



Board of Forestry Meeting

May 13, 2019
Richmond, VA

Convene Meeting, Call to Order:

The Board of Forestry meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Chairman Burke at the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) Board Room in Richmond, VA. Chairman Burke thanked DGIF for the use of their board room. A few thoughts from the Chairman to begin the day:

- ◆ Spring is in full swing, Welcome Spring!
 - Burning law has gone out.
 - Risk of fire has gone down.
 - Pine trees should be in the ground and growing.
 - Hardwoods have leaped out and are turning Virginia green.
- ◆ Virginia Forestry Association had their annual meeting first week in May.
 - Chairman Carl Garrison (former VDOF State Forester) handed the gavel over to John McGruder (former VDOF employee)
- ◆ Reminded the Board of the Anti-trust policy and the annual requirement to sign the acknowledgment form.

Recognition:

State Forester Rob Farrell presented new Board member Heather Richards with her appointment certificate.

Roll Call:

Board of Forestry Members Present

Anne Beals, Don Bright, John Burke, III, Joel Cathey, Beth Flippo-Hutchins, Ken Morgan Jr., Franklin Myers, Heather Richards, Greg Scheerer, Dr. David Smith, William Snyder and Glen Worrell

Members Absent

Mike Hinch

Adoption of Agenda:

Motion was made to approve the agenda as presented; seconded. All present were in favor.

Chairman Burke had index cards passed out for each Board member to write down their top 2 topics that they would like to discuss in upcoming meetings.

Recognition of Guests and Visitors:

Virginia Department of Forestry (VDof) Present

Rob Farrell, State Forester; Ed Zimmer, Deputy State Forester; Mary Weaver, Executive Assistant

Recognition of Guests and Visitors

Bettina Ring, Secretary of Agricultural and Forestry; Ron Jenkins, Virginia Loggers Association; Martha Moore, Virginia Farm Bureau; Susan Seward, Virginia Forest Products Association

Hearing of Citizens:

Ron Jenkins addressed concerns on behalf of the Virginias Logger Association (VLA). VLA would like to see safe routes along our highways. This is a federal issue, if you are interested we have talking points available. Would like to see weight parity on interstates and all highways. We have a Safe Routes Act (HR2453) submitted.

Approval of Minutes:

Don Bright requested that his inquiry about tracking hardwood land that is being converted to pine plantations be included in the minutes. A motion was made to approve the March 19, 2019 minutes as amended; seconded. All present were in favor.

Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry (SAF) Update:

- ◆ Moved to after lunch, waiting on arrival of Secretary Ring

State Forester's Report:

Rob Farrell recapped the last Board of Forestry meeting, March 19:

- ◆ Adopted new Board of Forestry procedures along with new voting procedures.
- ◆ Talked about a new meeting schedule.
- ◆ Elected a new Chairman and Vice Chairman.
- ◆ Discussed the name change of Forestry Camp.
 - Forestry Camp for 2020 will not conflict with the FFA camp week.
 - Campers for 2019 are back up, 50-70 projected to attend.
- ◆ Discussed solar projects.

Ed Zimmer gave update on big solar project in Spotsylvania County.

- ◆ Currently all Special Use Permits (SUP) have been approved.
- ◆ It has moved out of Silvicultural jurisdiction and into Department of Environment Quality (DEQ) jurisdiction which is handled by the county.

Ed Zimmer also updated Board on the status of the Forest Action Plan.

- ◆ Deputy Regional Forester for the Eastern region Bryant Bays is finishing up the draft portion of what things look like in Virginia.
- ◆ Finalizing the list of key issues in Virginia.
- ◆ Hope to have the draft ready for Board review soon. VDof has until summer of 2020 for completion.
- ◆ Bryant Bays has been working with various stakeholders and DGIF.

Rob Farrell reviewed with the Board agency updates:

- ◆ The new VDOF Strategic Plan is out on the website.
- ◆ VDOF has moved into the implementation stage of the new timber theft law.
- ◆ A new Chief of Administration has been selected. He has a lot of experience as Chief of Administration in other agencies.
- ◆ Bryant Bays has been promoted from Deputy Regional Forester of Eastern Region to the Eastern Region Regional Forester.
- ◆ Newest State Forest is First Mountain in Rockingham County. This was purchased with South River mitigation funds from the DuPont settlement. Board will be receiving an invitation to the Grand Opening.
- ◆ Working on a significant conservation project, hope to announce it soon.
- ◆ Attended funeral service for Mary Stewart Garner with Ed Stoots from the Western Region this past weekend. Got to speak with Mr. Jim Garner and he is looking forward to getting out and attending some meetings.
- ◆ Last year VDOF proposed some FOIA legislation that was sent to the FOIA council for further study. Rob attended a meeting last week and they are reviewing the necessity of the legislation and working to ensure it gives us protection on any economic development information that Charlie Becker (marketing and utilization program manager) receives as well as any investigation records.

