

APPROVED

Board of Forestry Meeting – April 14, 2015 Headquarters Office - Charlottesville, VA

The Board of Forestry meeting was called to order at 9:00am by Chairman Scheerer at the Headquarters Office Board Room in Charlottesville, 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, Ken Morgan, Jr., Keith Drohan, and Ervin Bielmyer

Members Absent: James Harder

Virginia Department of Forestry Present: Bettina Ring, State Forester; Rob Farrell, Deputy State Forester; Dean Cumbia, Director Resource Management; Todd Groh, Assistant Director Resource Management; John Miller, Director Resource Protection; John Campbell, Director Public Information; Faye DeFaizo, Budget Analyst; Mary Weaver, Administrative Specialist

Adoption of Agenda: A motion was made to adopt the Agenda as presented, seconded. All present were in favor.

Adoption of Anti-Trust Statement: A motion was made to adopt the Anti-Trust Statement as presented, seconded. All present were in favor. An Acknowledgement form was passed around for all members to sign.

Recognition of Guests and Visitors: Sam Towell, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry; Lynwood Butner, Virginia Forestry Association; Craig Christiansen, Culpeper County Landowner; Ron Jenkins, Virginia Loggers Association; Duncan Pitchford, OAG for VDOF; Susan Seward, Virginia Forest Products Association; Susan Jennings, Virginia Forest Products Association;

Hearing of Citizens: Mr. Craig Christiansen private landowner of Culpeper and Louisa counties, would like to see the Department of Forestry go back to its core duties for landowners: fire, reforestation and BMPs. "As a landowner, I would like to see the DOF get back to the basic core services."

Approval of Minutes: A motion was made to approve the February 24, 2014 meeting minutes as amended, seconded. All present were in favor.

Secretary of Agriculture & Forestry Update: Deputy Secretary Sam Towell commended the Department of Forestry that responded to the very challenging fires in the western part of the state on the great job it did. He made sure the governor was aware of how well VDOF handled the challenging conditions.

State Forester's Report: Ms. Bettina Ring thanked everyone for the love and support that was shown during the passing of her father. Ms. Ring recognized guests and mentioned that Mr. James Harder was unable to attend. Looking towards the next 100 years, we must go back to why we were established. The main priorities -- fire prevention, fire protection, reforestation and water quality -- will remain so, along with looking towards the future to retain the forests. Will keep you informed as we move forward with your guidance and thoughts. We lifted 28 million loblolly pine and 3 million white pine and hardwood seedlings this year. They were used across the state for various purposes.

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Focusing on forest protection today, there will be a presentation to explain where we are and where we are headed with our fire program. We are being very stretched with our budget and had to remove the equipment money.

Attended the Governor's Agricultural Conference, there was much attention on Forestry this year. Forestry was 2nd as it applies to wood products and 12th for wood fuel.

Working on diversifying our funding; staff is doing a great job trying to secure funding outside of our state budget. We have been able to secure a few new grants with: Department of Game and Inland and Fisheries for forest action and wildlife action plans, and University of Virginia for forest protection. We've been asked to submit a CIG grant from NRCS. Received word that we are in funding for our longleaf pine efforts along with DCR; also received funding for our next succession planning workshops.

Trying to flush out what are our strategies for all of our core programs to be very clear about what are the criteria of how we select State Forests and how we look at and make wise decisions with the resources we have. We are holding Forestry Camp again this year with 95 applicants. It is the second longest-running forestry camp in the nation. It is the 25th Anniversary of the Cooperative Forestry Act, and we've applied for a grant to help us draw attention to what we've been able to accomplish with those programs.

As it relates to staffing, we are continuing to keep our focus on filling field positions particularly the Southside counties. We made some changes to the assistant state forester position and advertised it as a chief of administration position.

Mr. Ken Morgan suggested instead of our 100th year celebration being one year and done could we say 100+ years to remind people of how long the Department of Forestry has been here serving the Commonwealth.

