

APPROVED

Board of Forestry Meeting – February 24, 2015 **Airfield 4-H Conference Center & Garland Gray ~ Wakefield, VA**

The Board of Forestry meeting was called to order at 9:00am by Chairman Scheerer at the Airfield 4-H Conference Center in Wakefield, VA.

Board of Forestry Members Present (roll call by Mary Weaver): Don Bright, Joel Cathey, Franklin Myers, Greg Scheerer, Dr. David Smith, Glen Worrell, Tommy Barnes, Anne Beals, John Burke III

Members Absent: Ken Morgan, Jr., Keith Drohan, James Harder and Ervin Bielmyer

Virginia Department of Forestry Present: Bettina Ring, State Forester; Rob Farrell, Deputy State Forester; Ron Jenkins, Assistant State Forester – Policy; Dean Cumbia, Director Resource Management; Todd Groh, Assistant Director Resource Management; Jerri Creighton, Research Manager; Mary Weaver, Administrative Specialist

Adoption of Agenda: Ms. Anne Beals motioned to adopt the Agenda as presented and Dr. David Smith seconded. All present were in favor.

Recognition of Guests and Visitors: Sam Towell, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry; Andrew Smith, Virginia Farm Bureau; Paul Howe, Virginia Forestry Association

Hearing of Citizens: No one spoke.

Approval of Minutes: A motion was made to approve the September 11, 2014 meeting minutes and seconded. All present were in favor.

Secretary of Agriculture & Forestry Update: Deputy Secretary Sam Towell briefed the Board in regards to the General Assembly wrapping up with good news to be announced by Mr. Ron Jenkins later. The Governor's Agricultural Trade Conference will be held 9-10 March with Secretary of Agricultural Tom Vilsack along with some ambassadors attending. The Governor has mentioned that there will be over 3 billion dollars in agricultural and forestal exports for 2014; exact total will be announced at the conference.

Mr. Tommy Barnes arrived at 9:09am.

State Forester's Report: Ms. Bettina Ring has been onboard for 10 months now and it has been a very full 10 months. Been spending time out with our stakeholders partner organizations, employees and some time in Richmond. We have some things to celebrate, Mr. Ron Jenkins will share later, but it's because of the great work everyone has done and that we're united in the forestry community, which is very important in everything we do.

Next year's General Assembly will be different with Ron wearing a different hat, as of April 1st Ron will be working with the Virginia's Logger Association. Looking forward to working with him in his new position. Our 100th year anniversary celebration was highlighted as we were invited to decorate the Governor's mansion with wooden ornaments. Lisa Deaton worked with teachers and students to provide decorations handmade from wood and other items from the forest. The Carroll Family, Claybrook Farm, was selected to provide the tree for the mansion. Billy Apperson provided much of the greenery and there were potted longleaf pine at the entrance to the mansion. The Governor and First Lady invited the VDOF to come to an open house before the Christmas tree lighting and also be a part of the lighting. It's been a great year for VDOF. The First Lady has become a

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very big fan of long leaf pine and at the Agency Head reception she spoke very passionately about the long leaf pine. I would like to continue to build on that excitement with the Governor's office.

Welcome Sam Towell, Deputy Secretary Agricultural and Forestry, he began in November and has been very supportive and testifying on our behalf at the General Assembly.

Recognition and thanks to John Burke for taking the Governor, First Lady and their children mistletoe hunting. John Burke and his family hosted the hunt on their property and kept everyone safe with a little target practice first. The hunt was successful and everyone went home with some mistletoe.

Policy Matters – Mr. Ron Jenkins will speak to policy from the General Assembly but it was a successful and very united effort. Bettina is currently serving on the National State Foresters Legislative Committee. It's a great opportunity to learn more by representing the Southern Group State Foresters and to be able to make sure VDOF is being represented in the south and the state of Virginia. Ms. Ring will keep you posted of national issues that impact VDOF. We will talk more today about trying to get increased funding for the Forestry Inventory Analysis since that cycle is slipping from 5 to 7 years. We need to do more with the national and state level to ensure we have enough funding for that program. We're also doing more to look at forest fire protection on how we have more fires out west the money often comes out of that state and private forestry pot and affects all states. We are trying to set up a separate/emergency fund to prevent that in the future.

