

Mr. Frank Lipson, President

Maryland Alliance for Greenway Improvement & Conservation

Wheaton, MD

Dear Frank:

I want to thank you and your organization for taking the time to review and comment on our State Forest annual work plan proposals. We will soon be posting all public comments and responses to our State Forest webpage. Since you asked me specifically for a response to your comments I wanted to address some of the issues you brought up in your letter.

You assert in your letter that logging began at Green Ridge in the 1960s; it actually began many years before. Near the beginning of the previous century Green Ridge was cleared of much of its forests in favor of apple orchards. The forest we now see is the result of the resilience and recovery of the forest since that time.

You mention several times that you believe our forest harvest operations are a financially losing proposition. Our State Forest managers have a multiple-use mandate and are responsible for many activities of these lands including providing recreational opportunities, boundary, road, and trail maintenance, plus the administration that is necessary to keep the forest working - not just harvesting.

We do not harvest trees with the express goal of producing revenue. Instead we utilize harvesting as a tool to enhance the overall health and vitality of the resource. However, we do generate revenue as a result of most intermediate and regeneration harvests which in turn provides funding for responsible resource management on the forest such as eradication of invasive species and enhancing habitats for native wildlife. Revenue generated from selling the products yielded from good forest management is a bonus because it would be costly to have this work done otherwise which would put additional burden on Maryland taxpayers.

Wood products are a renewable natural resource and if managed properly with a sustainable silvicultural program such as ours, will provide a perpetual supply of products for today and future generations. These products are an important part of the local natural resource based economy (please see "The Impact of Resource Based Industries on the Maryland Economy", attached).

Apparently you feel that our 18-month review process is a detriment. We would argue that it is an asset, allowing for many opportunities for a full range of input from the many stakeholders in Maryland's forest community.

It is unlikely that if there were no harvesting on state lands that harvests would diminish in the region. They simply would be pushed onto private lands where there is often less consideration for monitoring growth, biodiversity, and use of best management practices (BMPs). All logging contractors on State Forests must be current in Maryland's Master Logger Program which requires training in first aid and CPR, use of BMPs, and forest management principals.

Trends indicate we are losing two important forest landscape types in Maryland: what we would call old-growth forests as well as early successional forests which are also important for wildlife habitat (e.g. American Woodcock for instance). The Maryland DNR State Forest system helps provide both of these forested landscapes.

You may be interested to learn that, using funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and administered by the Wildlife Management Institute, biologists and land managers have developed a

Woodcock Conservation Plan (attached). The Plan sets targets for woodcock populations and acres of habitat to be created and restored in the United States. The Executive Summary states that the, "Loss and degradation of early succession forest habitat is believed to be the primary factor responsible for these declines [in woodcock populations]". The summary goes on to lament: "Changes in land use and societal attitudes towards even-aged forest-management practices (i.e. clearcutting) that create early succession habitat will likely contribute to continued declines in woodcock populations" (emphasis added).

You mentioned that logging causes soil erosion – actually erosion is a natural process. True, forest harvesting will expose bare mineral soil for a period, but with proper use of logging Best Management Practices this can be minimized (see attached Maryland Forestry BMP study). Again, we only contract with Master Loggers who are trained in the use of best management practices and we routinely monitor each harvest site while it is active.

You suggested that logging removes snags and understory, but you should be aware that we actively save snags within the harvest site for wildlife benefits and have been employing variable retention harvest methods which mimic natural disturbances. This method leaves untouched forest patches of various sizes, and distributes other remaining trees at variable densities and age classes throughout site. We have been doing so for some time and have used several of our harvest sites for demonstration purposes.

Also, our forest management policy has established forest protection zones which maintain riparian buffers for protected water quality, sensitive ecosystems, and wildlands. These areas comprise at least 50 percent each forest. And for those areas that are proposed for harvest up to another 25 percent can be set aside for special habitats such as wetlands, rock outcroppings, and special ecosystems. This refining process of the harvest sites is part of that 18-month review process mentioned earlier.

Regarding your comments on forest management carbon sequestration you should know that the report, "A Policy Framework For Including Avoided Deforestation And Forest Management Practices As Forest Offset Types In The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative" (Final Draft, July 15, 2009, attached), states that, "In the long term a sustainable forest management strategy aimed at maintaining or increasing forest carbon stocks, while producing an annual sustained yield of timber, fiber, or energy from the forest, will generate the largest sustained mitigation benefit." This seems to agree with the Wieland study. We have been in contact with Robert Wieland, and he has assured us that his study was indeed subject to peer review. We are responsible for the management of these lands for multiple benefits including forest products, we are mandated to do so, and that policy is not based upon the recently completed Wieland/Strebel study. I have attached additional information from the Forest-Climates Working Group and the National Association of State Foresters to further your understanding on the role trees and working forests play in mitigating climate change.

Forest management that includes harvesting of wood products plays a vital role in protecting the regions forests in many ways including protection from fire, invasive species, insect and disease outbreaks, and deforestation. Green Ridge State Forest serves as an example of good forest management for other landowners to learn from and mimic the practices. The State Forests serve as a model to educate forest landowners and logging operators of best management practices. Furthermore, forest products provide an incentive to private and public lands to keep forest lands in forest. Without the local economics associated with forest products, it is likely that deforestation rates would increase as a result of needing to find a new economic base for the region.

Marylander's should take pride and be grateful that our first State Forester, Fred Besley, had the vision to maintain large contiguous blocks of public forests to serve as a forest products resource (wood, water wildlife, recreation, aesthetics and air quality) for the citizens of Maryland and the nation. Today we still maintain that vision at GRSF, as we do all of our State Forests, and currently have more than 46,000 acres of contiguous forest fragmented only by the remaining private in-holdings and permanently by public infrastructure such as interstates and energy utility transportation systems. We hope that honoring

State Forester Besley's vision and continuing to maintain a silvicultural program at GRSF that generates significant economic activity in the region will reduce pressures to change land use in the area and continue to protect this treasured resource that I know we both care about.

In closing, as I see you have posted your Final Statement in Opposition to Continued Logging in Maryland's Green Ridge State Forest, dated 05/25/09 on your website. I would ask that you post my response as well including all the attached documents I have provided and referred to in the above in the advent some of your members may wish to review them.

Again, thank you for your interest in our State Forests. I hope we can continue sharing meaningful dialog on the subject and our mutual interests in healthy, vibrant forests for Maryland, now and for generations to come.

Sincerely,

/s/ Steven W. Koehn

Director / State Forester

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"IN THE WOODS WE RETURN TO REASON AND FAITH" - RALPH WALDO EMERSON

American Woodcock Conservation Plan

http://timberdoodle.org/sites/default/files/woodcockPlan_0.pdf

Forest-Climate Working Group: Policy Platform

<http://www.stateforesters.org/files/Forest-Climate%20Working%20Group%20Platform%202-20-09.pdf>

POLICY STATEMENT: National Association of State Foresters Climate Change Issues, Policy and the Role of Forests

http://www.stateforesters.org/files/2008.Climate_Change-Final.pdf

NASF FactSheet: FORESTS AS PART OF THE SOLUTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

<http://www.stateforesters.org/files/120208-Climate-onesheet.pdf>

The Impact of Resource Based Industries on the Maryland Economy

<http://www.marbidco.org/bEACONS%20STUDY.pdf>