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GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENT, GREAT LAKES, AND ENERGY
LANSING



LIESL EICHLER CLARK
DIRECTOR

MICHIGAN COUNCIL ON CLIMATE SOLUTIONS MEETING
Draft Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, November 23, 2021 – 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.
Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams
Find meeting information at Michigan.gov/Climate

Attendees

Niles Annelin
Steve Bakkal
Frank Beaver
Liesl Clark
Kerry Duggan
Meghan Groen
James Harrison
Judson Herzer
Marnese Jackson
Phyllis Meadows

Jonathan Overpeck
Tanya Paslawski
Cynthia Render-Williams
Joseph Rivet
Phillip Roos
Dan Scripps
Derrell Slaughter
Samuel Stolper
Scott Whitcomb

MEETING GOALS

- Review and discuss recommendations from the Natural Working Lands (NWL) and Forest Products Workgroup.

Meeting Notes

- **Welcome, Attendance (Liesl Clark, Director, EGLE)**
 - The meeting commenced at 3:00 p.m.
 - Attendance was taken.
 - Council members received the recommendation text ahead of the meeting and were asked to provide feedback via a survey.
- **Council Business (Liesl Clark, EGLE)**
 - Frank Beaver moved and Phillip Roos seconded a motion to approve the agenda. The agenda was approved unanimously by voice vote.

- Phillip Roos moved and Phyllis Meadows seconded a motion to approve minutes from the November 1 council meeting. The minutes were approved unanimously by voice vote.
 - James Harrison was incorrectly marked as having attended the last meeting. The minutes will be updated to reflect this.
- Public Listening Sessions:
 - Wednesday, December 1: 9:30a.m.-11:30 a.m.
 - Thursday, December 2: 6:00p.m.-8:00 p.m.
 - More information can be found at Michigan.gov/climate
- December 3 meeting:
 - EGLE will be sending a survey summarizing what we've been hearing, putting the top recommendations in front of the Council and working through prioritization.
 - Where are we going to have the biggest impact as a state?
- December 15 meeting:
 - EGLE will be sharing an outline of the Healthy Climate Plan for the Council to react to.
- **Overview by Workgroup Co-Chairs (Lauren Cooper and Scott Whitcomb)**
 - Michigan is very well positioned to fully leverage natural working lands as a climate solution.
 - Process:
 - 11 stakeholder meetings with diverse stakeholders
 - 4-phase process
 - Phase 1: Developed guiding principles and level-setting presentations
 - Phase 2: Topical deep dives and discussions
 - Phase 3: Split into subgroups to draft recommendations
 - Phase 4: Reviewed and refined the list of recommendations
 - Workgroup members were encouraged to provide input during discussions and through written feedback.
 - The land sector does provide a lot of opportunities for both mitigate and reduce emissions. Examples:
 - Avoiding forest lost
 - Inclusion and improvement of soil carbon
 - Reducing agricultural emissions
 - Increasing plant-based consumption and reducing food waste
 - Looking at the carbon stored in the landscape and the materials the landscapes can provide
 - Opportunity assessment for the state of Michigan

- Healthy forests: over 12 million tons of CO₂e/year
 - Healthy soils: about 8 million tons of CO₂e/year
 - Healthy freshwater systems (not including wetland conversion)
- Recommendation 1: Healthy Forests – Maintain and develop healthy forests across public and private land.
 - Keeping forests as forests
 - Reforestation
 - Urban Forestry
 - Considering carbon management in decision making
 - Billions Tree Initiative (plant one billion trees by 2050)
- Recommendation 2: Healthy Soils – Implement a Healthy Soils Act for Michigan to set a floor for future funding and attract additional funding for soil, water, and habitat conservation
 - Better use of agricultural best practices
 - Improving on deliverables for Farm Bill measures
- Recommendation 3: Healthy Freshwater Systems –Protect existing wetlands and waterways, create new and restore wetlands where appropriate, and increase carbon storage in waterway green infrastructure to increase both mitigation and adaptation benefits
 - Conservation practices focused on waterways
 - Use of green infrastructure
- Recommendation 4: Climate-Beneficial Bioeconomy - Creating a bioeconomy that promotes natural materials production, reduces emissions across all NEL commodities, reduces waste, and promotes sustainable land use
 - Increase use of forest products
 - Supporting low-emissions commodities production
 - Products like mass timber in place of concrete and steel, for example
 - Eliminated waste in the food-production system
 - There were differing views from workgroup members on plant-rich diets
- Recommendation 5: Leadership, education, and advocacy
 - Almost all of the subgroups mentioned the need for more data and analysis
 - Promoting sustainable land-use planning
 - Factoring NWL into climate decision making
 - There was advocacy for reducing or eliminating fossil fuel use on NWL, but not consensus.
- Equity and Environmental Justice Considerations
 - Financial impacts

