## Maine Climate Council Natural and Working Lands Work Group Meeting Forest Carbon Subgroup Meeting Notes Friday, December 15, 2023; 9:00 am – 12:00 pm DACF's Bolton Hill Facility, 2870 North Belfast Ave., Augusta

At this meeting, the Subgroup:

- Reviewed the history of forest carbon recommendation development
- Discussed progress made and/or existing barriers for each recommendation
- Chosen a few key recommendations to focus on during the update process
- Agreed on an approach to proposing concrete updates to the Open Space Tax Program
- Provided an opportunity for public input

The following numbers correspond to the recommendations in the Maine Forest Carbon Task Force (FCTF) final report.

#1. Review Current Harvest Levels. **Ivan Fernandez, Adam Daigneault, and Jereme Frank** agreed to update figures to reflect new FIA data, and provide estimates based on various acreage categories (including <10,000-acre ownerships).

#2. Review Practice-Based Forest Carbon Programs. The Subgroup delegated this to **Andy Whitman** for ongoing tracking to serve as an up-to-date clearinghouse for landowners. Won't be possible to summarize fully in 4 months, but may be possible to identify key variables/risks/failure points and develop a brief summary of these issues in the next month or two.

#3. Identify Climate-Friendly Forest Management Practices. The Subgroup viewed this work as largely complete. More recent learnings focus on the distinctions in stocking between northern and southern Maine and how that influences which forest management practices are most beneficial in each region. In both regions, of greatest importance is avoiding forest conversion.

#4a. Increase Technical Assistance to Landowners. The Subgroup would like to focus on this more, exploring ways to further capitalize on MFS's increasing staff capacity (while recognizing 2 field forester positions are still vacant). Areas of discussion included increasing alignment with NRCS and collaboration with SWCDs, outreach to agricultural producers, outreach to new forestland owners unfamiliar with forest management, and possibly identifying entities that could partner with MFS to increase landowner outreach.

#4b. Develop and/or Offer Financial Incentives to Landowners. The Subgroup acknowledged that this recommendation hinged on an understanding of forest carbon programs currently available to landowners, and that the field of options has evolved since the FCTF report was issued. It will be necessary to have further information on existing options in order to assess the value of Maine partnering with an entity to develop a program tailored to Maine landowners.

Until then, **Andy Whitman** should develop this understanding and serve as the clearinghouse for landowners. The Subgroup will continue discussing equity considerations related to this recommendation: e.g. how can we begin engaging those not yet engaged? It will also continue to explore opportunities that may be associated with NEFF's Climate-Smart Commodities grant work, and Forest Carbon for Commercial Landowners (FCCL) Phase 2, should that work move forward.

#5. Identify Incentives for Loggers. Progress on MFS staffing and federal funding for portable bridges was noted. **Dana Doran** will develop a bulleted list of ideas for making progress on promoting use of third-party certified harvesting companies, increasing the impact of the Direct Link loan fund, and providing landowner cost-share resources for Subgroup discussion. The Dirigo Loan Program was suggested during public comment as a potential new funding avenue.

#6. Update the Open Space Current Use Taxation Program. The Subgroup tasked an existing team of individuals to continue to develop proposed changes to the OS program that could be broadly supported and that align with the Forest Carbon Task Force's original recommendations. Those on the Subgroup that will participate include: Kaitlyn Nuzzo, Tom Doak, Tom Abello, Mark Berry, Mort Moesswilde, Alec Giffen, Chris Fife, Pat Strauch, and Dana Doran. Those also participating but not on the Subgroup include: Emily Horton, Jeff Romano, and Sally Stockwell. Kaitlyn will coordinate this work and share a brief summary of progress by 1/12/24 for inclusion in the next Subgroup meeting packet.

#7. Explore Opportunities for Partnerships with Commercial Forestland Owners.As noted in 4b above, the Subgroup will continue to discuss potential opportunities that FCCLPhase II, NEFF's Climate-Smart Commodities Project, and other efforts may present.

#8. Participate in Multi-State Forest Carbon Initiatives. **Jo D. Saffeir** will share the outcomes of the Northeast Net Zero Carbon Collaborative work that Maine, Vermont, and Massachusetts have engaged in over the past two years. Consulting firm Scale LLC will complete its work in early 2024.

#9. Recommend a Numeric Goal for Increased Carbon Sequestration in Maine. The Subgroup agreed that even with updated FIA data, the estimate of current sequestration of 12 MtCo2e/yr by Maine's forest sector should not be increased for a range of reasons highlighted in the FCTF report.

The next meeting will take place on Monday, January 22<sup>nd</sup> from 1-4 pm at Deering Building, Room 101. The other two meetings are:

## Wednesday, March 6, 9am - 12pm, Bolton Hill

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMsdeGuqzIsHNGnRO5hLz59B78uMCQ5mjv1

## Friday, March 29, 9am – 12pm, Bolton Hill

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZIpdO2hrTsoHtfSOGPFazxnm0CgTZWWyV31