

**PRESENTATION TO THE CAC/LGAC MEETING ON DECEMBER 5TH, 2013 AT LOWE'S HOTEL
CAPACITY ASSESSMENT FOR THE WATERSHED IMPLEMENTATION PLANS**

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I. INTRODUCTION TO THE HUGHES CENTER FOR AGRO-ECOLOGY, INC.

Began in 1999 as a result of the pfisteria crises and the disharmony between agriculture and environmental interests

Mission is to support and promote the economic viability and the environmental sustainability of Maryland farms and forests as Maryland's preferred land use

Implements this Mission in three ways: 1) by funding applied research to address issues and problems concerning agriculture, forestry and natural resources; 2) by sharing the results of this research to Maryland's stakeholders in these areas, local governments, State agencies, the Legislature, various interested groups and individuals so that the results can be used by them in the management of their resources as well as their decision-making; and 3) by using the results from the research to influence policy and decision-making

Affiliated Foundation with the University of Maryland College Park and is a 501 (c) (3)

27 Member Board comprised of forestry interests, various agricultural interests, environmental interests, the Dean of the College of Agricultural and Natural Resources, the Legislature. Members come from diverse geographic areas and represent diverse perspectives when bringing their expertise to the table for discussion and decision-making.

II. THE PROJECT AND THE METHODOLOGY

As part of its recent grant from the Town Creek Foundation, the Center was asked to perform a capacity assessment of the local governments (which in most cases involved the WIP Teams) as to their capabilities to develop and implement their Watershed Implementation Plans to address Maryland's nutrient load reduction to the Bay as required by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The Center was asked to do this because we had organized and held the first set of regional meetings to organize and open communication among the State agencies and local governments at the startup of the Watershed Implementation process and the Center continues to play this role annually through the holding of two sets of regional meetings to benefit all involved.

With sample templates provided by Jamie Baxter of the Bay Trust as well as others, the Center developed an interview table comprised of 10 major categories covering administrative issues such as staff and funding, process issues such as accountability, the ways in which decisions are made as well as meetings held ; outreach issues such as participation and by whom, and the degree non-governmental organizations were brought into the process and finally through project issues such as project management and planning for projects. The interview table concluded with next steps and what two items could make a difference with the success of that jurisdiction's WIP.

Jurisdictions were divided up among the three staff for the interview process. Staff began by calling the WIP Team leaders and requesting that the Team Leader help with organizing the interview meetings. Some of the meetings involved multiple groups including non-governmental organizations, local government agencies and finance staff. Some of the meetings only involved the local government departments as they had subsumed the effort once their own series of public informational meetings had been held. On occasion, multiple meetings were needed. On most of the occasions, only one meeting was held. For example in Kent County, meetings were held with watershed associations in addition to governmental staff. In Howard County, interviews also involved the Columbia Homeowners Association, two Soil Conservation District representatives and two municipalities.

We went methodically through the interview table, also noting qualitative comments made during the meeting that would offer up valuable information as to why those interviewed felt they were strong or not so strong in the various areas covered by the Table.

The process took approximately 4-6 weeks, 23 counties, the City of Baltimore, some municipalities and other organizations were interviewed. The process began during the summer of 2012 and extended into early September with completion of the analysis. It should also be noted that if the Conowingo issue had been a viable one at the time, the replies may very well have been different.

III. FINDINGS & ASSUMPTIONS

The information received and compiled together yielded items in two basic areas: **Issues and Needs.**

What we had assumed was that the issues and needs would be very diverse with many being of particular interest only to a few jurisdictions and in some cases that was so. However, for the most part, the issues expressed were common across the board. For example:

- a) 20 jurisdictions noted concern with the technical support to be provided by the Maryland Department of the Environment as to timeliness.
- b) 14 jurisdictions said that the Maryland Assessment Scenario Tool (MAST) needed to be revised and corrected as the land use numbers were not correct and that its assessment capability for best management practice efficiencies needed to be improved.
- c) 17 jurisdictions noted that the best management practices and their efficiencies needed to be updated and that new best management practices needed to be added

Some of the needs that were expressed were:

- a) 18 jurisdictions wanted periodic regional meetings to share successes and to learn the latest from the state agencies and from each other. The Center has been able to continue to do this and provide that venue for the state agencies and local governments
- b) 13 jurisdictions said that they wanted an easy to use, on line resource for all best management practices, their applicability, cost and nutrient reduction
- c) 11 jurisdictions asked for circuit rider assistance to help with grant writing and to help with project implementation

- d) 20 jurisdictions said that they needed help with funding the Watershed Implementation Planning actions

What was of additional interest to us was the following that we had not anticipated:

a) Matters of Trust:

– clarification of the consequences – too vague – what will happen if we do not meet our goals but we are really trying.

- Inconsistent participation on the part of the State agencies such as State Highway, UMES, Eastern Shore Correctional Institute etc.

- Lack of State leadership in the form of feedback from the State after submittal of Final plans and Lack of leadership on the part of the Governor

b) Matters of Process:

– Coordination of permits between State and Federal as well as capabilities of State agencies to review projects in a timely as well as comprehensive manner

The issues and needs were summarized in a Memo dated November 15, 2012 from Former Governor Hughes to Governor O'Malley as well as to his Bay Cabinet which was discussed at a BayStat meeting and produced the following actions:

- a) Technical Webinars on process and tools
- b) Meetings involving Secretaries of Agriculture, Environment, Natural Resources and Planning with the counties (e.g. Conowingo)
- c) One-on-one meetings with local governments and MDE staff (specific concerns)
- d) Agreements with Environment and US Fish and Wildlife to help review project requests
- e) Streamlining efforts on the part of the Corps of Engineers and Critical Area Commission as to project review

IV. CHALLENGES

- a) The **regulated jurisdictions vs. the non-regulated jurisdictions** – all need to be involved in the process but the unregulated are of such diverse nature that they are often overlooked
- b) **Communication Tools as well as Assistance** – how to best inform constituents as to what the Plan contains, how it is being implemented, what the impact is, what the individual can do, and is this making a difference . This is a challenge not only among state agencies but also with small towns such as Willards, middle towns such as Easton, larger municipalities such as Lexington Park and Salisbury, large cities such as Baltimore and counties that lack available staff to do it all such as Somerset.

Not only is communication needed as noted above, but in addition, it is needed for the Legislature (and legislative turnover) and for local officials both longer serving officials as well as

newly elected.

- c) **Fully engaged and interested local officials** who work with their staffs and provide what assistance they can to strengthen the process locally. Currently this is not consistent.
- d) **The municipalities** and how to involve them as they are of diverse capability and population and are often overlooked.
- e) **Consistent funding** from all levels so that the goals are able to be met for 2017 and for 2025 and beyond.

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