

Agriculture, Seafood and Forestry Board
Meeting Date: Thursday, February 13, 2025
Generated by Lisa Ledman
Approved June 12, 2025

1. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 12:00 PM

2. ROLL CALL

A. Confirmation of Quorum

Members present included Ben Beale, Bonnie Browne, Donald LaRocco, Kaitlin Fraer, Connie Gunn, Kellie Hinkle, James Moore, Stephen Reeves, Joseph Wood

B. Welcome Guests

Chris Kaselemis, St. Mary's County Economic Development
Emily Lacey, St. Mary's County Economic Development
Lisa Ledman, St. Mary's County Economic Development
Viv Marek, Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust
Joan Bearden, St. Mary's County Farm Bureau
Martin Proulx, Maryland Department of Agriculture

C. Approval of the December 12, 2024 Minutes

I move to approve Minutes from December 12, 2024 Agriculture, Seafood & Forestry Board Meeting. Motion by Stephen Reeves, second Bonnie Browne
Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Ben Beale, Bonnie Browne, Donald LaRocco, Kaitlin Fraer, Connie Gunn, James Moore, Stephen Reeves, Joseph Wood

3. PRESENTATION

A. Statewide Guidance Document for Value Added Agriculture & Agritourism

Martin Proulx, Value Added Agricultural Specialist, Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA), gave a presentation to the Board about the development of Maryland Statewide Guidance Document for Value Added Agriculture & Agritourism. MDA is looking to work and collaborate with colleagues and stakeholders to streamline and consolidate regulation from the top down to open the door to opportunity for farms and agriculture.

The definition of Value Added Agriculture is "... The alteration or enhancement of a raw agricultural product, including livestock, or an agricultural service in a way that increases the product or service's worth to a consumer and brings more revenue to a farmer, producer, or processor. This includes all enterprises, including those providing equine activities, in which an agricultural business or the agricultural business's products or services are altered, marketed, produced, or processed in a way that adds income to a farmer, producer, or processor."

Mr. Proulx pointed out that there is a Tangled Regulatory Web consisting of all levels of government (Federal-State-Local). MDA's Statewide Guidance Document is intended to educate State and Local agencies and officials on the diversity and evolution of agricultural industries, to include agricultural processing and Agritourism, for the sake of regulatory and policy-based decision making.

4. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Agriculture Land Preservation Advisory Board

Subcommittee membership includes Phil Langley, Alan Polk, Stephen Reeves, Michael Sirk, and Joseph Wood. No update at this time.

B. Agriculture Reconciliation Committee

Subcommittee membership includes Kaitlin Fraer, Connie Gunn, Stephen Reeves, Michael Sirk, Joseph Wood. No update at this time.

5. OLD BUSINESS

A. Agriculture Updates

Lisa Ledman told the Board that the Southern Maryland Agricultural & Aquacultural Draft Report was complete and copies were available. Kellie Hinkle added that this report was recommended in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for St. Mary's County. SMADC utilized Rural Maryland Economic Development Funding to complete the project for all Southern Maryland Counties.

B. Seafood/Aquaculture Updates

Lisa Ledman shared with the Board that the Southern Maryland Blue Catfish Feasibility Study Draft is being revised and copies will be distributed to the Board when it is available again.

C. Forestry Updates

No updates at this time.

D. Maryland Agriculture Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF)

Lisa Ledman shared with the Board that appraisals for the current MALPF Applications were in the process of being completed. MALPF has voted to combine cycles for FY25 & FY26. DED has continued to work with interested landowners and currently has interest from 7 qualifying properties total 1,078 acres.

E. Rural Legacy

Southern Maryland Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) – No update.

Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust (PTLT) – Viv Marek stated that PTLT is waiting on Department of Natural Resources approval on a couple of applications to move forward to settlement. The proposed Huntersville Rural Legacy Area Expansion has been placed on hold.

F. Farmers Markets

Emily Lacey shared that the Home Grown Farm Market is open Saturdays from 10 am until 1 pm for the winter season and is open year round. During the summer, also open Wednesdays from 9 am until 1 pm. The California Farmers Market opens May 3 - November 22, Saturdays from 9 am until 1 pm. New 2025 applications are available. The Barns at New Market Winter Market is open Saturdays from 10-2. The Seasonal Market will be open April 1 - October 31, Monday - Fridays 8 am until 5 pm and Saturdays from 9 am until 3 pm.

G. Regional Agriculture Center (RAC) Update

James Moore questioned what happened to the original money that was not refunded to the Southern Maryland Agriculture Development Commission (SMADC). Chris Kaselemis responded that SMADC had requested many changes to the plans that were created for this project, each change had a cost associated with it. At the termination of the agreement, St. Mary's County turned over the plans to SMADC so they now own the plans

that were paid for using that funding. Ben Beale would like the Commissioners of St. Mary's County to look to the Southern Maryland Agricultural & Aquacultural Report for GAP analysis action items to be funded in place of money that the County had committed to the RAC.

6. NEW BUSINESS

A. Agriculture & Seafood Brand

Kellie Hinkle updated the Board of an initiative outlined in the CEDs to establish a St. Mary's County Agriculture & Seafood Brand. Ms. Hinkle thanked the Board members that participated in the focus groups and steering committees that met with a consultant to determine what the Brand should look like. The Consultant development work is funded using DED's current budget however a request for FY26 funding of \$40,000 was submitted to support marketing and promotion of the Brand. DED also submitted a request for additional FY26 funding in the amount of \$14,112 to increase the hours for the Part-Time Market Manager at the Barns at New Market.

I move to draft a letter to the Commissioners of St. Mary's County supporting the Department of Economic Development's new funding requests for Fiscal Year 2026.

Motion by Connie Gunn, second Stephen Reeves

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Ben Beale, Bonnie Browne, Donald LaRocco, Kaitlin Fraer, Connie Gunn, James Moore, Stephen Reeves, Joseph Wood

B. Board Member Open Comment Period

Joseph Wood informed the Board that the Governor has cut \$100,000 from SMADC's current budget and is proposing to remove \$250,000 from the Commission's budget each year through fiscal year 2029. The Board agreed that SMADC is an asset to the Southern Maryland Agriculture Community and will be sorely missed if their funding is not restored.

I move to draft a letter requesting the Commissioners for St. Mary's County petition the Governor to maintain level funding for SMADC in the future.

Motion by Connie Gunn, second James Moore

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Ben Beale, Bonnie Browne, Donald LaRocco, Kaitlin Fraer, Connie Gunn, James Moore, Stephen Reeves, Joseph Wood

Ben Beale distributed the latest University of Maryland Extension's St. Mary's County Newsletter. He updated the Board on avian influenza, reporting that there were currently no cases in St. Mary's County. Mr. Beale stated that even with all the recent snow and rain, St. Mary's County still has about a 10-inch deficit.

B. Partner Updates

Joan Bearden told the Board about Farm Bureau's Legislative Day in Annapolis.

7. ADJOURN

I move to adjourn the February 13, 2025 Agriculture, Seafood & Forestry Board Meeting.

Motion by James Moore, second by Stephen Reeves

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Ben Beale, Bonnie Browne, Donald LaRocco, Kaitlin Fraer, Connie Gunn, James Moore, Stephen Reeves, Joseph Wood