



Board of Forestry Meeting

May 13, 2016
Richmond, VA

Call to Order

The Board of Forestry meeting was called to order at 9 a.m. by Chairman Smith at the Richmond Raceway Complex, in Richmond, VA. Chairman Smith thanked Susan Jennings, Susan Seward and the Virginia Forest Products Association for organizing the tour, transportation, food and meeting accommodations.

Board of Forestry Members Present (roll call by Mary Weaver):

Don Bright, Franklin Myers, Greg Scheerer, Dr. David Smith, Beth Flippo Hutchins, Ken Morgan Jr., Glen Worrell, James Harder, Anne Beals and William Snyder

Members Absent:

Keith Drohan, Joel Cathey and John Burke III

Adoption of Agenda

A motion was made to adopt the agenda as stated; seconded. All present were in favor.

Recognition of Guests and Visitors

Virginia Department of Forestry Present:

Bettina Ring, State Forester; Rob Farrell, Deputy State Forester; Andy Alvarez, Chief of Administration; Ed Zimmer, Chief of Operations; Dean Cumbia, Director Resource Management; Terry Lasher, Eastern Regional Forester; Mary Weaver, Administrative Staff Specialist

Recognition of Guests and Visitors:

Sam Towell, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry; Susan Seward, Virginia Forest Products Association; Ron Jenkins, Virginia Loggers Association; Steve Frebren, citizen

Hearing of Citizens

None

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve the March 22, 2016 meeting minutes as presented; seconded. All present were in favor.

Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Update

Deputy Secretary Towell gave a brief update to the Board on events since the last Board of Forestry meeting. There have been two Agricultural Forestry Industry Development Funds grants in the forestry community: two sawmills – one in Southside and one in Southwest.

State Forester's Report

Ms. Bettina Ring welcomed everyone and thanked Susan and the Virginia Forest Products Association for its generosity and invitation to the Sawmill and Logging Expo and the Evelyn family for the tour of their facilities and a very enjoyable evening. Everyone is welcome to walk around the Expo when meeting is adjourned. Bettina introduced Terry Lasher, the new Eastern Region Regional Forester, and thanked him for hosting the BOF at New Kent last evening.

It's been a very active spring fire season. VDOF has had a total of 387 fires across the state so far this year that burned a total of approximately 7,000 acres, and protected 433 homes and 358 structures. The biggest challenge with fire has been a lot of arson activity mostly in Southwestern Virginia. Investigations are continuing there and have recently celebrated the completion of an investigation in Brunswick County that had been going on for quite some time. The individual who had been committing woods arson for more than 25 years has been convicted. Bettina briefed the Board on the process that was used for the Rocky Mount Fire, the most challenging fire so far this year. 10,400 federal acres and 256 private acres were burned.

Governor McAuliffe's and Secretary Haymore's last mission trip was very successful and included interaction with an EU Parliament member regarding biomass and forest sustainability in the U.S. This individual was very excited to hear about our reforestation program and wanted to learn more. Bettina sent follow-up information on RT. This parliament member plans to visit the U.S. for a tour on forest sustainability with some other leaders from EU in fall of this year. Virginia is being considered as the preferred state for the tour.

We held an Arbor Day ceremony with the First Lady on April 29, 2016. She was initially interested in planting a longleaf pine on the grounds of the Executive Mansion, but we could not find a suitable site. As a result, we selected a site below the mansion where we planted four longleaf pine and one sweet bay magnolia. In addition to the First Lady, Julie Moore of The Longleaf Alliance and our own John Burke spoke at the ceremony. We had a good participation in the event. The audience included sister agencies as well as nonprofit partners. We also participated in a Garden Day event at the Executive Mansion where we had a longleaf exhibit. We received a great deal of traffic and interest in longleaf. This was the 40th Anniversary for Tree City USA. There were a number of Arbor Day programs across the state. VDOF was very involved in helping communities be recognized for the good work they are doing in maintaining their urban forests.

