



Board of Forestry Meeting

August 18, 2017
Blacksburg, VA

Convene Meeting, Call to Order

The Board of Forestry special meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Chairman Worrell at the Inn at Virginia Tech at Blacksburg, VA. Chairman Worrell reminded the Board of the Anti-trust acknowledgement and policy.

Roll Call

Board of Forestry Members Present:

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

Members Absent:

Keith Drohan

Adoption of Agenda

A motion was made to approve the agenda as presented; 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; Ed Zimmer, Chief of Operations; Hector Rivera, Director of Human Resources; Ed Stoots, Western Regional Forester; Mary Weaver, Executive Assistant

Recognition of Guests and Visitors:

Basil Gooden, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry; Andrew Smith, Virginia Farm Bureau Federation; Ron Jenkins, Virginia Loggers Association; Paul Howe, Virginia Forestry Association

Hearing of Citizens

None

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve the May 02, 2017 special meeting minutes as presented; seconded. All present were in favor.

A motion was made to approve the May 24, 2017 regular meeting minutes as presented; seconded. All present were in favor.

Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Update

Dr. Basil Gooden congratulated Bettina Ring for being selected and completing the “Program for Senior Executives in State and Local Government” at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. He thanked Rob Farrell for serving as acting State Forester while Bettina was away, thus enabling her to concentrate on the intensive program.

State Forester’s Report

Ms. Bettina Ring welcomed everyone to the meeting that is in conjunction with the VLA meeting. She thanked Ron Jenkins, Frank Meyers and Vance Wright for the invitation. Also thanked them for organizing the joint board dinner with Senator Ruff.

Secretary Gooden will be attending the evening’s legislative reception and speaking at the general session along with Ms. Ring. Water Quality Manager Matt Poirot will speak as part of the SHARP Logger Training session.

Ms. Ring thanked the SAF, the board, the leadership team at VDOF and Rob Farrell serving as Acting State Forester for the support while she was immersed in the leadership program at Harvard. It was a wonderful experience and a great opportunity to work with some incredible leaders from across the US and abroad.

The Governor and Secretary Gooden announced the new Economic Impact study, which was released by the Weldon Cooper Center in mid-July. A press conference was held in Capitol Square followed by a reception at the Executive Mansion. Mr. Glen Worrell represented the board at the event. The details of the study will be shared tomorrow morning at the conference’s general session. A few highlights included the fact that VDOF remained at #3 – and #1 when combined with agriculture. Forestry’s economic impact increased from \$17 billion to \$21.5 billion – and increased in jobs from 103,000 to nearly 108,000.

VDOF is continuing to work on legislative agenda and biennial budget decision packages in advance of DPB’s deadline. We’ll be meeting with the Secretary’s office in late August to review and determine what will be submitted for consideration as part of the Governor’s last budget (referred to as the caboose budget by many).

VDOF does not anticipate the introduction of any major legislation this year unless, collectively, VDOF staff and the Board of Forestry (BOF) make a decision to advance changes to the Code to address timber theft.

Federal Update – still waiting to have an Undersecretary of Agriculture announced – that person would oversee the USFS (NRCS and FSA moved from USFS). A new Chief of the Forest Service is anticipated to be named next week.

Forest Products Data Update:

- ◆ The total harvest volume for FY 2016 was 685,393.70 (thousand cubic feet). This is an increase of 15 percent over the previous year’s (FY2015) volume of 596,014.54 thousand cubic feet. This is the highest annual volume on record, but this is the first year that includes the new mixed-chip category.
- ◆ Total annual volume increased 60 percent since the low in FY2010.
- ◆ Total Forest Products Tax collected in Fiscal Year 2016 was \$2,462,490.94, which is a record. Of this total, \$1,843,180.03 goes to RT Funding. Tax collected from the new mixed-chip category amounted to \$180,902.34.
- ◆ The increase in total harvest volume appeared to be almost entirely related to the addition of the new mixed-chip category, which accounted for 20 percent of total harvest volume in its first year.
- ◆ Of the old categories, only pine sawtimber recorded an increase (1 percent) in total volume last year. Pine pulpwood decreased by 3 percent. For the hardwoods, the total volume of sawtimber decreased 18 percent while pulpwood dropped 14 percent.
- ◆ Harvest stumpage value for fiscal year 2016 is estimated at \$335,662,341. This is a decrease of a little more than \$50 million from the 2015 value of \$388,400,651. Total stumpage value has increased by 60 percent since FY 2010.