- Opportunity to invest in rural landscapes, but it may also disproportionately benefit those that already own land, further perpetuating unequal ownership patterns
 - Tree planting in urban areas can drive down utility costs
 - Job creation in certain sectors and reduction over time in others
 - Health impacts
 - Improved air and water quality, physical and mental health benefits
 - Increased access to natural resources
 - Adaptation benefits
 - Increased production on working agricultural and forest lands over time – being proactive about the changing climate
- **Council Discussion of Recommendations**
 - Recommendation 1:
 - A lot of trees are experiencing forest mortality due to climate change impacts like wildfire and insects. How does the state put into play an effective management system?
 - How do you envision the state should incentivize these actions? It may be hard to implement without incentives. Are there roles the state can play?
 - Carbon markets, especially for private landowners can play a role.
 - A concern for carbon markets is that Michigan has landowners who are selling their offset credits into other states' carbon markets, so we need to make sure we're not double counting those offsets.
 - On state land, keeping the forests healthy and productive.
 - In the detailed recommendations, looking at the current frameworks to leverage existing tools and expanding grants.
 - There is a significant suite of incentives for folks to participate in most of the recommendations
 - What levers can be used to engage landowners and expand funding?
 - There is a suite of state programs that leverage federal dollars for most of the recommendations that have been outlined.
 - How close are we with existing funding to reach goals? How far to do have to go with additional incentives to get to where we want to go?
 - Things have to be scaled up a lot to have an impact.

- To get a sense for the order of magnitude, there was a grant for \$5 million to plant trees in lower Michigan on low performing lands, so far it has planted about five million trees
- Reforestation is expensive, and even more so in an urban context
- There are a lot of opportunities to drive this through economic benefits
- Don't just consider the costs, it should be a whole economic analysis to look at the benefits these recommendations could bring. Some could be viewed more as investments, rather than upfront costs.
- How do you plan to education consumers around the incentives available?
 - There is value in partnerships and building the ideas that trees can be carbon solutions
 - Leadership from the state to bring people together
 - Strategically talk about these solutions to highlight the values that landowners have (ex: some people aren't ready to talk about carbon solutions or tying solutions to health outcomes)
 - Need more non-traditional partners
- Questions from the chat:
 - How many trees are in Michigan right now? One billion sounds like a lot but if it is only a 10% increase then that may sound more manageable.
 - There is an estimated 14 billion trees in MI
 - The question is where the billion new trees go
 - Question on capacity – how many licensed foresters do we have per county now?
 - Roughly 225 registered foresters as of 2018.
- How tightly linked is this to the soil recommendation?
 - It is definitely cross-cutting.
 - If we don't do one, can we do the other? Can the recommendations stand alone?
 - There are clearly linkages, but they can pursued separately. They garget different landowners.
- Why is reforestation more expensive in urban areas?
 - Generally, we like to plant larger trees in urban areas (bigger tree=higher price)
 - Siting trees in urban areas is more difficult

- More permits and equipment are needed to plant
 - There is follow up needed in both rural and urban settings
 - Caution on tree planting campaigns. Thought needs to be put into location, follow-up, etc. to make tree planting successful.
 - Was there consideration on locally sourced supply chain?
 - The workgroup didn't get into that level of analysis.
 - We'd want to make sure that the supply is in place.
- Recommendation 2:
 - "Promote agricultural conservation best practices" Can you unpack this phrase a bit? What really works?
 - Some states have done best management practices (BMPs)
 - Adoption, funding, and technical assistance are barriers
 - Agricultural producers want to do the right thing when it makes economic sense
 - Some other great lakes states do better with Farm Bill funds, look to them for best practices
- Recommendation 3:
 - Urban usage of wastewater systems and green infrastructure is an area where a lot can be gained even if it is a smaller emissions reduction footprint.
 - What would be the priority of any intervention? There are a lot of co-benefits to many of these actions.
 - Is there a way to lift up equity considerations in all of the recommendations like how it is noted in this recommendation?
 - Yes, there are definite opportunities to build it up more in the other recommendations.
 - The workgroups guiding principles are meant to be applicable to all recommendation and include attention to equity.
 - Recommendations 1, 2, and 3 are particularly a part of the Michigan brand/identity.
 - Sense of sequencing here... how long-term is restoration? What do you do first and how long until you see scale benefits?
 - Wetland restoration takes many years, and they release carbon when disturbed. A priority would be to avoid wetland destruction (emissions avoidance). Replacing a wetland does not have the same benefits.