A Longleaf Pine Workshop was held May 5 at Paul D. Camp Community College. Ninety-one individuals participated. This was an outstanding example of our longleaf restoration partnership and collaboration. A large number of private landowners expressed interest in planting longleaf pine.

Heather Dowling, area forester, led the Women and Land Regional Workshop for 20 women forest landowners and presenters. Program support for the Women and Land program comes from the Prince Charitable Trust, Virginia Environmental Endowment and the Virginia Department of Forestry. Female conservation professionals representing the Virginia Department of Forestry, Appomattox River Soil and Water Conservation District, Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries along with women leaders of the Black Family Land Trust, the American Farmland Trust and Whirley Tax Service led the sessions.

Joint VDOF/Department of Game and Inland Fisheries training sessions were held May 3 - 5. Session 1 was held at Luray with approximately 30 in attendance, and Session 2 was held in Daleville (Botetourt) with approximately 50 in attendance. The sessions focused on the Forest and Wildlife Action Plans and increasing interagency understanding and collaboration. The training sessions were part of, and supported by, the U. S. Endowment for Forests and Communities, Leveraging Forest/Action Plans for Collaborative Gain grant. In addition to learning, participants generated ideas to enhance collaboration.

Bettina reviewed the tax data highlights for the 2015 fiscal year. Record Forest Products Tax was collected: \$2,362,997 with \$1,779,341 going towards the RT program. The top five harvest value counties were Brunswick, Southampton, Charlotte, Buckingham and Pittsylvania.

VDOF conservation staff and Bettina participated in a US Forest Service program review of the Forest Legacy program implementation in Virginia. USFS staff in the Southeast emphasized that Virginia is a model program. The review included a site tour of current and proposed Big Woods projects and longleaf pine restoration efforts. It also included a tour of the Ellis Mine easement and an award and recognition ceremony where the owner, Dickie Purcell, and his family were recognized for their efforts in conserving and managing this 1,219-acre tract that protects the watershed for the City of Fredericksburg. Several nice articles appeared in the Richmond Times-Dispatch, Fredericksburg Freelance-Star and the Culpeper Star-Exponent.

Staff is moving forward with our emergency response equipment. Have a great team in place looking at how to best roll that out. There is a lot of catching up to do.

VDOF participated in the two Agricultural Forestry Industry Development Funds grants and would like to encourage the industry to take advantage of those.

Robbie Talbert was hired as the new Regional Forester in the Central Region (DC to NC border – west to Northern Shenandoah Valley and east to Powhatan. Robbie previously served as Deputy Regional Forester in the Central Region.

Terry Lasher was promoted to Regional Forester in the Eastern Region. Terry was formerly the Senior Area Forester of the NoVA Work Area (prior to that, he served in the Eastern Region).

VDOF received a letter from the U. S. Forest Service- Southern Research Station regarding Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) funds available for FY16. The potential award amount has increased from what was expected. As a result, VDOF will hire additional hourly personnel to assist full-time staff with FIA field work. This will help VDOF keep on cycle with plot measurement and increase efficiency and safety.

Mr. Ken Morgan inquired whether the VDOF keeps statistical data regarding final harvest on sites of age, class and expenses. With the recent changes that were made with our IFRIS, we are getting pine vs. hardwood and improving vs. regenerating. Staff is not being asked to get the age distribution on what is being harvested.

Informational Items

Grant Update:

Mr. Andy Alvarez, chief of administration, reviewed with the Board how the new Virginia grants portal works and how it will help us locate and apply for grants that are applicable to us. Andy also discussed the federal grant process, the restrictions on spending and the top 10 grants that we have. VDOF is very aggressively, but judiciously, pursuing grants that are applicable.

Reforestation of Timberlands Program:

Mr. Dean Cumbia, director of resource management, updated the Board in regards to the RT program project accomplishments to date, the regional allocations, the FY 2016 Interim budget and the proposed FY 2017 budget. The final budget report for FY 2016 will be available at the next meeting. Staff recommended to the State Forester to lower the incentives being offered for herbicide site preparation from \$70 per acre to \$60 per acre due to the competitive pricing. This will also help the funds to go a little further.

