



STATE OF VERMONT
General Assembly

Vermont Forest Carbon Sequestration Working Group

MINUTES- August 19, 2019

The Vermont Forest Carbon Sequestration Working Group met on Monday, August 19, 2019, beginning at 9:17 a.m. in Room 10 of the State House in Montpelier, Vermont.

Working Group Members Present

Michael Snyder, Chair
Rep. John L. Bartholomew
Rep. Mark Higley
Sen. Ruth Hardy
Sen. Corey Parent

Jack Byrne
Jim Shallow
Robert Turner
Stephen Webster

Staff Present

Deb Curtis, Office of Legislative Council
Ellen Czajkowski, Office of Legislative Council
Jane Lazorchak, Department of Fish & Wildlife
Mark Perrault, Joint Fiscal Office
Becca Washburn, Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation

Chair Snyder welcomed the group and had all members introduce themselves. The members of the staff present were then introduced. Chair Snyder asked if there were any proposed changes to the agenda. There were none.

Chair Snyder reviewed the Working Group's charge as set forth in Section 9 of Act 83. Chair Snyder stated that the Group is a study committee and is not required to create anything but must study the issues described in the Act and then report back to the Legislature. Representative Higley asked if the charge required the forest carbon sequestration program recommended by the Group be a State-run program. Chair Snyder responded that the charge does not require the program to be State run and the Group would consider different options. The Group then discussed the charge.

Chair Snyder then reviewed the deliverables required by the charge. Mr. Byrne then asked if the Legislature was required to act on the report written by the Group. Chair Snyder responded no. Senator Hardy explained that Legislature is not required to act upon any result from the Group, but that there is significant interest in this subject, as indicated by the formation of this Group. Mr. Webster then asked if any of the members could explain the legislative path of Act 83 and how the Working Group was decided upon. Senator Hardy and Representative Bartholomew briefly described some of the work that the Agriculture Committees did on Act 83.

Mr. Webster then asked which forest block in the State was the largest and if forest carbon sequestration should be focused on the largest blocks. Chair Snyder named three of the largest forest

blocks, with assistance from Ms. Lazorchak and Ms. Washburn. Mr. Byrne stated that the forest carbon sequestration project at Middlebury College involved 2,400 acres and that the company BlueSource, which facilitated the project, stated that it was smaller than they normally work on. Mr. Higley stated that he spoke with a company called Forest Carbon Works that specifically works with small landowners on forest carbon sequestration projects. They work with parcels as small as 40 acres. Senator Parent asked Mr. Byrne about the value of the carbon involved with the Middlebury project. Mr. Byrne said it was valued at \$10/acre and sold for \$9.50/acre and that he could provide further details at a future meeting of the Group. Senator Parent stated that it is important for the Group to consider the economic aspects of these projects and the impacts enrolling many parcels of forest will have.

Chair Snyder next turned to the technical literature that was posted on the Group's website. He asked if anyone had input on how to decide what should be included in the Group's review and if anyone had any additions. Mr. Shallow stated that he had further information he would like the Group to consider. Chair Snyder asked that additional resources for the literature review be added to the website no later than September 2. Chair Snyder stated that many substantive reports had already been written on this subject and multiple done in Vermont. These reports will be important for informing the Group's work.

Mr. Turner asked when the drafting of the Group's report will begin. Chair Snyder stated that by the next meeting the Office of Legislative Council will clarify who will oversee drafting the report. Mr. Turner suggested that a subcommittee of the Group begin to outline and create a rough draft of the report based on the legislative charge. Chair Snyder asked for volunteers for the report drafting subcommittee. The subcommittee volunteers are Mr. Turner, Mr. Byrne, Mr. Shallow, and Ms. Danks. Ms. Danks was not present at the meeting but is a technical expert who has studied and written about this subject before. The Group agreed that she would probably like to be involved in the report drafting. The subcommittee will have a draft at the next meeting.

Mr. Turner then gave an overview of the background reading that is posted on the Group's website. He has drafted an annotated bibliography discussing the posted information. He encouraged the group to begin by reading the Vermont Forest Carbon Report.

Mr. Turner then gave a presentation to the Group, entitled *Carbon From the Forest to the Market*. The slides from the presentation are on the Group's website. The presentation was intended to introduce the Group to key terms related to forest carbon sequestration and background information on the subject.

Chair Snyder then asked the Group members what the agenda for the next meeting should include. The Group agreed that the meeting should focus on the first task listed in the legislative charge, which is "review of available information on the feasibility of enrolling public and private land from Vermont in a carbon sequestration market, including review of existing feasibility analyses specific to the development of forest carbon sequestration projects in New England and Vermont." The Group agreed that they should begin by hearing details of forest carbon sequestration projects that have already been done. Mr. Byrne volunteered to speak about his experience with the Middlebury College forest carbon sequestration project. Mr. Turner also volunteered to present about projects he has worked on. Mr. Shallow volunteered to present or have someone from The Nature Conservancy present on their project. It was also agreed that Mr. Byrne would reach out to BlueSource, a company that works on these projects, and ask them to present. The Group would also like to hear from Forest Carbon Works about projects they have worked on. The Group will also hear an update from the drafting subcommittee on the status of the draft report. The Group will also plan how to address the other tasks listed in the Act 83 legislative charge.

Chair Snyder asked all of the Group members to fill out the Doodle poll in order to determine the dates for the rest of the meetings. Rep. Bartholomew asked if physical presence was required for each meeting. Chair Snyder said yes, unless there was a compelling reason. Chair Snyder stated that

physical presence made it easier to engage in discussion and was important because there will likely be four meetings or fewer.

Rep. Higley asked how public these meetings are and if more publicity should be done to advertise them. Chair Snyder stated that all meetings are open to the public, and the public is encouraged to attend. He said that public comment time is allotted for on the agenda in case members of the public would like to speak. Chair Snyder asked the only member of the public present, Mr. Jared Carpenter of The Nature Conservancy, if he would like to speak. Mr. Carpenter declined.

Chair Snyder reminded the Group that the Legislature provided per diem pay for the members and asked Legislative Counsel to look into how that per diem is paid to the members who are not State employees.

The Working Group adjourned at 12:40 p.m. The next meeting is not yet scheduled, but will be based on the members' availability and announced after they complete the Doodle Poll.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen Czajkowski
Legislative Counsel