

**LOUISIANA FORESTRY COMMISSION**  
**BATON ROUGE, LA**  
**JUNE 6, 2023**  
**MINUTES**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The Louisiana Forestry Commission meeting was called to order by Michael Hudson at 10:07 a.m.

**ROLL CALL**

The roll was called by Patricia Dayberry

**Members Present:** Gradon Clemons, Peggy Hagan, Michael Hudson, Bill Jenkins, and Dr. Allen Rutherford

**LDAF staff present:** Wade Dubea, Epney Brasher, Steve Bary, David Campbell, Tyler Cloud, Walter, Daigre, Patricia Dayberry, Michael Gray, Tabitha Gray, Baleigh Olah, Matthew Polk, Ronald Scotty Paul, Roy St. Pierre, and Jade Saunders

**Guests Present:** Gracie Texada, George Tiley, Buck Vandersteen, and Alicia Wheeler from the Department of Justice

**PUBLIC COMMENTS** - There were no public comments at this time.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**MOTION:** Bill Jenkins made a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting held on March 7, 2023; Gradon Clemons seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Adjudicatory Hearing: Deferred to later in meeting.

**BUDGET**

Epney reported that we are not out of money, just out of budget authority to spend. For Fiscal Year 2024, we are hoping to get a few more transport trucks so that we will have 19 or 20 complete units changed out. Rumor has it that the new dozers should be coming off the assembly line in October and be delivered to get the forestry package installed. We should have them by March if all goes well. We are not anticipating any budget cuts coming from the Legislature this year. We have had a lot of federal grant money come in as well. We have 92 dozers and 90 transports in service now.

**DIVISION REPORTS**

**Protection:** Wildfires year to date are down because of the rainfall we have received. This down time has given us time to do maintenance on the equipment along with training on fire & equipment. Bret Lane, Assistant Branch Chief, has retired and we will have to fill his position as soon as possible.

**Enforcement:** Our officers are out making their presence known. They are fully staffed now with a new agent added in the Jena area.

**Management:** The Forestry Productivity Program has completed the application period for this year. We have had new applicants for FPP over the last two years. The minimum acreage is 10. Getting loggers to move onto less than 40 acres is almost impossible. We are educating and assisting the forestry landowners on managing their land. There were no challenges this session for targeting statutory funds. So, the money is going where it is intended to go.

**Forest Health:** The map shows the results of the Southern Pine Beetle trapping this season. The parishes with activity are south of the Homochitta National Forest in Mississippi and coming into Louisiana. We saw that in the traps the ratio of the good predator beetles along with the southern pine beetles shows that they are

neutralizing the problem. This was in the majority of the trapping areas this year. The sites in Homochitta should be controlled and contained now. They are monitoring it closely to keep it contained.

**Aviation:** The aircraft have been up and flying. The time it takes to receive parts has been a problem. It takes about a year and a half to receive an engine. So, we had to come up with scheduling and tracking to maintain this fleet. Forest Protection Assessment pays for this fleet. The aircraft are the primary detection for forest fires. We have purchased a million dollars' worth of radios. Once the new system is installed, we should be able to get rid of all the radio tower sites. We plan to keep one at Hammond and one at the State Forest for history's sake.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

Fee structure change – the proposed rates show our fuel costs and such associated with the functions. These practices are used a lot in FPP program also. It has been about 10 years since a raise. We have purchased skid steers with mulching heads, which would be a new practice we can provide.

**MOTION:** Dr. Allen Rutherford made a recommendation to move forward with a rule change for the fee structure; Bill Jenkins seconded the motion. All were in favor.

### **ADJUDICATORY HEARING**

Alicia Wheeler, Assistant Attorney General with the Louisiana Department of Justice office was the hearing officer at the adjudicatory hearing. No one was present on behalf of respondents. Jade Saunders and Baleigh Olah, LDAF legal counsel, conducted the questioning and admitted into evidence on each case.

**Contested:** Case No. 23-FOR-000124, 23-FOR-000127, & 23-FOR-000166 – James Travis Johnson

- 1) 3 Violations – failure to keep a loaders log and there are several timber thefts and non-payment complaints against this logger – felony charges are pending.

**MOTION:** Gradon Clemons made a motion to charge him; Bill Jenkins seconded the motion. All were in favor.

**MOTION:** \_\_\_\_\_ made a motion to impose a \$500.00 fine; no one seconded the motion, motion died.

**MOTION:** Michael Hudson made a motion to charge him \$500.00 for the first violation, \$1000.00 for the second and \$2000.00 for the third violation for a total of \$3500.00 in fines; Gradon Clemons seconded the motion. Roll call voted conducted, all were in favor, motion carried.

**Stipulated:** Case No. 23-FOR-000172 – Melvin Leroval Powell

- 2) First Violation – 1 Count - \$350.00 Fine; LDAF Enforcement Agents were sworn in and testified regarding Mr. Brown's violation - failure to keep a loaders log.

**MOTION:** Bill Jenkins made a motion to impose a \$350.00 fine; Peggy Hagan seconded the motion. All were in favor.

The adjudicatory hearing was adjourned at 11:18 am.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Nothing for discussion currently.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Buck Vandersteen with the Louisiana Forestry Association gave public comments. FPP started in 1998 and over \$75 million has been reinvested in reforestation efforts in our state. The growth of timber is making new mills look at our state. Brown Spot Needle Blight is becoming a problem in the state. It is a virus that is taking over in young and older plantations alike. Another successful year of educators this year included Project Wet and Wild along with Project Learning Tree. One bill in the Legislature is public access to running water. This has come up about 6 times in the last few years and it was killed by one vote this year. This water goes through private land and should not have public access to private property. We want people to fish and enjoy the water, but private ownership of land is important. Local governments wanted to keep

more of the severance tax, but it was defeated this year. The Forest Products Innovation Center and Louisiana Tech is being built and will partner with LSU. On the national level, the supreme court ruled that the waters of the US are navigable. Do not extend the EPA's regulatory Clean Water Act to ditches etc. In September the National Association of State Foresters will be meeting in Louisiana. LFA annual meeting will be held in August in Lake Charles.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** Dr. Allen Rutherford made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Gradon Clemons seconded the motion. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 11:33 a.m.