Action Items:

Nomination/Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman: Mr. John Burke reviewed the process the nomination committee took considering eligible candidates according to the memorandum of procedures. Mr. Burke motioned to elect Dr. David Smith for Chairman and Mr. Glen Worrell for Vice-Chairman. Second was made with no more discussion. All present were in favor.

Mr. Tommy Barnes arrived at 9:26am.

Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) Program Recommendations: Mr. Dean Cumbia, Director of Resource Management, and Mr. Todd Groh, Assistant Director of Resource Management, reviewed with the Board the budget report. As of March 10th, the balance is approximately \$1.6 million available. This is the time of year all the projects start getting done so that money will be going quickly. Some of the expenses we had this year have been: Software Upgrade, Tax Department fees, Tree Improvement Program, Programs Costs and incentives to landowners. Mr. Groh also reviewed the RT Interim Project Accomplishments, Regional Allocations and the quarterly tracking of the forest products tax revenue. Mr. Groh passed out an FY16 projected budget and discussed what is being expected for FY16. Mr. Glen Worrell inquired as to what is the maximum projected acreage level based on the projected FY16 budget. We recommended leaving all the project rates at the 2015 rates. We made a recommendation to State Forester that we bring it down to 100 acres. Mr. Worrell asked how many practices were not funded and how many practices were in the 100- to 150-acre range? Not sure of unfunded projects; will find out, but there were 79 tracts greater than 100 acres and 27 acres that were at exactly 150 acres. Mr. Morgan asked that forestry look closely at the cut-to-growth ratio and possibly consider changing the allocations to make sure we are comfortable with the overcut rate.

The Board discussed several options of allocating reforestation money.

Mr. Groh passed out a graph and discussed the Herbicide/Plant vs. Plant/Release acres and the program related to it.

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Mr. Ron Jenkins discussed the concern of losing tax money when moving wood across the state lines. Virginia has improved systems for state agencies to reach out to the Department of Taxation and collect information. We have the responsibility to ensure that we manage the funds that come in. It is the Department of Taxation's responsibility to enforce the collection of the taxes.

Ms. Ring thanked everyone for their partnerships and effort on the great accomplishments during the General Assembly and getting the bills passed. Mr. Jenkins expressed the importance and success of starting early with getting the bills vetted.

Mr. Lynwood Butner of the Virginia Forestry Association talked about forestry products and what can be accomplished when you bring all the stakeholders together. Mr. Butner passed out a summary background for forest products.

Informational Items

Legislative/Budget Update: Ms. Fay DiFazio, Budget Analyst, summarized our budget history. The revenues are up but concerned with the inability to fully fund positions and equipment needs; can't appropriate what you don't have. The three sources of money coming to DOF are: federal, state and generated. We are really hurting in the area of funding for salaries.

The Board recessed for a 10-minute break.

The Board reconvened at 11:00.

Fire Protection Update: Ms. Bettina Ring discussed the importance of forest protection and introduced Mr. John Miller, Director of Resource Protection. Mr. Miller discussed the staff in resource protection division along with the various programs they conduct. Wildfires are very weather based; the peaks and valleys can be very extreme. The emergency response time for most areas of the state is covered within a 30-minute response time with a 10% gap. Sometimes, because of the need to pull responders from one area to assist with other areas, the gap could be much greater. Our agency is responsible for private and state lands of the Commonwealth -- about 15.7 million acres. Federal lands, 2.5 million acres, are managed by the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service, for which we also provide initial attack support. Mr. Miller reviewed with the Board the scope of fires, common causes, wildfire risk assessment and the agency's fire prevention efforts. Virginia has pretty significant fires at times, and the biggest challenges are resources and fire suppression.

The southeastern states have gotten together and created one united wildfire risk assessment called SOUTHWRAP, Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal, which is hosted by the South Group of State Foresters.

