

Maine Climate Council
Natural and Working Lands Work Group Meeting
Forest Carbon Subgroup Meeting Notes
Monday, January 21, 2024; 1:00 - 4:00 pm
Deering 101, Blossom Lane, Augusta

At this meeting, the Subgroup:

- Brainstormed strategies for key Forest Carbon Task Force recommendations
- Discussed 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. **Adam Daigneault**, presented the work that he, **Ivan Fernandez, and Jereme Frank** completed to update figures to reflect new FIA data, and provide more accurate ownership, stocking, and harvest level estimates within distinct acreage categories, including <10,000-acre ownerships (see 1/22/24 meeting materials). This analysis indicates that 7 million acres of forestland are owned by small landowners in the 10-10,000 acre category and that these lands account for 50% of the total private forest carbon stock in Maine. Harvest rates within this size class declined from 2017-21 as compared to 2015-19. Analysis of the stocking rates of various size classes can help identify how forest carbon could be enhanced through active forest management, such as thinning overstocked stands or planting poorly stocked forests. These data also highlight that significant portions of the small forestland owner forest area are classified as fully or overstocked forest that pose opportunities for improving forest health and carbon stocking through appropriate forest management practices. **Jereme will prepare an accompanying narrative to provide further context for the information on the tables.**

#2. Review Practice-Based Forest Carbon Programs. **Andy Whitman** presented a summary of existing forest carbon programs for the Subgroup's review (see 1/22/24 meeting materials). **Andy will draft a framework for landowners and other decision-makers of essential principles and components of forest carbon programs that helps ensure their effectiveness in advancing climate and forest carbon goals.**

#3. Identify Climate-Friendly Forest Management Practices. While the Subgroup viewed this work as largely complete, it acknowledged that a more refined list of climate-friendly forest management practices could be helpful to target actions with the greatest potential impact on and relevance to Maine's forests and forest landowners. **Andy Whitman will develop this list in concert with identifying key forest program carbon elements as noted in #2.**

#4a/b. Increase Technical Assistance and Offer Financial Incentives to Forest Landowners. Develop and/or Offer Financial Incentives to Landowners. The Subgroup agreed that MFS should provide support to landowners interested in implementing climate-friendly forest management practices and/or enrolling in existing public or private forest carbon programs. It also discussed continuing to consider the possibility of the state developing a forest carbon program in partnership with one or more entities. **Mort Moesswilde** will draft a concise list of existing landowner outreach and financial incentive programs.

#5. Identify Incentives for Loggers. The Subgroup reviewed a list of ideas Dana Doran developed for making further progress on actions that support high quality on-the-ground performance beyond the recent hiring of an MFS Forest Carbon Specialist and federal funding for portable bridges. **Dana Doran** and **Mort Moesswilde** will review incentive programs that could serve as potential models to provide support to logging contractors that helps achieve low-impact climate-friendly harvesting standards. One such model is the NY Watershed Agricultural Council's forest management implementation program.

#6. Update the Open Space Current Use Taxation Program. The Subgroup continued to express its support for a multi-party effort actively pursuing changes to the OS program that could be broadly supported and largely align with the Forest Carbon Task Force's original recommendations. This work is likely to conclude during this legislative session and therefore may not necessitate a recommendation to the Maine Climate Council.

#7. Explore Opportunities for Partnerships with Commercial Forestland Owners. **Alec Giffen** will provide brief summaries of the New England Forestry Foundation's (NEFF's) Climate-Smart Commodities Partnership and the Forest Carbon for Commercial Landowners (FCCL) projects.

#8. Participate in Multi-State Forest Carbon Initiatives. **Mort Moesswilde** will provide a brief summary of the Securing Northeast Forest Carbon Program, a 7-state effort to maximize private forest carbon in the Northeast through carbon sales in the voluntary and compliance markets, through special management practices, and through the use of conservation easements. **Stacy Knapp** will provide a summary of the Northeast State for Coordinated Air Use Management (NESCAUM) GHG Emissions Inventory Workgroup. When available, **Jo D. Saffier** will share the outcomes of the Northeast Net Zero Carbon Collaborative, which explored ways that ME, VT, and MA could potentially support achievement of one another's midcentury net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions goals.

#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.

Subgroup members tasked with work products agreed to provide materials by **February 21** for inclusion in the March 6th meeting packet.

