



Board of Forestry Meeting

March 21, 2024
James Garner Building
Charlottesville, VA

Convene Meeting, Call to Order:

The Board of Forestry meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chairperson Bill Osl at the James Garner Building in Charlottesville, Virginia. The chairperson reminded the Board of the anti-trust policy legal requirements.

Roll Call:

Board of Forestry Members Present

Ervin Bielmyer, Andrew Brown, Clark Diehl, Jennifer Gagnon, Terry Godwin, Mike Harold, Carolyn Mulligan, Bill Osl, Scott Shallenberger and Chad Shelton

Members Absent

Jamie Coleman, Heather Richards and Ralph Sampson, Jr.

Chairperson Osl thanked the new Board members for attending and taking their time and effort to contribute to the Board of Forestry.

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 (DOF) Present

State Forester Rob Farrell, Deputy State Forester Ed Zimmer, Assistant State Forester Terry Lasher, Chief Human Resources Officer John Habel, Communications Director Greg Bilyeu, Forest Management Director Dean Cumbia, Watershed Program Manager Caitlin Verdu, Working Lands Conservation Program Manager and Executive Assistant Mary Weaver

Recognition of Guests and Visitors

Other guests were Matt Lohr, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry; Corey Connors, Virginia Forestry Association; Lesley Mosley, Virginia Forest Products Association; Martha Moore, Virginia Farm Bureau; Ron Jenkins, Virginia Loggers Association; Joe Knight, CNRE-FREC Virginia Tech.

Hearing of Citizens:

Lesley Mosley reminded everyone of the logging expo, "Expo Richmond," coming up April 12 – 13. It is in a new location, 13191 Dawn Blvd, Doswell, VA. Currently have 250 vendors registered from around the world. Will be having a loader competition along with several demonstrations at designated times.

Approval of Minutes:

A motion was made to approve the October 31, 2023, minutes as presented; seconded. All present were in favor.

Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry (SAF) Update:

Secretary Lohr briefed the Board on the events since the last Board meeting.

- ◆ Forest fires have been front and center lately.
 - The Governor is very hands on with emergency situations and takes them very seriously. State Forester Farrell had a briefing with him yesterday evening to keep him informed on the fire situation with the winds being so high.
 - The team at the Department of Forestry (DOF) does a fantastic job and have everything under control. Kudos to all DOF involved.
- ◆ General Assembly session ended a couple weeks ago.
 - Governor has about a month to review all the bills and amend, veto or sign.
 - The Forestry community did pretty well from a budget standpoint.
 - \$175,000 a year for a Policy Analyst position.
 - In partnership with Virginia Department of Agricultural and Consumer Services (VDACS), Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and Department Wildlife Resources (DWR) will receive \$940,000 for next two years for two Invasive Species positions.
 - \$630,000 in year one and \$530,000 in year two to develop a Forest Plan and an Urban Canopy and Conservation Plan in coordination with an advisory committee due by November 2025.
 - Consolidating the VDACS Office of Farmland Preservation with the DOF Office of Forest Land Preservation.
 - Office will be at DOF Headquarters.
 - Thanks to Martha Moore and the Farm Bureau, who were very instrumental in making this happen.
 - \$2.5 million in year one for the Forest Sustainability Fund.
 - \$650,000 per year for the next two years to start removing the DOF Fire Towers around the state.
 - Funding for the Virginia Natural Resources Leadership Institute was restored to \$100,000 per year.
- ◆ Virginia is in need of more capacity to process timber. We have been partnering with Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) to encourage sawmills to expand or move to Virginia.
 - Sent a letter out to all sawmills in Virginia and about 30 around the country to tell them what Virginia has to offer and encourage them to expand or come to Virginia.
- ◆ General Session last year required Biomass Best Management Practices (BMPs) be created for energy companies looking to generate Renewal Energy Credits (RECs) so they can be certified.
- ◆ Thanks again for the partnership of our team and stakeholders in making sure that our voices are heard. Appreciate all the work that is being done.

State Forester's Report:

State Forester Farrell reviewed updates since the last Board meeting in October.

- ◆ Very active fire season. Many fires burning and very high winds.

