

**LOUISIANA FORESTRY COMMISSION
BATON ROUGE, LA
SEPTEMBER 10, 2019
MINUTES**

CALL TO ORDER

The Louisiana Forestry Commission meeting was called to order by Chairman Scott Poole at 10:23 a.m.

ROLL CALL

The roll was called by Epney Brasher

Members Present:

Chairman Scott Poole, Michael Hudson, Bill Jenkins, and Dr. Allen Rutherford

LDAF staff present: Wade Dubea, Epney Brasher, Patricia Dayberry, Damian Johnson, Don Smith and Roy St. Pierre, Melissa Sylvia and Brent Cutrer

Guests Present: Buck Vandersteen

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments at this time.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Dr. Allen Rutherford made a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting held on June 11, 2019; Mike Hudson seconded the motion. All were in favor.

BUDGET

Epney Brasher explained the budget regarding the airplanes, maintenance and the upgrades and we are still on schedule for the proposed projects. She explained about keeping a close watch on the Protection Tax Assessment Funds for budget spending purposes to continue to make decisions regarding spending. Because of the rain this year, there have not been fires that required lots of flights. So the hours on the planes have not required engine replacements currently for this fiscal year and we will look again at this in January. Damian explained the Garmin instruments being that are currently being installed in the planes. Because of the low number of hours on the planes, there is no need to replace the planes, just because they are 2003 models, they planes are in excellent condition, due to their diligent maintenance schedules and the continuing of upgrades that are available. So we are just doing upgrades to make them FAA compliant with mandates issued by the FAA. There are no major heavy equipment repair or update expenses expected in the near future.

Wade explained the opportunity for a Good Neighbor agreement that allows us to go into the National Forest system to do work and be paid from a federal program for all assistance that we give on the state forest. It would be another source of income for the Office of Forestry. Assistance would be in the form of timber sales, putting in pre-suppression lines, prescribed burning, and more intensive management of the National Forest. More intensive management of the National Forests would result in fewer wildfire outbreaks or

outbreaks like Southern Pine Beetles. This program is a mechanism to get state agencies involved to get and build up a more intensive management of the National Forests to prevent some of these disasters.

Wade explained the pay scale adjustment that employees are eligible to receive. All of the vacancies have been announced and hope to be filled soon. Bill Jenkins commented on how skilled and professional our employees are and should be recognized. They are unknown to most people, but do a very good job and are a great help with fires as well as insect outbreaks. They deserved any more money that we could get to them. They are truly professionals.

DIVISION REPORTS

Division reports were reviewed and Brent Cutrer reported on the Emerald ash borer problem. The traps have been collected and are being analyzed and we are currently waiting on the results. There are no borers detected in the Basin. Most have been detected in green ash in the northern parishes in Louisiana. There are still ten parishes under quarantine. There have been no confirmed reports on southern pine beetles. The only spots ground checked for southern pine beetles were Ips Beetles. There are about 70 Ips spots now in the state.

In Enforcement, we are looking for a replacement in southwest Louisiana and looking at putting that agent in the area around Alexandria. That will help out the other two agents in the north. This will put the Enforcement Division up to five agents when the new one is hired.

OLD BUSINESS

Scott Poole asked for an update about the electronic signatures. Wade told about the meetings to discuss this and receive suggestions. The law will not have to be changed because it allows for an electronic signature to be accepted when a written signature is required. After the comment period, there will be some rules and guidelines established. An affidavit will be collected from each driver that has the information required by law and will be kept at each mill that the driver uses. The rules will not specify what type of system must be used at the mills, just what information has to be collected or be on file for each signature. Job site specific information is required by law. Drivers have been known to share their cards. If someone is going to steal timber, they won't tell the truth about sharing the card with someone else. If there are cases where abuse of the system occurs, we may have to be more specific in the rules as to what system the mills can use. As technology changes, we have to change the rules to keep up with technology.

