



Board of Forestry Meeting

March 15, 2022
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 Ken Morgan at James Garner Building in Charlottesville, Virginia. Chairperson Morgan reminded the Board of the anti-trust policy legal requirements.

Roll Call:

Board of Forestry Members Present

Jamie Coleman, Beth Flippo Hutchins, Brian Irvine, Ken Morgan Jr., Carolyn Mulligan, Bill Osl, Heather Richards, Greg Scheerer, Chad Shelton, and Mike Hinchey

Members Absent

Michael Harold, Jennifer Gagnon, 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 (VDOT) Present

Rob Farrell, State Forester; Ed Zimmer, Deputy State Forester; Terry Lasher, Assistant State Forester; John Colligan, Chief of Administration; Dean Cumbia, Director of Forest Resource Management; Todd Groh, Forest Resource Management Program Manager; Mary Weaver, Executive Assistant

Recognition of Guests and Visitors

Matt Lohr, Secretary of Agricultural and Forestry; Beth Green, Deputy Secretary of Agricultural and Forestry; Lesley Mosley, Virginia Forest Products Association; Corey Connors, Virginia Forestry Association; Ron Jenkins, Virginia Loggers Association

Hearing of Citizens:

None

Approval of Minutes:

A motion was made to approve the November 10, 2021 minutes as presented; seconded. All present were in favor.

Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry (SAF) Update:

Secretary Matt Lohr and Deputy Secretary Beth Green shared with the Board a little of their background. They are eight weeks into their positions, in learning mode and excited to meet and work with everyone.

- ◆ The General Assembly has adjourned minus budget approval.
- ◆ Secretary Lohr thanked State Forester Farrell for the opportunity to meet and mingle with some of the staff before the meeting.
- ◆ He also thanked Rob Farrell for his leadership of the Department of Forestry and the entire leadership team. It is important to keep communication and dialog going with the agencies and partners.
- ◆ Governor Youngkin is economic development focused: economy, jobs, work force development, and being the best in class.
- ◆ There are lots of opportunities in the Virginia forestry industry. Goal is to determine how to bring more jobs and business to the Commonwealth, sell more products internationally, and be the best we can be at what we do.
- ◆ Solar is a great interest and the administration welcomes the opportunity to listen to ideas for improvement.
- ◆ There will be a lot of focus on meeting the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP III) goals.

Chairman Morgan opened the floor to the Board members to express any concerns they have with Secretary Lohr and Deputy Secretary Green.

- ◆ Interested in how the new administration will address the solar development along with the siting and mitigation issues that were brought up in HB206.
 - Would like to have a discussion in a couple of months to see how things are developing.
- ◆ How can the Board support the administration's goals to preserve prime forests and agricultural land while supporting the clean energy bill (solar development)?
 - There are no incentives or disincentives at the local level to prevent a large scale development.
 - Need to strike some balances between doing the development and keeping the developments from eating up our precious resources at the same time.
 - Don't believe there is a broad enough understanding of how important forests are, in terms of carbon sequestration, water filtration, protecting the bay, etc.
 - Need to strike a balance between eliminating forests and supporting the clean energy bill.
 - There need to be limitations, and counties have no templates on how to write ordinances or how to protect property owners.
 - There is a disconnection between where the permitting happens, how it happens, and the regulations.
 - Counties are unprepared.
- ◆ Cory Conners mentioned HB774-Renewable Energy Facilities Task Force is having Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the State Corporation Commission looking at utility scale solar, decommissioning and impact of forestlands.
- ◆ Look at development of technology to allow building on slopes.

State Forester Farrell requested the Board to look at the priorities topic list in the board packet and determine what we want to focus on in future meetings.

- ◆ Biomass is a very critical part of the forestry wood products business. Biomass is generally the woody portions of a tree that don't get utilized for anything else. Plant facilities burn it for energy.
 - Dominion has announced that they will stop burning biomass.

- Would like to see woody biomass kept in the mix as an energy supply.
- A lot of businesses have invested a lot to capture the debris and not leave it on the land after a harvest.
- Lumber mills need to have markets for biomass.
- On the landowner perspective of biomass, it can help productivity on the land.
- ◆ Hope to have the Hardwood Initiative program be as successful as the Reforestation Timber Program that just celebrated its 50th Anniversary.
- ◆ Secretary Lohr mentioned that the administration's goal is to reduce regulations by 25%. If you have any ideas on eliminating or streamlining regulations, please share with Secretary Lohr or State Forester Farrell.
- ◆ Assistant State Forester Terry Lasher mentioned that the Utilization & Marketing team is partnering with Michigan to look at the environmental and economic impact of biomass.
- ◆ Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) can impact our agricultural and forestry business. This has the potential to cause harm to our industries.
- ◆ We see the forestry industry as an incredible environment benefit because we're protecting and managing the forest to make it healthy. A lot of folks see the forestry industry as being bad for the environment. Need to work on a messaging/education effort.