- State Forester Farrell expressed that it was great to be on a call with the Governor in regard to the recent fires and be able to say confidently, “it’s bad but we’re on it” and have the Governor use the words professionalism, dedication and we trust the Department of Forestry to take care of it. It was very rewarding to have that recognition of what our folks are doing. The news will report the homes that were lost, but the real story is the disasters that were prevented. A lot of firemen and firefighters stood between wind-driven fires and homes. A lot of homes were saved by some folks acting very bravely and responding very quickly.
- ◆ This year’s legislative information:
 - Statewide Invasive Species Strategy - Four agencies working together; DOF, DWR, DCR and VDACS. Department of Forestry (DOF) received the lead for the Statewide Invasive Species Strategy.
 - Received one additional position and additional funding to help ensure this strategy is focused on helping private landowners and state lands.
 - Combined the VDACS farm conservation program with the DOF forest land conservation program into the Office of Working Lands (OWL). The OWL will be located at the DOF.
 - Will be celebrating 100,000 acres under conservation easement this year.
 - DOF has over 200 easements and will have protected 100,000 acres this year.
 - Was wonderful to sit in audience at the General Assembly and watch partners speak on DOF’s behalf eloquently, professionally and with the knowledge of how things work.
 - Legislation is requesting a Forest Cover Assessment to be done by November 2026.
 - Examine the current status and trends of forest in the Commonwealth.
 - Would like to see a detailed focus on where the forest land is being lost.
 - Identify challenges to forest health and forest land.
 - Land use, climate change, and invasive species
 - Identify target forests for conservation.
 - Develop forest-related and tree canopy goals.
 - Identify current potential funding streams.
 - Ensure consistence with the Board of Forestry with respect to forest management.
 - Would like to get someone to do a geographic analysis detailed look at the forest cover in the first year. Second year will do the remainder of the steps and have recommendations by November 2026.
 - Got a Resolution passed to recognize the life and service of DOF Firefighter Rocky Wood who was killed March 9, 2023.
- ◆ Following up on last year’s legislation:
 - Shared a Biomass Best Management Practice (BMP) proposal with stakeholders in December. Prepared a revised proposal based on their feedback.
 - Shared revised proposal with the Administration and waiting their feedback.
- ◆ Handed out the Biomass BMP audit report for 2023.
 - Good BMP compliance. 100% of tracts observed had no risk of sedimentation after timber harvest was closed.
 - Looking at a BMP manual update this year.
- ◆ Second Biomass Advisory Panel coming up, invitations have been sent out. This panel has been charged with:
 - Looking at policies in other states related to use of biomass for electricity generation.
 - Potential benefits of using biomass to Commonwealth hardwood forests.
 - Amount of material available to use for biomass.
 - Consideration of technological advances in biomass energy generation.
 - Carbon Lifecycle Analysis

- Put out a Request for Proposal (RFP) for someone to do the Carbon Lifecycle Analysis.
 - Received two proposals and in process of reviewing. Will be reaching out to stakeholders and Technical Advisory Committee to proceed with analysis.
- Governor put \$100,000.00 in budget to get Analysis done.
- All to be completed by December 2024.
- ◆ Enviva has filed for Chapter 11. Hopefully their market will continue as they work through restructuring.
- ◆ Receiving five years of funding to do underserved landowner outreach.
 - Will receive one position.
 - Thanked Board Members Jennifer Gagnon and Ralph Sampson, Jr. for participation with the meeting. Discussion was on position description, area to focus on and how to engage with the underserved landowners.
- ◆ Introduced the new Working Lands Conservation Program Manager Amanda Scheps.
- ◆ Introduced the new Utilization & Marketing Program Manager Justin Barnes.
- ◆ Watershed Program Manager Caitlin Verdu is working on the Riparian Buffer Forest Action Plan. A draft plan was handed out to everyone.
 - This is a statewide, unified strategy for landowner outreach and how to get more buffers established.
- ◆ State of the Forest Report is available on website and hard copies are available.
- ◆ Communications Director Greg Bilyeu talked about new logo messages and shared some SWAG items.
 - “Trees are the Answer “and “Wood is Good” are good conversation starters to get our message out about trees.
 - Looking into working with DWR’S online store to sell our items.
 - Worked with Virginia Tourism to develop a new “Lovers” logo: “Virginia is for Forest Lovers.”

Informational Items:

Board Member Terms Expiring June 2024

- ◆ Jamie Coleman, Michael Harold and Bill OsI’s term expire on June 30, 2024 and all are eligible for reappointment.
 - Each member has expressed willingness to serve again.
 - The Governor would like to see alternatives and diversity to choose from.
 - DOF is recommending reappointments for all three members. Hopefully the Governor will follow DOF’s guidance.

Action Items:

Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) 2024 Practice and Rates

- ◆ Chairperson of the RT Committee Carolyn Mulligan reviewed with the Board the discussion at the RT Committee meeting in February.
 - It was Scott Schallenberger’s first RT Committee meeting, and he brought great perspective since he has participated in the RT program in the past.
 - Discussed a variety of topics: timing, hardwood control, pine control, high quality seedlings, multiple applications beneficial to some tracks, and weed control.
- ◆ Forest Management Director Dean Cumbia reviewed the FY 2024 RT Program Budget Report, Project Accomplishments, and RT Regional Allocations Report.

- ◆ RT Committee Chairperson Carolyn Mulligan reviewed the RT Project prescription rates and recommended changes for FY 2025. Trying to keep everything as simple as possible.
 - Proposed increasing rates
 - Keep acreage at 100 acres maximum per ownership.
 - Tree Planting – Loblolly Pine – Increased to \$30.00
 - Tree Planting – Other Pine – Increased to \$65.00
 - Site Preparation – Aerial Herbicide (Hardwood only) – Increased to \$45.00
 - Site Preparation – Ground Herbicide (Hardwood only) – Increased to \$55.00
 - Site Preparation – Aerial Herbicide (Pine and Hardwood) – Increased to \$65.00
 - Site Preparation – Ground Herbicide (Pine and Hardwood) – Increased to \$75.00
 - Site Preparation – Aerial or Ground Herbicide (white pine only) – Increased to \$80.00
 - Release – Aerial Herbicide (all pines except white pine) – Increased to \$20.00
 - A motion was made to accept the RT rates recommended by the RT Committee; seconded. All present were in favor.

Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson

- ◆ The nominations committee, consisting of Jennifer Gagnon and Jamie Coleman, nominated Bill Osl for chairperson and Carolyn Mulligan for vice-chairperson.
- ◆ There being no other nominations, a motion was made to nominate Bill Osl for chairperson and Carolyn Mulligan for vice-chairperson. The motion was seconded. All present were in favor.
- ◆ Bill Osl will continue as chairperson and Carolyn Mulligan as vice-chairperson for the next year.

Committee/Liaison Reports:

- ◆ Director of Forest Management Dean Cumbia reviewed with the Board a Hardwood Initiative Summary.
 - \$350,000 has been allocated to the Hardwood cost-share.
 - First year started with \$15,000, second year with 20,000, and this year numbers are way up with \$122,000 committed.
 - Rates for Hardwood Cost-Share will be unchanged from last year.
 - Hardwood Initiative Committee will meet in May.
 - Training a lot of field staff on the Hardwood Assessment Tool (HAT).
 - Last May trained first group of consulting foresters on the HAT.
 - Now have a Hardwood Tax Credit incentive.
 - Working on institutionalizing hardwood at the DOF.
 - There is a lot of funding out there for landowners to invest in hardwood.
 - Develop contractors to get them into hardwood to provide services for DOF.
- ◆ A Board member inquired if there was a model or something that explains all the different incentive programs from DOF and NRCS to identify which program would be best for each landowner.
 - DOF could create something that would help landowners navigate between the different programs and identify which programs would be best for them.
 - DOF will provide a pros and cons sheet on the Hardwood Incentive Program versus NRCS EQUIP Program for landowners.
 - A decision tree for cost-share programs would be very helpful.
 - DOF will develop a decision tree, NRCS versus Hardwood cost-share.
 - Dean will send the Board members a link to the matrix that the watershed team created to use as an example.

Unfinished Business:

Virginia's Sustainable Forest Resources

- ◆ A one-page document was created to help individuals who are looking to buy forest products from certified land. This document addresses all the land and the different things going on that address similar concerns as certifications.
 - How do we display and use this information?
 - DOF logo on top would be helpful.
 - Go the info graphic route, colorful and pretty to hand out.
 - Incorporate the "Trees are the Answer" and "Wood is Good" messages.
 - Direct document towards forest management sceptics.
- ◆ #ForestProud is the one messaging/branding campaign that the forestry industry is trying to unify around.
 - It is housed at Society of American Foresters and supported by many stakeholders, including National Association of State Foresters (NASF).
 - Their messaging is, "forests are good, forests need management, products pay for that management."
 - Takes people a longtime to get through the process.

New Business:

Board member Ervin Bielmyer has a few concerns he wanted to discuss:

- ◆ Questioned if it would be possible to have the Logger Notifications accept longitude and latitude in decimal form.
 - DOF is working with the developers to make that possible.
- ◆ Is DOF raising non-native species with the potential of them becoming invasive species?
 - DOF handed out a list of species that is sold in the nurseries.
 - A few on the list are non-native to meet various functions and uses. It is a case-by-case basis.
 - DOF is not growing anything that has any inkling of being invasive.
- ◆ Need to promote to the public what is being done for forest sustainability in Virginia.
 - Get our success stories out there. Biomass BMPs – burning trees is good for the forest.
 - Let's focus on how to address the real threats, and not how to utilize the forest because that is not hurting the forest.
 - Can only affect a narrow segment of the audience.
 - Breaking down the resistance to forest management is one of the goals in our draft Strategic Plan.
- ◆ Concerned the people will stop buying DOF seedlings due to the inconsistency of pine seedlings planted.
 - The issue came from the fields that did not get fumigated.
 - Will be fumigating 5 additional acres and in the unfumigated acres plant lower density.
 - Attacking the problem in two different directions should solve this issue.
 - DOF is selling the best seedlings for growing in Virginia.

Chairperson Osl inquired about the Forest Sustainability Fund.

- ◆ The first year it was funded with one million dollars, second year it was not funded. Currently it is in the Governor's budget as zero funding if approved.
- ◆ Should the Board of Forestry as an advisory board write a letter of the importance of supporting this funding?

- The Board members support a letter from Chairperson Osl explaining the importance and support of funding the Forest Sustainability Fund.

Forestry Summit is coming up April 23-25 at the Boars Head Resort in Charlottesville.

Schedule of Next Meeting:

The next Board of Forestry meeting will be held in June. Possible dates are June 18, 19 or 20. A Doodle poll will identify a date. A possible opportunity is to go to the Augusta Nursery and see what is growing. Visiting Mountain Gateway Community College is an option for a location to have a meeting.

Adjournment:

Chairperson Osl called for a motion to adjourn; motion was made and seconded to adjourn the March 21, 2024, meeting at 12:53 p.m. All present were in favor.

Minutes recorded by Executive Assistant Mary Weaver.

APPROVED