Mr. Don Bright inquired about the program cost increase. Mr. Zimmer replied that it is mostly for increased RT funds that staff needs to process and work with landowners on, to include materials, increased personnel and all the costs that go with the program.

Mr. Ken Morgan questioned about how much emphasis is put on marketing good forestry. By working with VDOF partners at Extension on targeted outreach and having one of staff's primary goals be ensuring sustainable woodbaskets and focus areas to be more intentional and rigorous about the work in that area, you will see a shift in reaching additional landowners. We will be tracking and evaluating our success. The changes that were made in IFRIS will help staff focus on whom to target and make outreach much easier.

Mr. Don Bright stated that there is great value in what VDOF does with the management plan. It's a one-time fee that pays off for a long time. Partnerships are very critical to have and build on for the management of forests.

Water Quality Update:

Matt Poirot, assistant director of water quality, reviewed with the Board what the Water Quality program is and what it does. VDOF has 14 dedicated people organized around the state to work with landowners and foresters to inspect and fix issues that occur during the course of a silviculture activity. Currently doing research with Virginia Tech to showcase best management practices (BMP) that loggers can do on the job to save them money and protect water quality at the same time. VDOF monitors BMPs on 240 sites each year and inspects more than 5,500 harvests annually. Inspections are important and non-regulatory; they help us help the loggers prevent problems that could cause water quality issues.

VDOF's education program works closely with VFA and Virginia Tech on SFI SHARP Logger training for the loggers and field personnel to identify problems and how to correct or avoid them. Also work with VFA and Virginia Tech on workshops for landowners so they know what their responsibility is.

VDOF has a really strong water quality program and is engaged in the Chesapeake Bay project.

Paul Howe updated the board on a meeting that was called by Enviva in North Carolina to discuss what's going on in bottomland hardwood areas, wetland areas, how harvesting takes place, the impact of it, etc. Enviva is looking to develop policy for the company. A lot of great information was shared. Enviva is working with Endowment to set up conservation easements and giving funds to organizations like The Nature Conservancy to purchase lands.

Action Items

Nomination of Chairman and Vice Chair:

The nomination committee recommended Dr. Smith and Mr. Glen Worrell to serve a second term as Chairman and Vice-Chairman, respectively. A motion was made and seconded to reappoint Dr. Smith as Chairman and Mr. Worrell and Vice-Chairman. All present were in favor.

Committee/Liaison Report

Hardwood Management:

Hardwood subcommittee has been active and still working on the white paper. More information will be available at the August board meeting.

Unfinished Business

Deputy Secretary Sam Towell presented Ms. Beth Hutchins and Mr. William Snyder with their appointment certificates and Mr. Greg Scheerer with a reappointment certificate.

New Business

Reforestation of Timberlands Subcommittee:

Chairman Smith distributed a point sheet and discussed in regards to creating an RT subcommittee to provide updates on RT issues to the board. Dr. Smith appointed Mr. Greg Scheerer as Chairman and Mr. Glen Worrell member. This subcommittee will:

- Be composed of two members of the Board of Forestry who have current and first-hand knowledge of reforestation-related issues common to the sustainable management of Virginia's forests.
- Provide periodic updates to the Board of Forestry as appropriate. These updates will include such things as effectiveness of practices, combinations of practices, cost-share rates, new practices to consider and other considerations that could enhance or improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Reforestation of Timberlands program.
- Remain in place for an initial period of three years, at which time an assessment of the need for continuation will be made by the Board of Forestry in consultation with the State Forester.

Next meeting:

Bettina inquired for suggestions and ideas for what topics would like to be discussed at the next and future meetings. All ideas are welcome. Forest Health will be a topic for the next meeting, and a future meeting will be arranged for the Northern Virginia area.

Adjournment

Chairman Smith called for a motion to adjourn; motion was made to adjourn the May 13, 2016 meeting at 12 p.m. and seconded. All present were in favor.

Minutes recorded by Mary Weaver, Administrative Staff Specialist