**Louisiana Forestry Commission and**

**Louisiana Tax Commission Joint Meeting**

**5825 Florida Blvd.**

**Baton Rouge, LA 70806**

**December 10, 2012**

**Minutes**

**Call To Order**

The Louisiana Forestry Commission meeting was called to order by Chairman Sam Pruitt at 10:38 a.m.

**Roll Call**

The roll was called by Scarlet Arceneaux.

**Members Present:** Chairman Sam Pruitt, Dr. Allen Rutherford, Tina Meiners, Kenny Ribbeck and Mike Wolff.

**Not Present:** Scott Poole and Mike Merritt

A quorum was present.

**LDAF Staff Present:** State Forester Wade Dubea, Commissioner Strain, Associate State Forester Epney Brasher,

Scarlet Arceneaux, Mark Singleton, Don Smith, and David Campbell.

**Others Present:** Buck Vandersteen, Louisiana Forestry Association

**Approval of Minutes**

**Motion:** Dr. Allen Rutherford made a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting for September 11, 2012.

Mike Wolff seconded the motion. All were in favor.

**Budget**

Epney Brasher updated the Commission on the state of the budget. Dr. Strain talked about negotiating the amount to cut. At this point he stated that it looks to be about an $800,000 cut for Forestry. Discussion followed.

**Public Comments**

Buck Vandersteen stated that he didn’t know how Forestry was going to be able to absorb that kind of a cut along with all of the previous cuts. His concern was centered on the fire crews and their safety. The issue is going to be if we have fires breakout across the state and Forestry does not have enough personnel to cover the state. Discussion followed.

**Division Reports**

**Protection**

Don Smith reported that there were 838 fires for 4,764 acres with an average fire size of 5.7 acres. We Attended LFA Board of Director’s meeting held in Alexandria, LA. We Attended Society of American Forester’s meeting at Louisiana State University.

Nine fire fighter positions have been announced to replace recent retiree’s and transfers. Five positions have been filled and one is at the interview stage. LDAF conducted a two-day training for OOF fire fighters at our Woodworth Facility. Forty-one employees attended sessions on administrative paperwork, tractor-plow /transport maintenance and fire-fighting techniques, engine operation/maintenance and fire-fighting techniques, fire shelter deployment techniques, and fireline construction with hand tools. This field day training completed the requirements of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group for Firefighter II certification. At this time VFA grant reimbursement process is in full swing.

Installation of the quick release grill latches, and perforated engine side shields on the John Deere 650J & 750J’s has begun as well as the tropical coolant being put in the JD750J radiators. Discussion followed.

**I & E**

Don Smith reported that funding for the LDAF’sUrban & Community Forestry Grant Program will be announced for the FY 2012 January 1st. The grant program provides competitive federal matching grants to non-profits and state and local governments to assist in start-up or improvement of local urban forestry programs.

Applications for Tree City USA are now being submitted to LDAF and are being processed for the 2012 year. All applications are reviewed and submitted to the Arbor Day Foundation. The Tree City USA program, sponsored by the Arbor Day Foundation in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters, provides direction, technical assistance, public attention and national recognition for urban and community in towns and cities.

On November 13th-15th U&CF Program Coordinator, Whitney Wallace and LUFC’s Executive Director/Volunteer Coordinator traveled to Sacramento, CA to the Partners in Community Forestry Conference sponsored by the Arbor Day Foundation.

Whitney Wallace, current chair of the SGSF U&CF Committee, also helped to moderate and lead the Federal Program Manager/State Coordinators meeting on November 13th before the Partners conference began. Among the topics for discussion were Vibrant Communities, competitive grants and Cars data program information. USFS and state coordinators came together to discuss pressing topics and talked about objectives and suggestions for these items.

**Management**

Don reported on Forest Health and stated that no SPB were collected during this year’s trapping period. SPB flights in the districts are being conducted. We also continue to monitor cogangrass infestations.  We are in the process of working out a contractual agreement with Tangipahoa and Washington parishes to pay for them to spray cogongrass areas along roads in those parishes through our Forest Health grant from the Forest Service.

There have been 34 FPP plans written for a total of 1716 acres this quarter and a total of 290 plans for a total of 18,498 acres for the year.

The first Forest Legacy project was completed this year where Forest Legacy grant funds were used to purchase 180 acres of Weyerhaeuser property that joins LSU Lee Memorial Forest.

We have conducted 19 site-prep burns this quarter for a total of 780 acres.

Fire crews have installed fire lines on 922 acres that are to be burned by personnel other than LDAF. This totals 6335 acres for the year.

**GIS**

Wade reported that the objectives of the GIS Section through the fall included software technical support, department technical support, GIS website updates, forestry related spatial data creation and integration related to LOF programs, annual federal reporting, arson mapping, Stewardship template training, and participation in local and regional GIS meetings and conference calls.

Wade said that GIS has regularly updated Louisiana’s outdoor burn ban map as needed. Additionally, the GIS Section continues its wildfire mapping project with the assistance of a new student worker within the lab. Wildfires with polygons for 2012 have been completed and are up to date. Wildfire mapping has moved on to retroactively complete 2011. An FPP mapping projected has also been started and is ongoing.

**Aviation**

Wade said that Jeremy Coffey is out at this time and he would be taking questions if anyone had questions. There were no questions at this time.

**Enforcement**

Mark Singleton reported that there were several convictions this quarter. Larry Slaughter of El Dorado, Arkansas, was convicted of “Theft of timber” and was sentenced to five years hard labor. The sentence was suspended and he was placed on five year’s supervised probation with restitution of $73,000 to the landowner plus all fees, fines and court cost.

Bienville Parish, Harry Massey, Norphlet, Arkansas was convicted with “Failure to Remit Payment” for timber; he was sentenced to five years of hard labor. The sentence was suspended and he was placed on five year’s supervised probation with restitution of payment to the landowner for $11,500. Mr. Massey was also convicted in Union Parish for the same charges, sentenced to two years in prison, which was suspended and placed on two years of probation and must pay restitution of $8,458.13 to the landowner plus all fines. Discussion followed.

**Reforestation**

Wade stated that Randy Rentz was also out. Wade asked for questions from anyone, and there were none at that time.

**Old Business**

Wade updated the board on the new enforcement positions that are going to be filled due to the retirement of several of the enforcement officers. Forestry will be receiving two new enforcement positions and will start the process soon.

There was also discussion on previous proposed legislation. Discussion followed.

**New Business**

The board elected new officers for the new year of 2013. Chairman Sam Pruitt stated that he had spoken to Scott Poole (not present) on the phone about being nominated for Chairman of the Board. He asked him if he would accept the position if he was nominated. Chairman Sam Pruitt said that Scott Poole stated he would be glad to accept if he was nominated. The same happened with Mike Merritt. He also agreed to stay on as Vice Chairman if agreed by all of the board.

**Motion: A** motionwas made by Dr. Allen Rutherford to elect Scott Poole, Chairman and Mike Merritt, Vice Chairman. It was seconded by Mike Wolff. All were in favor.

**Adjournment**

**Motion:** Motion was made by Dr. Allen Rutherford to adjourn the meeting; Kenny Ribbeck seconded the motion.

All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 11:57 p.m.