- ◆ The decrease in total stumpage value was mainly due to a reduction in hardwood sawtimber volumes. The \$52.8 million drop in total stumpage value last year is almost identical to the \$52 million decrease in hardwood stumpage value.
- ◆ The decreased volume was related to reductions of exports resulting from the strong U.S. dollar and a decline in shipments to China.
- ◆ Since 2009, the proportion of pine volume from sawtimber has been steadily increasing and is approaching previous “normal” levels in the mid- to upper-40 percent range.
- ◆ Brunswick County continued its streak as the state’s top volume producer; however, Southampton County had the highest county harvest value in 2016.

Volume Rank

- 1 - BRUNSWICK
- 2 - SOUTHAMPTON
- 3 - BUCKINGHAM
- 4 - HALIFAX
- 5 - PITTSYLVANIA
- 6 - CHARLOTTE
- 7 - DINWIDDIE
- 8 - MECKLENBURG
- 9 - AMELIA
- 10 - SUSSEX

Water Quality BMP numbers are exceeding the 2017 goal for the Chesapeake Bay. More than 22,000 harvest inspections have been conducted this year on the more than 5,000 timber harvests.

More than 300 strategic plan surveys were completed with 70+% from employees, 51% of the landowners and 45% of our stakeholders. The consultant is compiling the results and will be walking through the results with VDOF next week. Several face-to-face interviews were conducted with stakeholders. Bettina thanked the board for its help in completing the form and encouraging the engagement of our employees.

VDOF has secured two LSR grants from the USFS: one for Emerald Ash Borer and one for African-American Land Retention and outreach to minority landowners. Also received was a NFWF grant for longleaf restoration efforts. This will enable VDOF to further diversify and increase the budget to support the advancement of forest health, landowner engagement and the diminished ecosystems goal and longleaf restoration focus area.

An urban wood project workshop and forum was held in Richmond. Deputy Secretary of Agricultural and Forestry Megan Seibel provided the welcome. More information about this can be found on the urban wood website.

We are in the thorough review stage of the scope of work for updating the VDOF website, which is one of the important steps in the process. It is not moving as fast as hoped, but progress has been made in the past six months.

Ms. Ring expressed there has been great improvement in VDOF’s social media presence since Michelle Stoll joined the team last fall. VDOF posts and tweets are increasing and diversifying to help tell the collective forestry story. Activity is being tracked on a weekly basis and there have been significant increases in followers and level of engagement.

The Good Neighbor Authority agreement was signed last week by Supervisor of the George Washington/Jefferson National Forests Job Timm and State Forester Bettina Ring. This agreement will allow VDOF to work across landscapes, assist the USFS with fuels reduction, timber sales, restoration, etc., and receive payment for the services. The location of the first project has not been determined. More active management on the Virginia’s national forests is anticipated as a result of this agreement.

Ms. Ring reviewed the great progress being made on the relocation of the VICC to Charlottesville (from Roanoke USFS office). This move will allow VDOF to improve emergency response and fire suppression efforts with our federal partners (USFS, NPS and USFWS). We hope to make this a Center of Excellence.

The VDOF opened the HQ office for the VA State Police and the Central Incident Management Team in response to the recent events in Charlottesville. They used the VDOF offices and interagency command center as a hub for their support of local law enforcement and emergency responders. VDOF supported the IMT with personnel.

Informational Items

HR Vision:

Bettina Ring introduced the new Director of Human Resources, Hector Rivera. Mr. Rivera reviewed with the Board a variety of workplace policies that he is working on to update/improve for the VDOF staff:

- Talent Management
- Wear and Appearance of Uniform
- Safe and Secure
- Understanding Diversity
- Hiring Practices – Outreach
- Balancing Customer-Agency-Employee
- Health and Wellness

Mr. Rivera discussed several workforce development areas that he is examining:

- Developmental and Technical Education
 - Leadership Series
 - New Employee Knowledge
 - Competitive Advantage
- Mentoring & Empowering Junior Leaders
- Measurements of Employee Success
- Creating Growth Opportunities
- A Global Perspective

He also reviewed some workforce planning that he would like to put in place.

- Basic, Intermediate and Advanced Leader
 - Forester (Fall 2017)
 - Technician (Winter 2017)
 - Program Managers (Summer 2018)
- Apprenticeships (Fall 2017)
- Internships (Spring 2018)
- Transparent Practices
- Educational alignment with career progression

The Board discussed the perception that working a four-day work week was giving to VDOF customers. Mr. Rivera explained the possibility of keeping a 4-10 work schedule as an incentive for the employees but still being able to have employees available five days a week or when needed.

