



Board of Forestry Meeting

September 27, 2022
Virginia State Fair Grounds
Doswell, VA

Convene Meeting, Call to Order:

The Board of Forestry meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Chairperson Beth Flippo Hutchins at the Virginia State Fair Grounds in Doswell, Virginia. The chairperson reminded the Board of the anti-trust policy legal requirements.

Roll Call:

Board of Forestry Members Present

Ervin Bielmyer, Clark Diehl, Mike Harold, Beth Flippo Hutchins, Brian Irvine, Carolyn Mulligan, Bill Osl, Heather Richards, Greg Scheerer and Chad Shelton

Members Absent

Jamie Coleman, Jennifer Gagnon and Ralph Sampson Jr.

Adoption of Agenda:

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

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; Sabina Dhugana, Utilization and Marketing Program Manager; Bryant Bays, Eastern Regional Forester; Mary Weaver, Executive Assistant

Recognition of New Board Members

Chairperson Flippo Hutchins welcomed and recognized Ervin Bielmyer and Clark Diehl, the newest members of the Board of Forestry.

Recognition of Guests and Visitors

Chairperson Flippo Hutchins and State Forester Farrell recognized and thanked former Chairperson Ken Morgan for his service on the Board of Forestry and in the lumber industry. They presented him with a plaque in recognition of his 10 years of service on the Board of Forestry.

Other guests were Matt Lohr, Secretary of Agricultural and Forestry; Beth Green, Deputy Secretary of Agricultural and Forestry; Martha Moore, Virginia Farm Bureau; Susan Seward, Virginia Forest Products Association; Lesley Mosley, Virginia Forest Products Association; Corey Connors, Virginia Forestry Association

Hearing of Citizens:

None

Approval of Minutes:

A motion was made to approve the May 20, 2022 minutes as presented; seconded. All present were in favor.

Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry (SAF) Update:

Secretary Lohr reported on events since the last Board meeting in May.

- ◆ The Governor attended the State Fair on Monday, September 26.
- ◆ The secretary thanked Lesley Mosley and Susan Seward for their hospitality at the Virginia Forest Products Association conference.
- ◆ The Governor is making a point to meet with the leadership of every state agency in the Commonwealth.
 - He will be meeting with VDOF leadership team on Friday, September 30 at the James Garner Building.
 - Goal is to discuss what VDOF's challenges and talents are and what the Governor's team can do to help with the challenges.
- ◆ Forest Products week is October 15-22.
 - Governor is scheduled to tour a lumber mill in Fishersville on October 20 with VDOF.
- ◆ Governor is scheduled to release the Energy Plan in the next few weeks.
 - The plan includes advancing biomass regulations.

State Forester's Report:

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

- ◆ VDOF is in the process of restructuring the field work areas.
 - Currently have three regions: Eastern, Central and Western, divided into 22 different work areas.
 - Each work area has a Senior Area Forester that was ½ supervisor and ½ field staff.
 - The agency is changing to 11 districts with a District Forester that will be 100% dedicated supervisor.
 - The 11 District Forester positions will allow better advancement opportunities.
 - This change should make it easier to push changes through the agency.
 - Hiring District Forester positions will occur in two phases:
 - Phase I was open to Senior Area Foresters only; five positions were hired.
 - Phase II was open to all VDOF staff; Five more positions were hired.
 - One position is left to fill.
 - Anyone who has or hears of any concerns with VDOF needs not being met is asked to inform agency leadership.
 - The goal of this change is to focus the agency toward on-the-ground accomplishments.
 - Central Regional Forester Robbie Talbert was tasked with a special project interviewing VDOF field staff to find out what prevents them from getting their accomplishments done.
 - Talbert received lots of good information and will use it to help field staff focus on getting more done directly related to improving the forest.

- ◆ Field recruitment is down.
- ◆ VDOF's new Facility Manager Richard Schmidt started on September 26.
 - Finding locations to build tractor sheds is a high priority.
- ◆ Water Quality Engineer Matt Poirot has retired as of June 1 with 42 years of service.
 - This position will be revamped.
 - Watershed Program Manager Caitlin Verdu will manage agency Chesapeake Bay and watershed initiative implementation and expanding riparian forest buffers.
 - Water Quality Engineer Rodney Newlin will be leading the Silviculture Water Quality Program.
 - The agency is in the process of hiring a Water Quality Engineer for Eastern and Western Regions.
- ◆ VDOF is working on reopening the New Kent Nursery.
 - A Request for Proposal (RFP) is out for a plan/process of what it will take to reopen the New Kent Nursery.
- ◆ The Fire and Emergency Response Branch has reorganized.
 - Director of Fire and Emergency Response – John Miller
 - Assistant Director Operations – David Houttekier
 - Assistant Director of Planning – Jason Braunstein
 - Assistant Director, Mitigation and Prevention – Chad Briggs
 - Safety, Compliance and Fire Training Officer – Vacant
 - Radio Specialist – Keith Brown
 - Agency Equipment Manager – Danny Fortune
 - Lead Equipment Repair Technician – Carl Belew
 - Mechanic – Paul Morse
 - Fire and Water Quality Programs Coordinator – Sandy Mills
- ◆ VDOF is working on getting better timber harvest information from IFRIS.
- ◆ Greg Scheerer is concerned about the number of loggers going out of business.
- ◆ Chief of Administration position is still vacant. It has been posted for the second time.
- ◆ Human Resources Director Hector Rivera is retiring October 1.
- ◆ The agency is closing on its 200th Conservation Easement.
- ◆ Two Forest Management Academies are planned for field staff with more than two years of experience.
 - The Eastern Region academy will focus on pine.
 - The Western Region academy will focus on hardwood.
- ◆ Forest Products week is 16-21 October; staff will be visiting with some forest product companies discussing various forest product markets.
- ◆ State Forester Farrell is serving as the liaison for the American Forest Foundation at the national level representing the state foresters.
- ◆ VDOF has had an internal database for Forest Management called IFRIS for the last 15 years. We are in the process of looking at switching over to ESRI.
- ◆ Lots of funding is currently going to forestry, especially from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act funding streams.
 - VDOF is trying to seize opportunities in Virginia and do good work.
 - The agency is ramping up an invasive plant control program.

