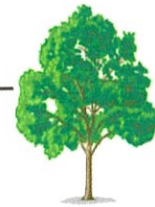


## ASSOCIATION OF FOREST INDUSTRIES, INC.



P.O. Box 501  
Huntingtown, Maryland 20639

February 28, 2024

### OPPOSITION TO BRFA'S PROPOSED \$500,000 REDUCTION TO THE *MEL NOLAND WOODLAND INCENTIVES AND FELLOWSHIP FUND*

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The Association of Forest Industries ("AFI") represents Maryland's forest products industry. **The Administration's proposed \$500,000 reduction to the *Mel Noland Woodland Incentives and Fellowship Fund* ("WIF") – via 2024 BRFA – is strongly opposed by Maryland's forest community. If the proposed WIF \$ reduction is approved, forestry's role in climate change mitigation and the Chesapeake Bay restoration effort – duly referenced in the Administration's December 28, 2023 "*Maryland's Climate Pollution Reduction Plan*" – will be measurably diminished.**

Bill Miles, Advocate  
billmilesmd@comcast.net/443-404-7449

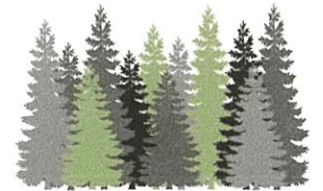
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#### HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

Maryland's forest community aligned itself in 2009 to secure enactment of the nationally acclaimed **Sustainable Forestry Act (Chapter 175)**. The Act not only declared the statutory nexus between a healthy managed forest and a healthy Chesapeake Bay, but also broadened the DNR Forest Service's principal funding source --- *Mel Noland Woodland Incentives and Fellowship Fund* (§5-307 NR) – to achieve the purpose and intent of the 2009 Act.

From 2009 until 2022, Maryland's forest community suffered from the delusion that a portion of revenues dedicated to the 2010 Trust Fund (Chapter 121, Acts of 2008) would be allocated to WIF as authorized by the enabling Act via §8-2A-04 NR. Not to be...so much so, then DNR Secretary Jeanie Haddaway-Riccio sought advice from Attorney General. On January 10, 2022, the AG ruled that such line-item eligibility for WIF, under the 2010 Trust Fund law, was no guarantee annual funding would be made available for WIF. To date, no such funding for WIF from the Trust Fund has been approved.

Distraught by the AG's ruling, Maryland's forest community appealed to the 2022 General Assembly resulting in a 2-fold legislative response: **FIRST**, a request was made to then-Governor Hogan by then-Delegate Luedtke and Delegate Stein to fund WIF at the \$1 million level sought by Maryland's forest community, ideally from the 2010 Trust Fund (*attached*). **SECOND**, having not received a favorable response from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, State lawmakers amended the *Great Maryland Outdoors Act of 2022* (Chapter 39) to include the \$1 million funding allocation to WIF...*effective July 1, 2023, and each fiscal year thereafter*. Alas, forestry thought, after 14 long years (2009 through 2023), WIF had finally become fiscally recognized/supported...*short-lived realization in view of the Administration's 2024 BRFA proposal to reduce the \$1 million WIF authorization by 50%*.



When one looks at the statutory mission of WIF (§5-307 NR, *attached*) in context with the December 28, 2023, *Maryland's Climate Pollution Reduction Plan*, Maryland can best achieve its climate change/Chesapeake Bay restoration goals of cleaner air and cleaner water through sustainably managing its 2.4 million acres of forest land – under the watchful eye of the DNR Forest Service -- as underscored by science and echoed by the Luedtke/Stein 2022 letter to then Governor-Hogan.



THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

The Honorable Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr.

Governor of Maryland

State House

100 State Circle

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Governor Hogan:

We write to respectfully request that you fund the Mel Noland Woodland Incentives Fund in your proposed fiscal year 2022 state spending plan. During this turbulent economic period when we are experiencing sizable reductions in state revenues, making these funds available would help allow the state to uphold its commitment to protecting the Chesapeake Bay without increasing spending.

Sustainable management of the State's remaining 2.4 million acres of publicly and privately-owned forest lands will enhance Maryland's environmental goals. Regretfully, the Mel Noland Woodland Incentives Fund has lacked funding to meet its statutory mandate to facilitate forest and tree stewardship in the State. We request that you encourage the BayStat Subcabinet to allocate \$1 million to the Mel Noland Woodland Incentive Fund from the fiscal year 2022 appropriation for the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays 2010 Trust Fundas authorized under §8-2A-04(c)(2)(iv) of the Natural Resources Article.

