the TAC would plan on taking action in January on the subcommittee's recommendations regarding steep slopes and asked that they be sent to TAC members in advance via email. He would distribute Rick Wooten's work on the slope maps. The TAC will also discuss what additional indicators should be measured by the Regional Sustainability Report Card and which experts might be able to do the related work. The TAC will also discuss its future meeting schedule.

Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:00 AM.