

DRAFT

Carrot Committee Status Report

We can confirm that Chairman Parkowski is looking for a status report from us that outline the topics we have covered and our next steps. To that request we have in bullet format with some annotation listed the major points of discussion that the subcommittee covered at our January 29th meeting in Dover. **As requested, we are sending this around to all subcommittee members for review and comment. Please respond with any input by noon on February 7th. For the full committee meeting on February 11th, we will brief group with 8 to 12 PP slides that summarizes these major points noted below:**

As a group we asked ourselves the question: What are the priority habitats that incentive programs should target?

- Subcommittee is focusing on forested habitats that contain wetland complexes (such as Delmarva Bays and headwater wetlands) as a priority for developing and targeting incentives. (Intent here is to share with the full committee our rationale for this focus – “low hanging fruit” that should be picked; an easy way to build voluntary partnerships with landowners; financially more efficient to protect an existing resource that pay to restore it; etc.)

As a group we asked ourselves a second question: What are some of the key characteristics that any incentive program have that we might recommend to the full committee?

- Keys components of any incentive programs developed or promoted should consider:
 - the leveraging of state and federal conservation programs (Farm Bill may offer the largest menu of opportunities);
 - conservation/environmental NGOs participation and funding should add to this “leveraging”;
 - land conservation easements that are utilized should provide for permanent protection;
 - be voluntary;
 - density bonuses, payment in lieu, and offset options should be offered as a part of any proposed regulatory program that may be proposed;
 - the Farm Land Preservation Program should be looked at as a model in building partnerships with landowners (currently there is a Forestland Preservation Program that should be considered by the subcommittee in greater detail);
 - incentive programs should have understandable criteria;
 - Open Space funding should be available for high quality wetland projects;
 - an education effort to assist landowners in navigating the various incentive programs (and helping them understand the ecosystem values of wetlands on their properties) should be an ongoing priority;
 - state and federal tax incentives can be an incentive for some landowners (subject to consultation with their respective legal and tax advisors);
 - incentive programs should have a dedicated source of funding;

- State and Federal agency folks should evaluate the new farm bill to see what program options may exist to expand/leverage CRP or WRP;
- where appropriate in the land use planning process incentives should be included;
- Emerging markets for ecosystem services should be monitored and utilized where appropriate.

Following our discussion we identified some action items to move on as a group. These items include:

1. Examine in greater detail existing state and federal programs and partnership that create incentives for private landowners to protect freshwater wetlands. Document existing resource materials.
2. Jim McCulley will consult with county and municipal land use practitioners regarding the feasibility of implementing a “natural resource protection incentive ordinance” which will include the protection of high priority wetlands, rare species habitats and forest resources.
3. The subcommittee will review the Agricultural Lands Preservation model and evaluate how the lessons learned can be applied to the now dormant Forestlands Preservation Program in providing incentives for landowners to protect the state’s remaining forested wetlands.
4. We will evaluate all carrot committee recommendations against the Parkowski Points before bringing any recommendations forward to the full committee.
5. Continue to work on identifying existing studies within Delaware and from surrounding states that document the attitudes and opinions of private landowners concerning the voluntary participation in conservation programs (aim here is to increase participation rates) Sarah Cooksey will lead this effort for the carrot committee.
6. At the March meeting of the DWAC present up two to three case study incentive approaches for consideration.
7. Continue to coordinate with DNREC Conservation and Restoration subcommittee.