



Board of Forestry Meeting

September 22, 2015
Morgan Lumber, Red Oak, VA

Call to Order

The Board of Forestry meeting was called to order at 9:30 am by Chairman Smith at Morgan Lumber, in Red Oak, VA.

Mr. Morgan, our host for the meeting, welcomed the Board to southern Virginia and introduced Kerri Williams, the general manager of Morgan Lumber.

Chairman Smith introduced the new board members, Beth Flippo Hutchins and William Snyder, along with reappointed member Greg Scheerer.

Board of Forestry Members Present (roll call by Mary Weaver):

Don Bright, Joel Cathey, Franklin Myers, Greg Scheerer, Dr. David Smith, Glen Worrell, Beth Flippo Hutchins, John Burke III, Ken Morgan, Jr., Keith Drohan, James Harder, and William Snyder

Members Absent:

Anne Beals

Virginia Department of Forestry Present:

Bettina Ring, State Forester; Rob Farrell, Deputy State Forester; Andy Alvarez, Chief of Administration; Dean Cumbia, Director Resource Management; Mary Weaver, Administrative Specialist

Recognition of Guests and Visitors:

Sam Towell, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry; Leisa Weatherford, Virginia Forestry Association; Ron Jenkins, Virginia Loggers Association; Susan Seward, Virginia Forest Products Association; Andrew Smith, Virginia Farm Bureau; Brad Copenhaver, Virginia Agribusiness Council

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve the April 14, 2015 meeting minutes as amended, seconded. All present were in favor.

Adoption of Agenda

Chairman Smith asked to move the Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry update to later in the agenda when Deputy Secretary Sam Towell arrives. A motion was made to adopt the agenda as stated, seconded. All present were in favor.

Hearing of Citizens

Andrew Smith and Brad Copenhaver thanked Mr. Morgan for his hospitality with hosting the meeting. Ron Jenkins thanked Mr. Morgan for also hosting the events prior to the meeting. Ron announced and congratulated Frank Myers for being selected to receive the American Loggers Council "2015 National Logger Activist of the Year Award."

State Forester's Report

Ms. Bettina Ring welcomed everyone and thanked Mr. Morgan for being such a gracious host, providing a tour of Buggs Island Lake, and organizing a great networking reception.

Deputy Secretary Sam Towell arrived at 9:45am.

Bettina reported that much has happened since the last meeting, including Andy Alvarez joining us as Chief of Administration. Andy comes to VDOF from the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services where he served as the Director of the Division of Consumer Protection.

Bettina congratulated Frank Myers for winning the 2015 National Logger Activist of the Year Award and recognized him for organizing a great field tour for the Secretary's office in Brunswick and Greensville Counties. He was a gracious host, providing an opportunity to see one of his logging jobs and mulch operation. Frank and his family also provided a delicious lunch. During the tour, we saw CK Greene's logging operation, with spotless equipment; his focus is on professionalism and appearance/perception and utilization. We had a good discussion on how biomass has changed markets and forest management and some of the challenges and opportunities this provides industry. It was a great learning experience.

Secretary Haymore and Bettina presented at Virginia Forest Products Association (VFPA) 2015 Annual Convention.

At our last board meeting, we discussed the need to replace our lifting machine at the cost of approximately \$600,000 to \$800,000. After a lot of research, we have been able to locate a similar machine in Maryland that does not have much usage on it. Bettina is working with the MD state forester to purchase it for \$175,000, which is a big savings to the state.

Being in the heart of southern Virginian wood basket, we will be discussing where we are and what we are going to do to ramp up our wood sustainability efforts. The agency has a draft of our pine sustainability strategy to share with the board. Dean Cumbia will be discussing with you where we are with team accomplishments. A handout was distributed to summarize harvest levels in the state. We have the highest harvest level on record since we began keeping records in the early 60's. The top counties for harvested acreage are: Brunswick, Charlotte, Southampton, Pittsylvania, Sussex, Amelia, Buckingham, Dinwiddie, Louisa and Caroline. A total of \$2.1million in forest products tax collections was received statewide.

As we talk about the Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) program and move into the pine sustainability strategy document, staff would like to hear from the board; what we are missing, are we on target with this, what else do we need to be doing, how do we move forward collectively. We will also hear from John Burke and Dr. Smith on our hardwood management efforts. We need to think in a very creative way and look at how we are going to move forward with the financial costs associated with hardwood management.

We took a hard look at our water quality program and we identified that we could do things just a little better. We shortened the period of time for the agency to respond to the initial inspection which allows us to identify and address any problems quickly. Bettina asked the board to let her know if they are seeing a difference with these changes.

We are working on eliminating policies that are no longer needed, updating policies to ensure that they are not more restrictive than applicable state requirements, as well as updating our procedures so that they are easier for employees to implement.

Had a great opportunity to take the Governor and his family horseback riding on one of the State Forests and discuss forest management with them.

Bettina reported that she just returned from the National Association of State Foresters Conference held in California by CALFire. It was an excellent meeting that ran pretty seamless considering all that was going on with fires in the state. CALFire used their incident team, Command 6, to pull the meeting together. They demonstrated how incident command management skills can be applied across the board, not just fire. That's where we benefit from sending folks out West to assist our sister states.