The graphs for FPP have been updated to include the last couple of years of information. Both 2018 and 2019 have been added to include the number of acres and the payout taking into account the increase in cost share amounts. The change in practices allowed has increased the payouts. The landowners have taken advantage of the prescribed burning. For us, it is a win-win situation. It promotes better management and takes down the fuel load. If we do have a wildfire situation, we can better control it because of the areas that have had prescribed burning for us to tie into. Both the statute and the rules need to be updated and clarified. We need to take some of the specifics out of the law. That way we can make changes in the cost shares and such as needed without having to change the law. We would only need to change the rule. We are looking at making it easier on the landowner to cost share the practices they want and not have to make the decision on what money might be available for what practice. The difference in price on bare root seedlings versus containerized is less now. If the money is less of an issue, then they can go more to the science of managing their stands. In regards to FPP we have received more applications this year, but the information regarding the year as to how much actually go out to the landowners will not be available until after March of next

year. There was much discussion on the changes in acres and mills after the hurricanes and the direction that FPP is heading or needs to head.

NEW BUSINESS

Melissa Sylvia has been tasked with overseeing Indian Creek Recreation Area for the Department. There is a new project that has been proposed that will involve the Forestry Commission. They want to install a lift station and connect Indian Creek with the town of Woodworth for city sewage. The line would have to run underground by the roadway on State Forest property. The goal is to approve the right of way for the line. There are 101 sites now with electricity & water at Indian Creek. They need to add 35 to 37 new RV sites. The town of Woodworth has agreed to provide the line and the labor to install the line all the way from the edge of town to Indian Creek at no expense to the Department. They need the Commission's approval to utilize the right of way to install the line. The town will own the line and service it, so they would be granting the right of way but not granting them ownership of the property. The line would need to be 36" deep to keep from hindering a road or crossing over. The city would charge \$500 to \$600 per month for sewage.

MOTION: Dr. Allen Rutherford made a motion to approve the servitude pending approval of line depth and non-exclusive servitude; Mike Hudson seconded the motion. All were in favor.

The prospectus is being prepared for a timber harvest on the State Forest in the longleaf area. The Department of Wildlife & Fisheries biologists have asked that we do a cut in the longleaf area for the red cockaded woodpecker colonies to open up the stands a little more. There are a couple of other stands that are too crowded, so we are going to include them in the sale. This will be about a 1,000 acre project and mostly longleaf. It should move forward within the next month. The goal is for stand improvement and supporting these threatened and endangered species and will bring in some money to reinvest into the state forest. Wade will send out the prospectus for the Commissioners to check out.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Buck Vandersteen wanted to thank you again for allowing him to come and comment. The Louisiana Forestry Association is co-sponsoring the Southern States Livestock and Rural Enforcement Association Training Seminar in Natchitoches in about three with enforcement agents from around the region. Roy St. Pierre mentioned that all of The Office of Forestry Enforcement Officers will be attending and he will be presenting some insight on the Enforcement Division for The Office of Forestry. Buck mentioned that the Forest Entomologist at LSU will be retiring and that he asked the vice president at LSU Ag Center to please fill that the possession. The Forest Economist Shaun Tanger will also be leaving Louisiana and we are asking that they fill that position as well. Dr. Allen Rutherford mentioned it could take a year to get those position filled once the process gets started. At the LFA annual convention we honored the outstanding tree farmers of the year and that went to Ron and Madeline Brasher and the Epney Tree Farm. Forester Epney Brasher made a wonderful presentation representing her family and the tree farm. Congratulations to the Brasher family and Epney Tree Farm. The FPP program and markets were mentioned at the convention and how they can be expanded on. Epney explained that the ten year forest action plan is still being prepared for Louisiana and hoping to have it ready for public comments in January.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Dr. Allen Rutherford made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Bill Jenkins seconded the motion. All were in favor. Meeting was adjourned at 11:54 a.m.