Organizational Changes – Made a number of hires this year, trying to stay focused on filling positions in the field. We had to eliminate four positions and chose to keep that at the headquarter level to keep the focus on landowner services in the field and fire protection. Those decisions were not easy but trying to look at ways to share those responsibilities. With every vacancy we have, we are stepping back and evaluating what is needed moving forward. We will keep you posted as we move forward in advertising positions; we need to slow that down next fiscal year, as part of our reduction plan is to slow hiring.

Research – Mr. Jerre Creighton recently represented us at the National Wildlife Turkey Federation Conference. They met with state foresters to look at how they can work with us and private landowners to provide more technical and financial assistance to do more on the ground.

Much happening on the sustainability front, we'll be spending some time later talking about that. We can be proud of where we are for the past 100 years we were established to focus on reforestation, fire prevention, and fire protection. With those still being our key priorities, moving forward we really need to think about the next 100 years and how we sustain the resource.

Increasing our efforts related to Chesapeake Bay all across the board. We are three years ahead of our requirements with the Chesapeake Bay Agreement regarding BMP implementation thanks to the great proactive work that has been done. Looking to do more around Riparian Buffers and whatever we can do with local government to help them meet some of their requirements by retaining forests. The governor will be serving as chair of the executive committee of the Chesapeake Bay so that will position Virginia well. There is more funding right now at the Federal level. We would like to seize the opportunity to bring more of that funding to Virginia, want to make sure we have equity across the bay.

Ms. Ring attended the Department of Fire Services Board meeting and Fire and Rescue Conference with Mr. John Miller in Virginia Beach. We do more than just fire protection in the field. Our folks have been helping out in Wise County and Scott County with clearing roads related to emergency responses. So far to date we have had 106 fires for a total of 459 acres. We all know how quickly things can dry out we need to be prepared

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for what is coming. Next meeting we are going to focus on fire. Working a lot to make sure we are staying up on our readiness plans and with our agreements around making sure we respond to fires within 30 minutes. That is getting much harder with limited resources in the field. We had to eliminate \$500,000 dollars in our budget for fire equipment.

Conversation Easements – We had five easements that we closed on last year and five that we are currently working on this year. We are a little ahead of schedule this year and working very closely with the Governor and both cabinet secretaries to ensure that we are meeting the goals around land conservation. We are also doing great work on our research side.

Urban Community and Forestry – Great things continue to happen as we provide grants and support to our communities. Next year is the 40th Anniversary of Tree City USA. We will be looking at more opportunities to highlight Arbor Day and Tree City USA in our urban program next year.

Action Items:

Memorandum of Procedures: The officers for the Board of Forestry, Chair and Vice-Chair, are to be elected every year. Chairman Sheerer appointed Mr. John Burke and Mr. Glenn Worrell to the nominating committee to select a slate of officers for consideration and a vote for Chair and Vice-Chair at the next Board meeting.

Informational Items

Legislative/Budget Update: Mr. Ron Jenkins, Assistant State Forester, reviewed with the Board the good news and success of legislation results. You will be glad to know that there are lots of people in Virginia working hard to get these bills through legislation to a successful. Starting earlier and working together helped getting these bills passed. The overweight truck bill provides for a 7% increase in truck weights for logging trucks, which would ensure more competitive fairness between Virginia, North Carolina and other states. The Forest Products Tax Bill was approved and both bills are at the governor's office waiting for signature. Great work by everyone involved. The budget conferees have reached an agreement, the state employees will receive a raise across the board somewhere around the amount of 2% along with probably a compression raise. Over 2500 bills in short session, everything worked so well. One budget amendment, requires study for the feasibility and cost of the enhanced retirement credits for firefighters or special fire wardens in the Department of Forestry. The Department of Forestry will have to commit to providing a study and report of their results by October 1, 2015 to the House of Appropriations and Senate Committee requirements. It's been a great year. Mr. Glenn Worrell mentioned that the two bills passes, Overweight Truck Bill and Forest Products Tax Bill are huge successes for the Forestry industry.

Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) Program and Other Program Updates: Mr. Dean Cumbia, Director Resource Management, and Mr. Todd Groh, Assistant Director Resource Management, reviewed with the Board the RT Interim Project Accomplishments and Regional Allocations. Some of the regional allocation is based on volume of timber tax collected within the counties, 50% of all funding coming from the county is required to go back to that county. We are working hard at allocating the money based on harvesting and receipts. How many projects are big acre projects? One of the recommendations we would like to make is to return to the 100 acres maximum and keep the same rates to maximize funding. DOF is continuing to take applications for backorders in case funds become available. Todd reviewed the budget report as of December 31st the balance is approximately \$570,606.00. The Board asked, if the maximum acreage for a project was changed to 100 acres vs 150 acres, can the landowner request an additional 50 acres if there is funding. We will review the code, if the code allows it could be possible, and have answers for you at next meeting. Forest Products Tax Revenue is estimated to be 56% above what we projected to receive. Chairman Scheerer requested if the Forest Products Tax Revenue could be broken down by Regions, and by pine and hardwood.

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Dean replied that it would be possible after the end of the fiscal year. Staff will distribute to the Board members around September.

Cost Share Programs: Dean reviewed and explained the many cost share programs available to the landowners.

- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP)
- RCP with Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- Longleaf Pine Stewardship Fund
- Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay – Chesapeake Forest Fund
- Forestry-Quail Habitat Restoration Program
- Water Quality Improvement Fund
- Conservation Reserve Program

Chris Asaro is piloting a small program in five counties on east side of the Blue Ridge on invasive weed management with grant money he received.

These programs wouldn't be possible without the public and private partnerships and collaboration of landowners.

Committee/Liaison Report: None

Unfinished Business:

Follow-up on Hardwood Management: Chairman Scheerer opened the discussion of Hardwood Management to establish a strategy on how we are going to have an approved practice for hardwood management through the RT program if there is money available. Mr. Don Bright mentioned it's about more than just RT practices, how do we advise landowners of practices to improve the quality of their product. Hardwood is a long term investment, would like to see someone that can analyze the studies that have been done and someone that can advise on the forestry investment for landowners. Mr. Joel Cathey mentioned that Hardwood is very soil dependent which makes it difficult to grow. Mr. Bright; we owe it to the state to look at how we can encourage and develop forestry practices so we don't end up with either 100% pine or maple and gum. Mr. John Burke, III; the DOF knows a lot about hardwood the problem is its complicated getting the information to the landowners. It is an important outreach to teach landowners to do timber stand improvement and how it's important to think about, before you harvest, what's going to come back next. How do you encourage what you want to come back? Clearly funding would help landowners, hardwood is a long term investment. Dr. David Smith; hardwood is site specific. When you harvest mixed oak stand hardwood, if the regeneration isn't on the ground and well established before you cut, it's not coming back. We need to do the background and come up with a strategy, at least on a pilot basis so we can make some recommendations and we can start to develop a landowner education program. Can RCPP money be used for hardwood? Mr. Todd Groh; we are looking at splitting the money up; I believe that is a possibility. Mr. Jerre Creighton; The Forest Service has expressed interest in working on state forests or private landowners in Virginia to expand some of the regeneration modeling work and silvicultural work they've done; this is an opportunity going forward. The National Wild Turkey Federation has money, resources and interest in hardwoods and our interest in hardwood would make a good partnership. Dr. Smith; the incentive to regenerate after a harvest isn't there because it takes 100 years to turn a profit. Education is what we need to do. Mr. Burke suggested creating a small task force to work with the VDOF to explore hardwoods over a period of time and see what we can do.

Chairman Scheerer appointed Mr. Burke and Dr. Smith to be on the Hardwood Task Force.

New Business:

Sustainability Strategy Discussion:

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Ms. Bettina Ring mentioned that staff would really like your input and active engagement on how we move forward not only as an agency but as a community. How do we focus and do the right things in the right places with the soil for hardwood management. It's a good opportunity to step back and look at the whole resource.