Informational Items:

VDOF Programs Update

Ed Zimmer expressed to the Board for most meetings we are going to get one of our key program managers to give a short presentation on what their program does, what their accomplishments do for the commonwealth, how they interact with the regional staff and field staff.

Ed gave a quick overview on the areas of responsibility for the Assistant State Forester and Deputy State Forester.

- ◆ Assistant State Forester – Terry Lasher is responsible for the following programs:
 - Urban and Community Forestry
 - Urban and Community Forestry Program Manager is currently vacant.
 - Utilization and Marketing and Economic Development
 - Predominately handled by Charlie Becker hope to receive grant funding for additional staffing.
 - Watersheds: Non-Silvicultural water related things.
 - WIP3
 - Land conservation
- ◆ Deputy State Forester – Ed Zimmer is responsible for the following programs:
 - Fire Emergency and Response Branch
 - Forest Resource Management Branch
 - Silvicultural Water
 - Harvest Inspections
 - BMPS
 - Agency Lands
 - State Lands
 - Other state agency's land that VODF helps manage.

Updates from Assistant State Forester Terry Lasher via Ed Zimmer.

- ◆ Working on the Sentinel Landscapes program.
 - Predominately military bases trying to ensure neighboring properties remain compatible with the military operations.
 - Quantico Marine Corps Base and Joint Base Langley-Eustis have agreed to be the anchor bases for the program.

- Purchasing easements and working with surrounding area to limit development.
- ◆ WIP III program is full steam ahead.
 - Available for public comment until June 7.
 - Series of public presentations going on for public comments.
- ◆ Working on updating the Riparian and Urban Canopy Goals and how those will be credited.

Updates from Deputy State Forester Ed Zimmer

- ◆ The Virginia Environmental Endowment grant for riparian work has kicked off.
 - Working in conjunction with the James River Association to get better and additional quality and more diverse riparian buffers put in along creeks and water ways in the Middle James watershed.
- ◆ Matt Poirot is transitioning to some different responsibilities. He will still lead the VDOF Water Quality Program and also serve as the Eastern Region Water Quality Engineer.
 - Matt was the VFA Distinguished Service Award recipient this year.

Work of the Conservation Fund in Virginia

Board Member Heather Richards spoke to the Board about what The Conservation Fund does.

- ◆ The fund was founded by Pat Noonan in 1985. Works in all 50 states, headquarters is in Virginia.
- ◆ Works with federal agencies, state agencies and localities helping them achieve their land conservation goals.
- ◆ Founded on the dual principle that economic development and environmental conservation are reinforcing and the concepts are not diametrically opposed.
- ◆ As Virginia Director, Heather's job is to find out what the VDOF wants to acquire and how TCF can be the bridge with the state process and what a landowner might need to do in order to sell property.
- ◆ Fund is here to fill the gap between private landowners, corporate landowners and getting that land into public ownership.
- ◆ Since The Conservation Fund has been in Virginia, over 60,000 acres of land have been protected.
- ◆ Created the Working Forest Fund, a significant amount of funds, to purchase working forests to keep them working forests. These forests are eventually sold to federal or state agencies as conservation easements or private landowners with stipulations to be managed as working forests.
- ◆ The National Capital Investment Fund is to work with small communities to work help them create business that take advantage of the Natural Resources.
- ◆ Starting to see a lot of land getting out of REITs after the first ten years. Concerned at what the next 10 years of protection looks like. Would like to step up this program and have the capital available to acquire that land and then figure out what the best conservation solution would be. In very early stages of figuring out what the solution will be.

Discussion and Decision on topics to focus on in upcoming meetings

Chairman Burke reviewed the Powers of the Board from the Code of Virginia §10.1-1103. Reminded the board that they are an advisory board that serves as liaison to the public.

Rob Farrell reviewed how to prioritize what topics for the Board to focus on in future meetings.

