



Board of Forestry Meeting

September 30, 2021

Hotel Madison and Shenandoah Valley Conference Center
Harrisonburg, VA

Convene Meeting, Call to Order:

The Board of Forestry meeting was called to order at 12:30 p.m. by Chairperson Ken Morgan at Hotel Madison and Shenandoah Valley Conference Center in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Chairperson Morgan started meeting with self-introductions for the benefit of the five new Board members. Chairperson Morgan reminded the Board of the Anti-trust policy legal requirements.

Roll Call:

Board of Forestry Members Present

Jamie Coleman, Jennifer Gagnon, Beth Flippo Hutchins, Brian Irvine, Ken Morgan Jr., Carolyn Mulligan, Bill Osl, Heather Richards, Ralph Sampson Jr., Greg Scheerer, Chad Shelton

Members Absent

Michael Harold, Mike Hinch

Recognition of Guests and Visitors:

Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) Present

Rob Farrell, State Forester; Ed Zimmer, Deputy State Forester; Terry Lasher, Assistant State Forester; John Colligan, Chief of Administration, Michelle Stoll, Director of Public Information; Karl Didier, Forestland Conservation Program Manager; Mary Weaver, Executive Assistant

Recognition of Guests and Visitors

Glen Worrell, F & W Forestry Services; Ron Jenkins, Virginia Loggers Association; Paul Winistorfer, Virginia Tech; Conner Miller, Virginia Forest Products Association; Martha Moore, Virginia Farm Bureau; Susan Seward, Virginia Forest Products Association; Aaron Berryhill, Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy; Robert Crockett, Advantus Strategies; Corey Connors, Virginia Forestry Association; Dr. David Smith, Virginia Tech;

Adoption of Agenda:

Motion was made to approve the agenda as presented; seconded. All present were in favor.

Hearing of Citizens:

None

Approval of Minutes:

A motion was made to approve the June 15, 2021 minutes as presented; seconded. All present were in favor.

Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry (SAF) Update:

Secretary Bettina Ring was unable to attend.

State Forester's Report:

State Forester Farrell reviewed with the Board the changes since the last Board meeting in March.

- ◆ Reviewed how the Board of Forestry positions are set up.
 - Two Pine Lumber Industry representatives
 - Ken Morgan, Jr.
 - Beth Flippo Hutchins
 - Four At-Large members
 - Mike Hincer
 - Carolyn Mulligan
 - Jennifer Gagnon
 - Heather Richards
 - Timber Harvest Industry representative
 - Chad Shelton
 - Pine Pulpwood Industry representatives
 - Greg Scheerer
 - Brian Irvine
 - Hardwood Lumber Industry representatives
 - Jamie Coleman
 - Michael Harold
 - Small Forest Landowner representatives
 - Bill Osl
 - Ralph Sampson, Jr.
- ◆ Working on budget proposals with the Secretary of Agricultural and Forestry, which are due to the Department of Planning and Budget and the Governor's Policy Office October 1.
- ◆ Newly hired personnel are outstanding.
 - Promoted Area Forester Joe Rossetti to the Hardwood Coordinator position
 - Watershed Program Manager – Caitlin Verdu
 - Finance Director - Lauren Sumner
- ◆ VDOF full-time employees are 80% vaccinated for COVID-19, the other 20% are participating in the required testing program.
 - Compliance for the part-time firefighters is challenging.
- ◆ Celebrating the Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) 50th year Anniversary at the Virginia Forestry Association Summit Banquet.

Informational Items:

Discussion of Forestland Conversion Due to Solar Facilities

State Forester Rob Farrell reviewed the solar power facilities issues with the Board of Forestry for discussion.

- ◆ There is a push in public administrative policy to increase renewable energy, and solar energy creates a big footprint among renewable energy sources.
- ◆ Solar facilities have been leading to the loss of forest and farm lands as new facilities are built.
- ◆ Tens of thousands of acres of forest and farmland are likely to be converted to make space for solar power facilities.

The Board of Forestry discussed the concerns of solar industries, the effects on the forestland and some possible solutions.

- ◆ Engage developers to steer away from the best forestland.
- ◆ Work with groups to provide context and help them understand the impact solar is having on forest and farmland.
- ◆ There has not been an impact analysis on the oxygen level impacts as a result of the elimination of forests.
- ◆ Does VDOF have a high-value-forest property map available?
 - Assistant State Forester Terry Lasher explained what goes into the forestland conservation layer.
 - The VDOF forestland conservation layer was designed to prioritize between properties for conservation rather than identify what kind of property to avoid.
- ◆ Are there legal issues with specifying where solar facilities can be put?
 - Counties are able to decide what would be best through their zoning ordinances.
- ◆ Has there been a study comparing solar energy and wind power?
 - In Virginia, solar power is more energy efficient. Out West and off-shore, wind is more efficient.
- ◆ Chairperson Morgan suggested crafting a statement articulating the Board of Forestry's position on solar facilities.
- ◆ State Forester Farrell reviewed the consensus of the board:
 - Agriculture and Forestry communities should work together to protect working lands.
 - Create maps that identify the least suitable areas for solar facilities.
 - Share the maps with local government and the major developers as a step to encourage them to site solar facilities somewhere else.
- ◆ Look into the possibility of mitigation.
- ◆ Chairperson Morgan requested the Board Members send four to five bullets detailing the position they would like to see the Board take on solar energy construction location to Chairperson Morgan and State Forester Farrell within two weeks.
 - State Forester Farrell will work with Chairperson Morgan to combine the responses into a draft position statement as a starting point for the Board to discuss.
 - A meeting will be scheduled to discuss and finalize the statement.

A motion was made that the Board of Forestry be requested to provide individual comments to the Chairman and to the State Forester regarding potential position statements from Board of Forestry regarding energy construction and its impact on forestry within the next two weeks; seconded. All present were in favor.

- ◆ Robert Crockett of Advantus Strategies offered to help facilitate conversations with developers and county officials.

Action Items:

Appointment of Nomination Committee Members

- ◆ Chairperson Morgan appointed Greg Sheerer and Heather Richards to the Nomination Committee to nominate a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson from existing board members by February 15 for selection at the March Board meeting.

Committee/Liaison Reports:

None

Unfinished Business:

- ◆ Chairperson Morgan mentioned that we don't want to lose sight of the Hardwood Forest Habitat Initiative. He requested that State Forester Farrell share with the Board members the Hardwood Forest Habitat Initiative presentation that he gave at the Virginia Forestry Summit.
- ◆ Board Member Osl commended the VDOF for their support at the State Fair this year.

New Business:

None

Schedule of Next Meeting:

Will put options together for end of October beginning of November and send out a doodle poll of dates.

Adjournment:

Chairperson Morgan called for a motion to adjourn; motion was made and seconded to adjourn the September 30, 2021 meeting at 1:38 p.m.. All present were in favor.

Minutes recorded by Mary Weaver, Executive Assistant