Action Items

None

Committee/Liaison Reports

Hardwood Management Sub-Committee:

Mr. John Burke shared with the Board the VDOF Forest Sustainability Strategy Hardwood Resource working draft. Dr. David Smith reviewed the history of hardwood trees and laid out the case for why Virginia should be investing in

hardwood management. Mr. Rob Farrell reviewed the one-page VDOF Hardwood Sustainability Strategy along with a summary of what steps that have been taken and new opportunities for the hardwood strategies:

- ◆ Abundant Resource
 - 12.6 million acres – 80 percent of Virginia’s Forests
 - 22.8 billion cubic feet or 900 million tons and growing
 - Large economic contributor
 - Many associated values – wildlife habitat, clean water, recreation
- ◆ Concerns and Issues
 - Lack of proper management – high-grading, passive management
 - Markets and economics – particularly for small- and lower-value trees
 - Forest Health – oak decline, gypsy moth, invasive species and many others
 - Scarcity of oak regeneration
 - Land-use changes, as well as landowner demographics and knowledge
- ◆ The Need for Action – VDOF Hardwood Management Plan – Strategies
 - Develop a broad **partnership of stakeholders** in the hardwood resource, and create a framework or a process to keep these partners engaged over the long timeframe that will be required to make meaningful improvement in the hardwood resource.
 - Work with partners to **identify hardwood management practices** that have the potential to be widely implemented; evaluate existing barriers to their use, and develop plans to get those practices implemented at a meaningful scale.
 - Develop **service providers/operators** to perform the necessary work for landowners.
 - **Institutionalize** hardwood strategy within VDOF by integrating these strategies into agency work plans; accomplishment recording and reporting, and agency training.
 - Provide **training** opportunities for forestry professionals and practitioners, particularly for loggers through the SHARP Logger program.
 - Implement **outreach and education** programs for landowners and stakeholders that will include on-the-ground demonstration sites throughout the state.
 - Establish and implement **incentives** for landowners, loggers and forestry practitioners as needed to spur implementation of identified improved hardwood management practices.

Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) Sub-Committee:

Mr. Greg Scheerer reviewed with the Board the RT committee’s last meeting (August) and reviewed the rates for RT.

Unfinished Business

Timber Theft Strategies:

Mr. Rob Farrell reviewed meetings that have been held since the last BOF meeting as well as feedback that was received from meeting with consulting foresters, loggers and Commonwealth Attorneys in Southwest Virginia. He then reviewed the five proposed changes to address Timber Theft:

1. Add language in code section 10.1-1105 to specifically grant the State Forester authority to assist law enforcement agencies in investigation of timber theft.
2. Add a code section to require payment to the landowner within 45 days of removal of timber from the property unless there is a written timber sale agreement that indicates a specific future date for final payment in full.
3. Add a code section to require load tickets be provided to landowner within 30 days of request by the landowner and specify what information is required on the load ticket.

4. Change the current code section to increase the time that a landowner has to determine damages from 30 days to 90 days after discovery. This is for cases of timber trespass where the landowner has to estimate the value of the trees that were removed.
5. VDOF to investigate reports of timber theft utilizing existing personnel. This would involve:
 - Reports/complaints from citizens being forwarded to the identified water quality engineer or specialist in each region.
 - Initial follow up to determine if it is likely a valid complaint related to timber theft and, if so, what category of theft or trespass is involved.
 - Identify the parties involved and provide the landowners with contact information.
 - Provide the landowners with referrals for professionals to assist them in determining values in cases of trespass.
 - If no other code changes are enacted, VDOF would summarize the results of these investigations to provide better information on the extent of reported timber theft statewide.
 - If the proposed code changes are enacted, VDOF would assist landowners in pursuing load tickets and full payment or obtaining assistance from law enforcement pursuant to the adopted codes.

There was consensus among the board members to move forward with these five items to address timber theft.

New Business

The Board discussed the possibility of having a conference call in November to discuss the progress of the timber theft strategies before the General Assembly begins.

Adjournment

Chairman Worrell called for a motion to adjourn; motion was made to adjourn the August 18, 2017 meeting at 1:30p.m. and seconded. All present were in favor.

Minutes recorded by Mary Weaver, Executive Assistant