- Baking in these considerations as decisions are made. Such as having additional metrics aside from costs when the state is making infrastructure decisions.
 - This recommendation also speaks to reduction of heat sinks as a contributing factor in Michigan.
 - Being able to leverage federal funding for green infrastructure.
- Recommendation 4:
 - This is a real opportunity for the state to be a leader in something that will be an economic engine in rural areas. Other states could follow our lead.
 - Is there an opportunity to add communities to this recommendation? How do we ensure we aren't missing the consumer component?
 - This will be the challenge of the council as they implement the recommendations
 - This recommendation encompasses a lot and there is potential for innovative thinking beyond just the actors who have a lot of land.
 - Explicitly state that we need to engage a broad community
 - Chat Comments:
 - An apparent significant economic development opportunity - would want to do all we can to assertively and aggressively attack this opportunity.
 - If we also reduce food waste via robust statewide composting we can use that compost to help create healthy soils, and also reduce methane emissions from landfills which comes from the food waste that is sent there.
- Recommendation 5:
 - This is another one where the state can show leadership.
 - We don't get anywhere if we can't move toward eliminating fossil fuel production on public land. What was the counter argument to this point?
 - From a state agency perspective, they are walking the balance between fossil fuel development and wildlife management. We need to point to a more systematic step-down that is enabled through statute and done with the right stakeholders.
 - Offsets seem to come up a lot in this area. Is there a discussion to be had of how we want to treat those?
 - We're staking a lot on offsets in non-local projects and double counting is a big problem. A comprehensive inventory of

accounting would help. Michigan could be a leader in going after comprehensive accounting.

- We can't offset our way out of the climate solution. They are short term opportunities. The longer term strategy is the bioeconomy.
- Access to information. Would like to see MI as a leader state here. But do have concerns about:
 - Our assumptions around public knowledge around stewardship of trees and the education of private landowners
 - Making sure these are equitable/accessible jobs
- **Circular Economy Recommendations (Chad Rogers, EGLE):**
 - Background:
 - There were several recommendations that fell outside the five workgroups
 - There was a meeting on November 16 leading to a discussion on this topic
 - Michigan generates and landfills approximately 8,000,000 tons annually (not including imports and additional materials such as construction waste)
 - In 2017, a waste characterization analysis was conducted
 - Food waste, non-packaging paper, and cardboard were the highest three (followed by various plastics)
 - Metal is about 4% by weight
 - Recommendations:
 - Food waste: Michigan should adopt and pursue the joint USDA/USEPA goal to reduce food loss by half no later than 2030. Also support technologies for composting and anaerobic digestion
 - Indirect benefits: address hunger, equity, and increases soil capacity to sequester carbon
 - There are challenges regarding composting and anaerobic digestion, but could be overcome in time
 - Circular, low-carbon economy: Michigan should position itself as global leader in the manufacturing and procurement of low-carbon and circular-economy products
 - Tripling the recycling rate in Michigan would avoid more than 10 million metric tons of CO₂e annually.
 - Job creation and economic development

- Retaining value of materials
 - Reducing landfill climate impacts: Require the insulation and best practices at landfills for gas capture
- **Council Discussion of Recommendations:**
 - There's a tendency to look at circular economy and wonder if there is a material impact. The emissions avoided from these recommendations are very meaningful, maybe around 10%.
 - What does the food waste process look like?
 - Food waste collection is pretty minimal from a residential standpoint, could be done in a similar manner to recycling
 - On the commercial side of things, there are different types of interventions:
 - Animal feed
 - Digesters
 - Look at the full lifecycle of food and see where can we make interventions to reduce food waste
 - There has been a lot of talk about the lack of market for recycled materials, especially plastic. Could you talk about that issue?
 - In Michigan the markets are strong, some of the issues you hear in the news is more relevant to the coast.
 - The importance of purchasing recyclable products
- **Next Steps (Liesl Clark, EGLE)**
 - The next meeting is December 3 from 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. It will be a discussion of the recommendations and prioritization.
 - Meeting materials and recordings are available at [Michigan.gov/climate](https://www.michigan.gov/climate).
 - Comments on the natural and working lands recommendations can be sent to EGLE-NWLForestClimate@Michigan.gov.
- **Adjournment**
 - The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Approved at December 3, 2021, Council on Climate Solutions meeting.