The mindset of those responsible for wildfire suppression is:

- VDOF (State and Private lands)- quick and aggressive attack with available resources
- Structural Fire Service Industry(Private lands) - quick and aggressive attack with available resources
- Federal Cooperators of Virginia (National Forests) – responsible for fire suppression with very little resources

Ms. Ring explained that VDOF works very closely with the federal agencies, especially the Forest Service, and local agencies for planning purposes. The federal cooperators are challenged by not being able to actively manage their forest in the way they were able to in the past, which creates more of a challenge for everyone. Working on a piece of legislation that addresses the larger fires in the Forest Service; when they have to pay for the fires, they won't dip into the State and Private funds.

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Cost comparison between State and Private cost to Federal Cost:

- Fire on private land, 1,700 acres and total cost approximately \$70,000 to \$80,000.
- Fire in NC on private and federal land, 1,700 acres and total cost approximately \$300,000.

Equipment Resources: Two important things needed to fight fire: equipment and personnel. Reviewed what VDOF has:

- 88 – Bulldozers
- 1 - Hummer (all-terrain) vehicle
- 10 – Type-6 Engines/Brush trucks
- 181 – 4X4 Pick-ups
- 2 – Mobile Command Posts
- 1 – Plane, Cessna 206
- 162 - All Agency county personnel are Commissioned Special Forest Wardens with full law enforcement powers.
- 1 – Type-2, Nationally Credentialed Incident Management Team (IMT); the only such team in the Commonwealth

Along with wildfires, VDOF also helps out with other state emergencies. Dr. Smith inquired about using drones in the future. Mr. Miller discussed with the board the challenge of equipment replacement. A lot of the equipment is very old and it will be 2017 before we have the opportunity to request money in the budget, due to the recent cuts. To get back up to our 20-year rotation, we would have to replace 48 dozer units and 111 pick-ups -- approximately \$20 million or \$3.7 million each year for six years starting in 2017.

Ms. Ring expressed that she is working very closely with the Secretary's office on addressing our equipment needs.

Mr. Miller explained the relationship that VDOF has with contract operators and part-time VDOF dozer operators who are trained to help when needed. Working on implementing a new dispatch program, and looking at opening up some of the prescribed burns.

Committee/Liaison Report:

Hardwood Management: Mr. John Burke discussed with the Board what progress the Hardwood Management Task Force has made towards better hardwood management. The goal is to increase the implementation of proper hardwood management practices in Virginia, and among the objectives for the board to consider: identify hardwood management practices as a group, and narrow those that deserve attention for incentivizing and ease of introduction. Would like to start with a pilot program and then come back with recommendations on how the state can implement a cost-sharing program for hardwood. The task force will work on a white paper to show that needs have been carefully considered; will then present the board with a narrative summary for discussion and consideration.

Unfinished Business:

Sustainability Strategy Discussion: Mr. Rob Farrell shared with the board the progress that is being made on the sustainability strategy outline. Mr. Farrell feels the big recommendation change in practices for the VDOF is going to be the decision tree for foresters talking to landowners. Start broadening our foresters thought process when they're looking at regenerating a site. Ms. Ring mentioned wanting to have very clear strategies for our employees, good silviculture and how do we go beyond looking at just internal. The board discussed the need to get information and education out to the landowners about the importance of sustainability, opportunities and programs the VDOF has to offer.

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New Business:

Discussion from Board – Mr. Don Bright inquired about an incentive that states could look at to offset counties that do not have use-value taxation for forestry. It would be nice to get land-use taxation statewide rather than by county. Land-use tax codes are from 1979 and haven't been revamped.

Ms. Ring reminded the board that there are three terms getting ready to expire, and if you would like to be considered for reappointment you will need to go online and register. Mary Weaver will send you the link.

The next board meeting will be Thursday, September 22, 2015, at Occoneechee State Park with a tour of Morgan Lumber.

Adjournment:

Chairman Sheerer called for motion to adjourn; a motion was made to adjourn the April 14, 2015 meeting at 1:05pm and seconded. All present were in favor.

Minutes recorded by Mary Weaver, Administrative Staff Specialist