State Forester's Report:

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

- ◆ Thanked all VDOF partners for the tremendous help and support they gave during the General Assembly session.
- ◆ Cory Conners (Virginia Forestry Association) did some great work on the Forest Sustainability Fund.
- ◆ Hardwood Tax Credit for managing or planting hardwoods is close to being approved.
- ◆ Budget is still not approved, but looking very good for VDOF. Most requests have stayed in so far.
 - Request for more urban tree planting, which had positions and funding, and the request for State Forest recreation funding did not stay in the budget as requested.
 - The request to reopen the New Kent Forestry Center did stay in budget from the House and Senate. This will be general funding to set up the nursery and plan to be self-supporting in a few years.
- ◆ The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funding provide funding to the states for wildfire mitigation and forest enhancement.
- ◆ Based on a survey of all of the state nurseries, Virginia is growing 26% of all the seedlings produced.
- ◆ IIJA includes funding for tree nurseries as well and half will be distributed to every state that has a nursery and the other half will be a competitive grant program.
- ◆ Virginia will be receiving more funding through our four core (Fire, Stewardship, Health and Urban Forestry) consolidated grant funding programs.
- ◆ There is also specific funding for a National Logger Bridge Program.
- ◆ Receiving funding for FIA to catch up from the year that funding was cut. Will have an extra FIA crew for the next five years.
- ◆ Will be replacing the headquarters phone system and minimizing landlines.
- ◆ Investing in a grants management software program.
- ◆ Funding in the proposed state budget for IFRIS development and to improve mapping.
- ◆ Having an All Agency meeting on June 29 at UVA Darden for all VDOF staff.
- ◆ VDOF will start having an annual Forest Management Academy for improved training. This year there will be an Eastern and a Western meeting focused on pine and hardwood management.

- Goal is for everyone to know the VDOF way.
- Hope to invite guests and partners in the future to enhance the forest management skills and capacity.
- ◆ VDOF Positions
 - Brad Carico is now our Western Regional Forester.
 - Job announcement has gone out for three new watershed positions.
 - Director of Public Information is vacant and will be announced soon.
- ◆ There will be a Carbon Symposium in Staunton on June 1.
- ◆ There will be a Cross-Laminated Timber (CLT) workshop in Charlottesville on July 27.
- ◆ The Chesapeake Bay WIPPII goals for riparian forest buffers will be coming due in the next few years.
 - Working on developing an outreach strategy for landowners that best suits each landowner's needs.
- ◆ Fire season has started and the first few weeks have been pretty intense.
- ◆ Continuing to work with USDA Forest Service (USFS) through the Good Neighbor Authority.
- ◆ Just received the agreement to transfer the Mountain Valley Pipeline Mitigation money to USFS to do some forestry enhancement projects.
- ◆ Considering deemphasizing the Good Neighbor Authority and focusing efforts on getting USFS to do hardwood management work using Mountain Valley Pipeline Mitigation money.
- ◆ Eventually want to help get Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) to do hardwood management work with Mountain Valley Pipeline Mitigation money.

Informational Items:

Anti-Trust Policy Acknowledgment

- ◆ State Forester Farrell reminded the board to sign the Anti-Trust Policy Acknowledgement Form. It is a yearly requirement to read the Anti-Trust Policy and sign the form.

Members' terms expiring in 2022

- ◆ State Forester Farrell reminded the board which members' terms were expiring in June. Those eligible and interested in reappointment should let him know.
 - Kenneth Morgan – second term, ineligible to be reappointed.
 - Mike Hinch – first term, eligible for reappointment.
 - Heather Richards – first term, eligible for reappointment.

Action Items:

Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) 2022 Practice and Rates

Forest Resource Management Program Manager Todd Groh reviewed the Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) information packet that was emailed to the board members to give them some background on the RT Program.

- ◆ Todd Groh reviewed the RT final project accomplishments for FY 2021 year and where the RT funds are being spent.
 - Most funds are being spent in site preparation, which has the most benefit.
- ◆ Chairman of the RT Committee Greg Scheerer reviewed the RT Project Prescription Rates and recommended changes for FY2023.
 - Separate aerial and ground site preparation rates. Recommend increasing cost-share to help with the increased chemical cost.