The Sustainable Forestry Act of 2009 declares sustainably managed forests as the State's preferred land use given the measurable nexus between a healthy forest and a healthy Chesapeake Bay. Despite this and numerous studies that have documented the nutrient mitigation benefits of sustainably managed forests, it is not clear whether any 2010 Trust Fund monies have ever been allocated to the Mel Noland Woodland Incentives Fund. In fact, our state has experienced escalated conversion of forest lands as our population has grown.

For these reasons, we believe that there is both a clear urgency and ability for funding the Mel Noland Woodland Incentives Fund through the 2010 Trust Fund. We hope that you will take this request into consideration as your office develops the 2022 state spending plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Eric Luedtke".

Delegate Eric Luedtke

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dana Stein".

Delegate Dana Stein

## MEL NOLAND WOODLAND INCENTIVES AND FELLOWSHIP FUND

(2) For fiscal year 2024 and each fiscal year thereafter, the Governor shall include in the annual budget bill an appropriation of \$1,000,000 to the Fund.

(g) The Department shall use the Fund:

- (1) To help fund the Woodland Incentives Program and the cost-share assistance established under this subtitle;
- (2) To fund the Mel Noland Fellowship Program established under this subtitle;
- (3) For administrative costs calculated in accordance with § 1–103(b)(2) of this article;
- (4) To offset the costs of the Forest and Park Service for developing and approving forest stewardship plans on privately owned forest lands;
- (5) To provide annual grants to the forest conservancy district boards under § 5–605 of this title, to help facilitate their respective outreach efforts to encourage forest land owners to develop forest stewardship and other forest conservation management plans;
- (6) To establish a forest health emergency contingency program to help:
  - (i) Maintain the health and vitality of publicly owned and privately owned forest lands; and
  - (ii) Prevent or control large degradation caused by natural threats;

**(7) To provide financial assistance, as provided in the State budget, for the administration of an urban and community forestry program established under § 5–426 of this title, including:**

**(i) Increasing the number of communities with tree canopy goals;**

**(ii) Facilitating compliance with the Chesapeake Bay Program’s forestry targets;**

**(iii) Supporting the use of urban tree canopy expansion for air quality improvement purposes; and**

**(iv) Helping achieve implementation of Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative offset opportunities in urban areas;**

**(8) To help fund a forest marketing and utilization program in the Department to provide financial assistance to help support, stimulate, and market innovative and creative ways to enhance the production of value-added wood products;**

**(9) To help the Department, in cooperation with appropriate public and private sector entities, develop and expand:**

**(i) A forest mitigation banking system;**

**(ii) A carbon credit or carbon sequestration program;**

**(iii) A clean water credit trading system;**

**(iv) An environmental services credit trading program; and**

**(v) A renewable energy credit trading system.**

**§5–308.**

**(a) (1) In this section the following words have the meanings indicated.**

**(2) “Fellow” means an individual selected to participate in the Fellowship Program.**

**(3) “Fellowship Program” means the Mel Noland Fellowship Program.**

**(4) “Managing organization” means an organization selected by the Department to coordinate the administration of the Fellowship Program with the Department.**

**(b) There is a Mel Noland Fellowship Program in the Department.**

**(c) The purpose of the Fellowship Program is to support students seeking a career in fields relating to natural resources as they matriculate and graduate from an institution of higher education.**

**(d) The Department shall develop criteria for the selection of:**

**(1) Fellows; and**

**(2) Managing organizations.**

**(e) The Department shall select a managing organization with which the Department shall coordinate to administer the Fellowship Program under this section.**

**(f) (1) Subject to the provisions of this subsection, each year, the Department and the managing organization shall select two fellows and support them in their matriculation in a natural resources field at an institution of higher education.**

(2) One fellow shall be seeking a degree to work in the field of natural resources management.

(3) One fellow shall be seeking a degree to work in the field of urban and community forestry.

(g) The Department or the managing organization may require a fellow to complete tasks related to the Fellowship Program in addition to the fellow's course of study.

(h) (1) A fellow shall receive an annual stipend of \$20,000 paid from the Mel Noland Woodland Incentives and Fellowship Fund.

(2) Any funds remaining after the stipends under paragraph (1) of this subsection are distributed from the Governor's appropriation required under § 5–307 of this subtitle shall be used for the administration of the Fellowship Program, including the recruitment, selection, and supervision of the fellows by the Department and the managing organization.