Article - Natural Resources

§5–606.

(a) The district forestry board shall:

(1) Promote private forestry by assisting landowners in forest management, planting trees, conservation and development of tree crops, and protection of forests from fires, insects, and diseases;

(2) Make available to landowners the services of a forester and advise them with regard to their forest and tree crop problems;

(3) Assist the county assessors in their appraisal of forest lands for tax purposes;

(4) Disseminate forest conservation information and collect data concerning forest conservation problems of the State;

(5) Secure the cooperation and assistance of the United States and any of its agencies and State agencies in conservation of forest resources of the State;

(6) Assist private owners of forest land by advice as to the construction of flood control measures, seeding and planting of waste slopes, abandoned or eroded lands, and development of wildlife by planting food or cover producing trees, bushes, and shrubs;

(7) Receive and pass on proposed work plans for cutting forest lands;

(8) Maintain an office, keep a record of its transactions, and promptly file copies of its decisions and orders with the Department;

(9) Employ personnel, in addition to the district forester, as the Department approves; and

(10) Perform all acts necessary to attain the objectives of this subtitle.

(b) Any board or its agent may:

(1) Hold meetings and demonstrations in regard to conservation of natural resources;

(2) Enter into agreements with landowners within its county or district for a specified period of years;

(3) Cooperate with other government agencies to achieve better forest growth and promulgate conservation measures, including meeting at least annually with agricultural advisory boards as provided under § 2–504.1 of the Agriculture Article in order to encourage the promotion and retention of agricultural land and

forest land in their respective jurisdictions;

(4) Develop comprehensive forest management plans for conservation of soil resources and for control and prevention of soil erosion within the county or district;

(5) Enforce rules and regulations made by the Department. Each local board may suggest tentative rules and regulations of forest practice to accomplish objectives set forth in this subtitle and to carry out policies established by the Department. The board shall publish the tentative rules and regulations in one or more newspapers having a wide circulation in the area they cover, together with a notice of a public hearing which the board shall hold on them. The final draft of these rules and regulations shall be presented to the Department for approval. The board may summon witnesses for hearings on infraction of its rules and regulations and initiate a prosecution for violation of its rules. It shall forward copies of any proceedings and rulings to the Department and make an annual report of its proceedings and actions to the Department; and

(6) Promulgate safeguards for proper forest land use, such as those intended to:

(i) Provide for adequate restocking, after cutting, of trees of desirable species and condition;

(ii) Provide for reserving for growth and subsequent cutting, a sufficient growing stock of thrifty trees of desirable species to keep the land reasonably productive; and

(iii) Prevent clear–cutting, or limit the size of a tract to be clear–cut in areas where clear–cutting will seriously interfere with protection of a watershed, or in order to maintain a suitable growing stock to insure natural reproduction. However, any rule dealing with clear–cutting shall establish a procedure by which any operator of forest land may secure a permit to clear–cut particular lands upon proof that he has a bona fide intention of devoting the land to other than forest use; that the lands are appropriate for the proposed use; and that devoting the lands to the new use will not seriously interfere with the protection of the watershed.

(c) Subject to the approval of the Secretary, each board may impose fees for the purpose of offsetting its costs incurred in carrying out the requirements of this section, unless an equivalent amount of funds is provided to each board under § 5–307 of this title.