Looking to the future, we will be working very intentionally in southern Virginia to advance our sustainability efforts along with looking beyond our water quality efforts to help people understand the connection between forests and the quality and quantity of water across the state. Forests play a very important role in maintaining the rural character and cultural heritage of Virginia. We do a lot to make sure our communities are resilient and that we serve all the citizens of the state. The agency is going to be as strategic as we can possibly be in the coming year.

Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Update

Deputy Secretary Sam Towell welcomed Beth Hutchens and William Snyder to the Board of Forestry and congratulated Frank Myers on his 2015 National Logger Activist of the Year Award. Sam discussed the education campaign on the new forest tax law and the interpretation issue on hauler transport, which was addressed in house administratively and is running smoothly.

Riparian Forest Buffers have become an increased area of focus and (he?) would not be surprised to see the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) take on a larger role with the Chesapeake Bay watershed perspective. In the near future, there will be an increased presence of the Forest Training Operations Program (FOROP). It will be a great opportunity to train more folks in forestry and logging operations.

Sam mentioned that there is a revenue surplus this year. The budget surplus will not be as large as the revenue surplus. On the VDOF level we have put together a very reasonable budget to catch up on some of the things we lack. We have advocated to the Governor people would like to see RT funded at 100%. We are still in the process of determining how best to maximize the ability of VDOF to get as much fire protection equipment coming in to VDOF on a regular basis. That has been elevated to the Secretary level. Sam expressed optimism that the Governor will support this.

Bettina informed the Board that the VDOF is at 87.8% BMP implementation statewide and 93.6% for the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Mr. Frank Myers discussed new changes being made as it relates to water quality. Mr. Don Bright expressed his concern as well. It was suggested to company representatives provide more insight. Chairman Smith suggested having two individuals from the Board gather information to clearly understand who the players and partners are along with what the root issue is and what might we do to address the issue. Frank Myers and Don Bright agreed to work with Dean Cumbia, Matt Poirot and Charlie Becker on this.

The Dutch government has concern with forest sustainability in the US and as a result Dutch officials plan to visit a couple states in the South to learn more about small lands management and forest sustainability practices in the south.

Informational Items

Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) Program Recommendations:

Mr. Dean Cumbia, Director of Resource Management, reviewed with the Board the RT program and recapped the progress of FY2015. Pine tax continues to go up and the general fund is staying consistent. Dean reviewed the current RT allocation of \$1.8 million along with the accomplishments and budget for FY2016 so far. Dean reviewed agency progress related to diminished species; over 500 acres of shortleaf pine planted, 200 acres of longleaf pine and about 600 acres of white pine. He announced that VDOF are the recipients of a grant from the Natural Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

On behalf of the Governor's office, Secretary of Agricultural and Forestry office, and the Department of Forestry, Sam Towell and Bettina Ring recognized Greg Scheerer for his leadership as Board chairman.

Action Items

None

Committee/Liaison Report

Hardwood Management:

Mr. John Burke discussed with the board the opportunity to make history with an initiative program for hardwood management. Hardwood management is very complicated with the many different species. The task force has been working on a white paper to bring before the board. In developing a hardwood initiative, we would like to not simply reach out to all landowners with an incentive program but to also have outreach, education and training. We would like to develop a group of partners to introduce our interest. Dr. Smith suggested starting with a pilot program to look at the difference depending on the location. Education to landowners will be a challenge. The task force is looking to have something to move forward with within the next year.

Unfinished Business

Sustainability Strategy Discussion:

Mr. Rob Farrell reviewed with the board the pine sustainability strategy draft. This draft is looking at continued tree improvement, more seedlings in the ground, more trees on the ground; site prep vs release spray and giving our landowners better financial information. Mr. Farrell asked the board to look at the draft and send any comments, questions or concerns to him by close of business on October 6, 2015. Looking at creating a decision tree that will help guide the landowners in deciding what will work best for the property. First phase is the Virginia Department of Forestry strategies and phase two will be working with partners to improve outreach to landowners. Partnerships and collective effort from everyone involved helps things move forward.

Bettina updated the board on some staffing changes. Lisa Deaton transferred from the Project Learning Tree position to a forester position in Gloucester. The Project Learning Tree position has been advertised and received quite a few applicants. Interviews should begin in October.

VDOF held an orientation session for new employees. Our new employees attended multiple sessions around the state to learn more about forestry and the organization.

The agency is working with the Human Resources Director on succession planning to help retain employees.

The group discussed when to hold the meetings in 2016. They were reminded that they are required to hold one in Charlottesville, VA. The board will consider having one after the General Assembly session, a second one in conjunction with the Richmond Expo in May and a third one during the VLA annual meeting in late August. Mary Weaver will send out a doodle poll to determine dates for a meeting to be held in Charlottesville in March.

Dr. Smith expressed the importance about educating the kids on natural resources.

New Business

None

Call of Executive Session

None

Adjournment

Chairman Smith called for motion to adjourn; a motion was made to adjourn the September 2015 meeting at 11:36 am and seconded. All present were in favor.

Mr. Ken Morgan's staff gave a guided tour of the Morgan Lumber and Sunrise Shavings.

Minutes recorded by Mary Weaver, Administrative Staff Specialist