- VDOF is also working on a state strategy for invasives.
- Heather Richards discussed the amount of funds available for large-scale conservation lands.
- ◆ Forest Sustainability Fund was created this year to reimburse localities for the revenue lost from land use taxation.
 - A group of Commissioners of Revenue and tax folks are working on this.
 - A survey for localities that have land use will be distributed and received back by October 15.
- ◆ Hardwood Tax Credit was also created this year as a cost-share opportunity for hardwood management.
 - Guidelines should be done by November so current tax year filers can participate.
 - Landowner is required to have a plan and do the practice in the same year.
- ◆ Assistant State Forester Terry Lasher has been representing VDOF on House Bill 206 (HB 206) Small Renewable Energy Projects Regulatory Advisory Panel (RAP) and shared with the Board a summary of the discussions topics:
 - Mitigation techniques, how to avoid and minimize
 - The significant adverse impact
 - What control local areas have/don't have
- ◆ Assistant State Forester Lasher is also working on the Forest Economic Assessment, the Biomass policy and looking at the evolving carbon credits market.

Informational Items:

Pine Resource Analysis

Utilization and Marketing Program Manager Sabina Dhungana gave a presentation to the board on the results of an independent analysis of pine resources across the state, done by Forest2Market.

- ◆ Three locations – Forksville, Jarratt, and Vernon Hill - were recommended to recruit a new or expand an existing high-capacity sawmill operation with a 20-year forecast period.
 - Analyses of past, present, and future pine sawtimber demand, inventory, and process were performed for all three locations.
 - A unique regional site assessment (heat map) was utilized which leveraged related pine sawtimber availability, price, and market characteristics data to create a colorized map of favorability.
 - All three basins can sustainably support a new sawmill.
 - Throughout the 20-year forecast period, all locations will experience pine sawtimber inventory growth over 20 million tons and GRRs above 1.05 for all demand scenarios.
 - The differences between the basins are current level of pine inventory and the impacts from new demand.
 - Log cost and residual chip revenue will be the deciding factors in ranking the basins.
- ◆ Forest2Market will soon share the final report, which can then be shared with investors.

Action Items:

Hardwood Task Force

- ◆ A motion was made to dismiss the Hardwood Task Force; seconded. All present were in favor.
- ◆ A motion was made to create the Hardwood Incentive Program Committee; seconded. All present were in favor.
 - Chairperson Flippo Hutchins appointed Jamie Coleman and Jennifer Gagnon to the Hardwood Incentive Program Committee.

Appointment of Nomination Committee Members

- ◆ Chairperson Flippo Hutchins appointed Heather Richards and Mike Harold 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:

Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) Committee

- ◆ Deputy State Forester Ed Zimmer reviewed some RT reports with the Board.
 - In FY 2022, there were over 1,000 agreements, 74,702 total acres, and 47,513 net acres accomplished.
 - The pine forest products tax annual collection was up slightly from last year.

Hardwood Incentive Program Committee

- ◆ There will be a Hardwood Steering Committee meeting on October 21 at the McCormick Extension site.

Unfinished Business:

- ◆ None

New Business:

One-pager for the Sustainability of Virginia's Forest Resource

- ◆ Chairman Flippo Hutchins request VDOF to create a one-page document on how Virginia Department of Forestry, the Logging Community and the Forest Products Community work together to have a sustainable resource.

Workforce Development Strategy for Virginia's Forest Industry

- ◆ Chairman Flippo Hutchins requests VDOF to identify all places that already do apprenticeships and other workforce programs and how these programs are funded and established.
 - VDOF will present information at the next Board meeting.

Schedule of Next Meeting:

The next Board of Forestry meeting will be held in March in Charlottesville; a Doodle poll will identify a date.

Adjournment:

Chairperson Flippo Hutchins called for a motion to adjourn; motion was made and seconded to adjourn the September 27, 2022 meeting at 3:36 p.m. All present were in favor.

Minutes recorded by Executive Assistant Mary Weaver.