- ◆ Scale: How much does this issue impact the forest of Virginia (acres, dollars, people)? What's the scale to the forests of Virginia?
- ◆ Role of the Board: Does the Board's role lend itself to addressing that topic?

There are 17 topics on the list, we are going to pick two or three to focus on during meetings and have tours if available. The other topics we will try to find other ways to work on them. Below are the topics requested with a short explanation.

1. Personnel Property Tax on Forestry Equipment
 - If you're using your equipment to grind, chip, mulch, etc. for production of electricity you should be exempt from local property tax. Someone from state agency has to confirm what you do. It should be the Department of Forestry. Would that be done legislatively?
2. Right to Practice Forestry in Virginia
 - Concerns of potential weakness, need to strengthen legislative for the right to practice forestry.
3. Forest Health
 - Broad topic, multiple issues that could be addressed.
4. Public Education
 - Including elected officials
 - VDOF contributions
5. Hardwood Initiative – *Top pick with five votes*
6. Evaluate Reforestation of Timberlands Fund (RT)
 - Take a fresh look at RT in general.
7. Solar - *Third pick with two votes*
 - Potential conversion of forestland to solar facilities.
8. Economic Viability
 - Pulp and Residuals – both pine and hardwood
 - Markets for Pine
 - Transportation, Mills, Renovations
 - Southern Virginia
 - Analyze conversion of Natural stands to pine plantations
9. Analysis of Land Conversion
 - Conversion to development.
10. Funding working Forestland Conservation
 - Lack of funds for working forests.
11. Seed Tree Law
 - Revisit to make sure it is still beneficial.
12. VDOF Staff Pay
 - Pay for field staff is not competitive.
13. Chesapeake Bay Program
 - Emphasizing the role of forestry in the Chesapeake Bay
14. Outreach to Landowners prior to harvest
 - Agency Strategic Plan
15. Biomass
 - Carbon Neutrality of Biomass/Carbon Capture Regs
16. Landowner Succession Planning

Number one pick was Hardwood Management, discussed Hardwood Management Task Force and progress.

- ◆ John Burke reviewed with the Board how the Hardwood Management Task Force came to be and the good support of the Board.

- ◆ Don Bright expressed his thanks to the VDOF staff for their leadership. The Hardwood Initiative meeting held April 3 was a great success.
- ◆ A summary report of April 3 Hardwood Initiative meeting was sent out from Tom Davidson, the consultant that presented meeting.
- ◆ VDOF staff just finished answering questions from attendees at meeting and combined with the presentation. We will figure out how to share with everyone.
- ◆ Very successful meeting, seven pages of recommendations.
- ◆ Next step is to figure out how to devote a position at the agency using existing resources to take the lead on the hardwood work.
- ◆ Received a pot of pipeline mitigation money from Mountain Valley Pipeline and Atlantic Cost Pipeline. The vision for this money has always been for hardwood management. It is part of the U.S. Endowment for forests and communities.
 - Looking at ways to use that money for a hardwood incentive program.
 - Need to figure out a way to leverage funds and not spend all at once.
- ◆ Still need to figure out to bring together the group of individuals to work on this project.
 - Summarize the strategies, VDOF will work on the internal strategies that can be done.
 - Looking at using the Forest Stewardship Committee that is mandated by US Forest Service. An opportunity to add some members and have one of their focus be hardwood management.
- ◆ Dr. Smith attended Hardwood Initiative kickoff meeting and said principles were well received. However the pathway is still a significant issue. It will take tremendous partnerships to make it what we want it to be.
 - Three words come to mind that make this a difficult task, stigmas, misconceptions and biases.
 - Work on establishing the right kind of data.
 - This will not happen quickly, need to be persistent and will take partnerships that we never had before.
- ◆ 80 percent of Virginia's forests are hardwood.
- ◆ Need to keep staff up on how to handle land conversions.

Ron Jenkins: When we talk about how to conserve forests, seems like we take away from how to keep strong business, whether its pine or hardwood. Solar is just one part of how to lose a working forest.

William Snyder: Focus on what that value proposition is on hardwood management. If you can go to a landowner or a set of landowners with a value proposition then you're pulling rather than pushing.

Secretary Ring arrived paused topics discussion for Secretary Report.

Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry (SAF) Update:

Secretary Ring discussed the following:

- ◆ Attended the conservation cabinet meeting this morning that gives opportunity to keep each other up on items that may impact other secretariats and also how to work in a more integrated fashion around policy issues.
- ◆ Congratulated Rob Farrell, Ed Zimmer and others for their great leadership.
- ◆ Highlighted the great work VDOF is doing.
 - SFI Certification
 - 100th Anniversary of VDOF State Forests.
- ◆ Next week is Virginia Ag week, taking Governor out to highlight important Ag business throughout the state. Will be doing the same for Forest Products week in October to highlight forest product business.
- ◆ Had a very successful 11th Ag trade event. Fifteen different countries were present. Working on integrating forestry more for next year's event.

- ◆ Will be looking closely at the biennium budget to look at how we prioritize and make sure we're doing what we need to do to address certain issues that we brought forward in the past.
- ◆ William Snyder and John Burke are serving on the Watershed Stakeholders Group. Make sure we continue to participate and be actively involved in the public comment period.
- ◆ Thanked VDOF for stepping up and being one of the first agencies to have solar panels on the roof
- ◆ Was nice to see the presence of the VDOF at the Environment of Virginia Symposium as well as the VaULT conference this year.
- ◆ Recognized Anne Beals as a recipient of the 2019 De Lacy Gray Conservation Medal for the Virginia Garden Club.

Resumed topics discussion.

Discussion and Decision on topics to focus on in upcoming meetings continued

Opened floor for board members to weigh in on topics.

- ◆ Board discussed Topic #8 Economic Viability was too broad.
 - Suggestion was made to put 8e-analyze conversion of natural stands to pine plantation by county into a land use topic.
 - Possibly break it out into - what we do, with what we have, and how can we get more of what we need.
- ◆ Dr. Smith: very concerned about the VDOF pay structure. The VDOF is going to lose a significant amount of staff in the very near future, to replace those people with the same quality the department is not competitive.
 - Given the state of the economy, this is the time to bring forward.
 - Will need a lot of political support.
 - Critical to the department for future projects and programs.
- ◆ Glen Worrell: So many of these topics intertwine. Concept of economy viability is extremely critical, might be more important in some areas than others.
 - Market decisions are out of our control but have substantial results for landowners in those regions can be critical.
 - Many issues that have an impact on our industries (CRP program, personal property tax, truck weights, registration fees).
- ◆ Frank Meyers: Discussed Biomass, need to encourage, great for landowners. Got to keep all our business healthy and sound. Healthy forest, healthy forest industry and lobby on the side for things such as competitive pay for VDOF.
- ◆ Ken Morgan: Marketing is a key word that impacts most everything on the topics list. Utilize marketing better, marketing of what the department does.
 - Let the general public know what we do as a department and we as an industry.
 - If legislators know what VDOF does, getting competitive pay for VDOF employees would be a better sell.
- ◆ Susan Seward asked the board to focus discussion on solar concerns. Board of Forestry can be helpful at a local level educating.
- ◆ William Snyder: Discussed fragmentation issues and having good succession planning for forestry.
- ◆ Rob Farrell mentioned that some of the topics can be looked at and completed in a short amount of time. The majority will be ongoing items (public education, economics, hardwood, etc). Need to identify a more specific topic for economic development for a meeting or field trip.
- ◆ The Board discussed the best way to approach which topics to discuss:
 - What are the goals for economic viability? Look at economic viability through job creation.
 - What can this group of people do with what we have to move the needle, where can we make a difference?
 - Let Rob's leadership group put together from VDOF perspective and put back out to Board.

- Opportunity for VDOF to let the Board know what the can help VDOF with.
- ◆ Rob's team will come up with a working document and bring back to next Board meeting for approval. Get follow up information to Rob by end of month. Will send working document prior to meeting for review around mid-July. Mary will send out list of topics from today's discussion to all board members after current meeting.

Action Items:

- ◆ None

Committee/Liaison Reports:

Hardwood Management Task Force

- ◆ Discussed under Informational Items-Discussion and decision of topics to focus on in upcoming meetings.

Unfinished Business:

None

New Business:

None

Schedule of Next Meeting:

- ◆ Rob asked for suggestions of what to talk about at next meeting.
- ◆ VDOF Executive Assistant Mary Weaver will send out a doodle poll for September 6, and two weeks following to schedule the next meeting. Location to be determined.

Adjournment:

Chairman Burke called for a motion to adjourn; motion was made to adjourn the May 13, 2019 meeting at 2:55 p.m. and seconded. All present were in favor.

Minutes recorded by Mary Weaver, Executive Assistant