Mr. Rob Farrell begun the discussion on sustainability by stating that the VDOF has needed for some time to come up with a defined, clear, public strategy to address sustainability of the pine resource in Virginia. The work Virginia Tech is doing with the CeNRADS study is certainly going to bring more attention to this issue. Rob reviewed an outline of what DOF's response to sustainability concerns should include:

- Introduction – sustainability of the pine resource in Virginia. Where are we, where are we going, what do we need to do differently. This is an acknowledgement of concerns about sustainability and what does Virginia do about that.
- Current Sustainability Concerns and Background – address concerns with; CeNRADS report, a point in time, contributing factors, how did we get here, where we are.
- Sustainability Plan - What do we do, how do we respond.
 - Looking ahead – what can we expect to see in the future.
 - Identify Stakeholders and Partners – what roles can be for the different partners we have.
 - Strategies related to Research, Genetics, and Nursery – How we're going to improve the pine resource.
 - Changing DOF recommendations for establishment and management practices – Developing long term plans.
 - Strategies related to Landowner Services/Implementation - Planning with landowners up front, what are their objectives and then create a long term plan that will fit that, outreach, inform landowners. Partner with consulting foresters, planning takes place between landowners and trusted advisors, there is a big void in the education of what landowners want and can get.
 - Strategies related to Resource Information – FIA, IFRIS, CeNRADS – Continue to do more research, making changes in IFRIS to better track every harvest through its lifetime.
 - Local Policy - ability to continue to manage the forest.
- Should we also address related sustainability issues in this initial strategy document - How broad do we get in this document? Do we include hardwoods, water quality and land conversation related to sustainability?
- How do we add reference to economic development? Connect with economic development elements, why we are relevant to the state and why should the state help us.

Discussion from Board – Dr. Smith; we need to come up with some basic assumptions about what's going to happen. Bio-mass demand is going to increase, increased pressure on the landbase to keeping it in forest. Mr. Farrell; what does the industry need, good thing to know to give the landowners the right guidance. Product size classifications are archaic. Mr. Cathey is concerned with what are we going to do to get the fiber out there vs. determining what it needs to be and how do we incentivize landowners to keep land in a forestry condition. Mr. Bright; key is to have the planning density, flexibility, and knowledge to where you can anticipate what your landowners are going to need. Mr. Burke; the context of the market is important to someone interpreting the document. Ms. Ring; maybe sustainability of pine is the first step that we as agency need to be doing. This needs to be a state wide forest resource, not just pine. Strategy is based on a moving target; we will need to review once a year.

Paul Howe, Virginia Forestry Association, offered a list of other bills that were filed and passed through the General Assembly if interested in looking at them. Senator Rob introduced a resolution recognizing Mr. Ken Morgan and the 100th anniversary of Morgan Lumber. The 2015 Virginia Forestry Summit is April 15-17, 2015 at the Boars Head Inn in Charlottesville. Mr. Howe also left copies of the latest issue of the VFA magazine.

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Chairman Scheerer reminded the Board that the next board meeting will be April 14th at DOF Headquarters in Charlottesville, VA in conjunction with the Virginia Forestry Summit.

Lunch and a guided tour of the Garland Gray Nursery will immediately follow the Board of Forestry meeting.

Adjournment:

Chairman Scheerer called for motion to adjourn; a motion was made to adjourn the February 24, 2015 meeting at 12:00pm and seconded. All present were in favor.

Mr. Harvey Darden, Director of State Lands, Mr. Dwight Stallard, Forestry Centers Manager and Justin Funk, Assistant Manager gave a guided tour of the Garland Gray Nursery. The Board was briefed on process of how the seedlings are grown, lifted, packaged and sent to customers. Unfortunately due to the weather and frozen ground there was no lifting in progress.

In recognition of Mr. Dwight Stallard's retirement on February 28, 2015 after 33 years at VDOF, Ms. Bettina Ring and Mr. Harvey Darden presented Mr. Stallard with a sign commemorating a road at Garland Gray Nursery named after him.

Minutes recorded by Mary Weaver, Administrative Staff Specialist

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