- Site Preparation - Aerial Herbicide (Hardwood only) – increased to \$40.00
- Site Preparation - Ground Herbicide (Hardwood only) – increased to \$45.00
- Site Preparation - Aerial Herbicide (Pine and Hardwood) – increased to \$60.00
- Site Preparation - Ground Herbicide (Pine and Hardwood) – increased to \$65.00
- Recommend decreasing the cost of prescribed burning site preparation to help spread the cost-share funds out to reach more landowners.
 - Site Preparation – Prescribed burning – decreased to \$30.00
- ◆ Recommend all other rates remain the same as FY22.

A motion was made to accept the RT rates as recommend by the Reforestation of Timberlands Committee; seconded. All present were in favor.

Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson

- ◆ The nominations committee consisting of Greg Sheerer and Heather Richards nominated Elizabeth Flippo Hutchins for Chairperson and Bill Osl for Vice-Chairperson.
- ◆ There being no other nominations, Heather Richards made a motion to nominate Elizabeth Flippo Hutchins for Chairperson and Bill Osl for Vice-Chairperson. The motion was seconded. All present were in favor.
- ◆ Elizabeth Flippo Hutchins is Chairperson and is Bill Osl is Vice-Chairperson for the next year.

Committee/Liaison Reports:

Hardwood Initiative Committee

State Forester briefed the Board on the current status of the Hardwood Forests Habitat Initiative.

- ◆ Hired Joe Rossetti as the Hardwood Initiative Coordinator.
- ◆ Have seven Hardwood Incentive cost-share projects approved.
- ◆ In order to build up contractor workforce and landowner interest in the various practices, VDOF is going to focus on one practice at a time to build up as much interest and momentum as possible.
 - Selected Crop Tree Release to start with. It is relatively straightforward to apply and can be done in multiple ways. Has more options for contractors to get involved.
- ◆ Have been holding hardwood training with VDOF foresters.
- ◆ Have put out some contracts with contractors to do Crop Tree Release work using demonstration grant funding.
- ◆ Working on State Forests, private landowner sites, McCormick Farms (Extension site) as well as Wildlife Management Areas for Department Wildlife Resources (DWR).
- ◆ Joe Rossetti is attending meetings and events spreading information on the Hardwood Initiative Program.
- ◆ Received word that the signed agreement has arrived from the USDA Forest Service (USFS) and we can begin doing Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) work on the National Forest.
 - Have approved four big projects on USFS lands to be completed using MVP funds.
 - Meeting with DWR in May to look at a couple of example projects in Southwestern Virginia to use MVP funds on game management land.
- ◆ Improving the Hardwood Assessment Tool.
- ◆ Continuing to do more marking of crop tree release projects.
- ◆ Working with Extension to provide workshops for service providers and landowners.

- ◆ Second Hardwood Steering Committee meeting scheduled for April 19.
- ◆ Hardwood Initiative gives VDOF more tools to give staff a product that they can help landowners implement. Will help to do more work across the state.

Unfinished Business:

It was suggested that two Board Members request a meeting with Secretary Lohr to discuss solar and use the talking points that the Board drafted.

- ◆ Beth Flippo Hutchins and Heather Richards agreed to request a meeting with Secretary Lohr to discuss solar.

New Business:

Land Use Taxation

- ◆ State Forester Farrell will reach out to the Board members and gather information in regards to thoughts on land use for discussion at a future meeting.
- ◆ There is the Forest Sustainability fund to advocate for the state to assist localities.
- ◆ Corey Connors discussed what the Forest Sustainability fund is intended to cover the first year.
 - Providing resources for the department to provide guidelines.
 - Setting up communication with localities.
 - Determining how much tax is being deferred.
 - Possibly enough funds to set up a pilot program.
- ◆ Data for land use is difficult to locate.

Schedule of Next Meeting:

The next Board of Forestry meeting will be held on May 20 from 10am – 2pm at the Richmond Raceway, in conjunction with the Richmond Logging Expo.

- ◆ State Forester Farrell wants to make sure we have topics that the Board wants to learn about or discuss.
 - Guest speakers can be invited.
 - Board members could share their perspectives.
 - Invite VDOF staff to speak about their programs.
 - Board members look at topic list and suggest what they would like to discuss. Can be on current topic list or something new.
 - Send topic ideas to State Forester Farrell by April 18.
 - A reminder email will be sent out.

Adjournment:

Chairperson Morgan called for a motion to adjourn; motion was made and seconded to adjourn the March 15, 2022 meeting at 2:00 p.m.. All present were in favor.

Minutes recorded by Mary Weaver, Executive Assistant