

Agriculture, Seafood and Forestry Board
Meeting Date: Thursday, June 12, 2025
Generated by Emily Lacey
Approved August 14, 2025

1. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 12:00 PM

2. ROLL CALL

A. Confirmation of Quorum

Members present included Scott Bacon, Ben Beale, Bonnie Browne, Kaitlin Fraer, Sydney Garner, Connie Gunn, Phil Langley, Alan Polk, Stephen Reeves, Michael Sirk, Joseph Wood

B. Welcome Guests

Chris Kaselemis, St. Mary's County Economic Development

Emily Lacey, St. Mary's County Economic Development

Viv Marrek, Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust

Marti Bagwell, Program Administrator, Southern Maryland Resource Conservation & Development

Liz Mildenstein, Executive Director, Visit St. Mary's

C. Approval of the February 13, 2023 Minutes

I move to approve Minutes from February 13, 2025 Agriculture, Seafood & Forestry Board Meeting. Motion by Connie Gunn, second Ben Beale

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Scott Bacon, Ben Beale, Bonnie Browne, Kaitlin Fraer, Connie Gunn, Phil Langley, Alan Polk, Stephen Reeves, Michael Sirk, Joseph Wood

D. Election of Officers

I move to elect Joseph Wood as Chair and Stephen Reeves as Vice-Chair of the Agriculture, Seafood & Forestry Board.

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Scott Bacon, Ben Beale, Bonnie Browne, Kaitlin Fraer, Connie Gunn, Phil Langley, Alan Polk, Stephen Reeves, Michael Sirk, Joseph Wood

3. PRESENTATION

A. Unified Wood

Jeff Carroll from Unified Wood Economy gave a presentation to the Board about his company that finds value in fallen trees. Unified Wood Economy works with community partners to recycle trees from cities, towns, neighborhoods, and rural areas that have fallen from storm damage, age, disease, development or other reasons. These trees normally end up in landfills where Unified Wood Economy works to keep this wood in circulation, providing value-added products and reducing the release of carbon in the atmosphere. Such products include

- high value lumber which is used by builders and other end users such as furniture manufactures, architects, and artisans

- biochar is a versatile carbon-based product that has many diverse uses, such as a soil amendment and water filtration

- nutrient-rich compost which supports plant growth as nature's fertilizer everywhere from organic backyard gardening to large-scale agriculture.

Bonnie Browne questioned if this process would be harmful for the Amish Community that already provides similar services. Ben Beale commented that there is currently a high demand for wood in our area with a lot of family-owned mills. Connie Gunn suggested that Ben Beale and Jeff Carroll meet and discuss options privately.

Liz Mildenstein, the Executive Director for Visit St. Mary's updated the Board of the tourism entity's efforts to promote and market St. Mary's County as a destination for overnight visitors and day trippers.

4. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Agriculture Land Preservation Advisory Board

Subcommittee membership includes Phil Langley, Alan Polk, Stephen Reeves, Michael Sirk, and Joseph Wood. The Agriculture Land Preservation Advisory Board met at the conclusion of the Agriculture, Seafood & Forestry Board Meeting.

I move to approve a request to amend the preliminary release for the Raum/Pinkerton Easement (MALPF File # 18-86-01.) It is the intention of the landowner to void the lot (tax account # 19-03-180560) and recombine it with the same tax parcel as the farm (tax account #19-03-020797.)

Motion by Phil Langley, second Joseph Wood

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Phil Langley, Alan Polk, Stephen Reeves, Joseph Wood

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

No updates at this time.

B. Seafood/Aquaculture Updates

Phil Langley updated the Board that the winter crab dredge survey is down, but still not below the threshold so little to no change to regulations. The Stripped Bass population is trending low and there is a possible 10% reduction in commercial stripe bass harvesting. Oysters doing well.

C. Forestry Updates

No updates at this time.

D. Maryland Agriculture Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF)

Sydney Garner shared with the Board that St. Mary's County has submitted all required Annual Inspections to MALPF for review.

At the May 27, 2025 MALPF Board Meeting, MALPF Staff announced that St. Mary's County would have an allocation of \$3.5 million for the FY25-26 combined Easement Cycle (County funding - \$1,333,333 & State funding - \$1,563,400)

Joseph Wood's term on the State MALPF Board will expire on July 1, 2025.

E. Rural Legacy

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

Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust (PTLT) – Viv Marek stated that PTLT anticipates closing soon on the 136 acre Bowling property. There are an additional 2 easements in the works.

F. Farmers Markets

Emily Lacey shared that both the Home Grown Farm Market and the California Farmers Market are open Saturdays from 9 am until 1 pm. The Barns at New Market Seasonal Stalls are open Mondays – Saturdays from 8 am until 5 pm and the Value-Added Building is open Saturdays from 9 am until 3 pm.

6. NEW BUSINESS

A. Agriculture & Seafood Brand

Sydney Garner presented the Board with the new St. Mary's County AgriCoast Brand. The local and branding concept was well received by the Board.

B. Board Member Open Comment Period

Ben Beale told the Board that the St. Mary's County Department of Aging and Community Services is hosting the Farmers Feeding St. Mary's again this year in August and September.

Mr. Beale also shared that there was a new Dean for the University of Maryland Extension, Craig Beyrouthy.

Mr. Beale stated that the rain is causing some farmers to replant their corn. There is high crop damage this year from deer. The cooler temperatures have caused beans to not grow as quickly or regrown after deer damage. There is also damage to the corn from cold and wet weather. Wheat is also affected by the rain. Sweet corn is currently selling at \$10/dozen. Tomatoes, squash, and peppers are doing well. Sales are the Loveville Produce are doing well however the Amish community is reporting lower sales stating that the Hispanic community sales have dropped significantly in the last three months.

B. Partner Updates

No updates at this time.

7. ADJOURN

I move to adjourn the June 12, 2025 Agriculture, Seafood & Forestry Board Meeting.

Motion by Bonnie Browne, second by Connie Gunn

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Scott Bacon, Ben Beale, Bonnie Browne, Kaitlin Fraer, Connie Gunn, Phil Langley, Alan Polk, Stephen Reeves, Michael Sirk, Joseph Wood