

**LOUISIANA FORESTRY COMMISSION
BATON ROUGE, LA
DECEMBER 6, 2021
MINUTES**

CALL TO ORDER

The Louisiana Forestry Commission meeting was called to order by Chairman Michael Hudson at 10:05 a.m.

ROLL CALL

The roll was called by Epney Brasher

Members Present:

Chairman Michael Hudson, Gradon Clemons, Peggy Hagan, Bill Jenkins and Glynn Pittman

LDAF Staff Present: Wade Dubea, Epney Brasher, David Campbell, Brent Cutrer, Patricia Dayberry, Bret Lane, Amy McInnis, Baleigh Olah, and Roy St. Pierre

Guests Present: George Tiley and Buck Vandersteen

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comments at this time, will readdress later.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Gradon Clemons made a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting held on June 15, 2021; Glynn Pittman seconded the motion. All were in favor.

BUDGET

Epney went over the budget item highlights. Changes in Management & Finance division along with a new accountant have us waiting for the federal funds to come back into our budget. Protection tax usually pays for a lot of our aviation expenses. This year it was decided to do something a little different with the protection tax. Fire season has been slower the last two to three years, and with COVID, so our equipment has not had as much wear but has a lot of age on it. They are not working like they should, especially the electronic components. So we are working to repair and catch any issues before fire season begins along with planning to ask for funds to work on replacing the equipment as necessary. There have been some major issues that cost more than expected. Wade stated that funds were requested in the next budget, beginning July 1, 2022 to replace ten fire units. This request has to go thru the whole legislative process. The goal is to replace some of the units and to divert the timelines of purchasing the new units. The oldest units are 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004 with the rest being 2007 & 2008 are the transport trucks. The goal would be to have units rotated out on a five year rotation to keep the fleet in good working order and can sustain us. Wade mentioned that we were able to get additional grant funding for mitigation and maintenance equipment. There has been three mulchers that have been purchased along with the skid steers to be utilized across the state on the state forests and envision to have this available to landowners at a per acre cost as we do with other practices.

Severance Tax Rates

Proposed tax rates and the historical information are in the packages that were sent out earlier. The Commission has the authority to set the rates. All severance tax reporting go directly to the Department of Revenue. Revenue sends the information to the Office of Forestry and we report it in the Quarterly Market Report. There are holes in the information, but this is the best information we have. There was much discussion on how the information is gathered and how it is figured and reported.

MOTION: Bill Jenkins made a motion to go into executive session; Gradon Clemons seconded the motion. All were in favor.

After discussing the severance tax rates were set for 2022.

ADOPTED SEVERANCE TAX VALUES FOR 2022

<u>PRODUCT</u>	<u>VALUE PER TON</u>	<u>TAX RATE</u>	<u>TAX PER TON (2022)</u>
Pine Sawtimber	\$31.58	2.25%	\$0.71
Hardwood Sawtimber	\$35.00	2.25%	\$0.79
Pine Chip-n-Saw	\$16.87	2.25%	\$0.38
Pine Pulpwood	\$7.56	5.00%	\$0.38
Hardwood Pulpwood	\$7.16	5.00%	\$0.36

MOTION: Bill Jenkins made a motion to accept the tax rates as stated; Gradon Clemons seconded the motion. All were in favor.

DIVISION REPORTS

Given the challenges, it is noteworthy that the average fire size stayed inside of 10 acres. Fire protection is a main objective of the Office of Forestry. There was a discussion on the Good Neighbor Agreement, which is through the USFS, reimburse/pay us for assistance with clean up, control burns, etc., the certified prescribed burner workshops, handbooks, classes and on the job training that is available to employees.

Roy gave the updates on Enforcement reports, fires are down, 170 complaints, 15 arrests and 5 violations issued. There is a need to have hearings at the next commission meeting in March for violations that have been issued in the northern part of the state. He stated that they are one agent short in the southeast portion of the state.

Overall, staffing for the Office of Forestry is close to 100% as per Wade. Because of our pay scale being so low, we are having problems getting applicants.

David gave an update on the FPP program. Preapprovals are already coming in for our next funding period which begins in April. We have 515 applications from last funding period, which is about average. Funding is stopped before it goes over 3.5 million dollars. The timber sale on the state forest is about finished.

The planes are still being updated from analog radios to digital as recommended by the FAA. Painting the planes has extended the life of the shell of the planes. Fire towers that are left are just being used as antenna bases.

OLD BUSINESS

There is nothing up for discussion.

NEW BUSINESS

One item was discussed. It was the cutting of trees on the state forest to widen the right of way to benefit one landowner. Recommendation by the Commission is to deny the request to expand the right of way and to honor the current right of way that is already accessible.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Buck Vandersteen questioned the timber sale on the Alexander State Forest as far as price received for stumpage. David noted that it was not as much as we had hoped, but the logger is doing a great job and we got the basil area cut as needed, the hurricane thinned a little more than we wanted. We favored the long leaf cutting instead of the loblolly pine.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Gradon Clemons made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Bill Jenkins seconded the motion. All were in favor. Meeting was adjourned at 11:49 a.m.