



Board of Forestry Meeting

October 31, 2023
James Garner Building
Charlottesville, VA

Convene Meeting, Call to Order:

The Board of Forestry meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chairperson Bill Osl at the James Garner Building in Charlottesville, Virginia. The chairperson reminded the Board of the anti-trust policy legal requirements.

Roll Call:

Board of Forestry Members Present

Ervin Bielmyer, Andrew Brown, Jamie Coleman, Clark Diehl, Jennifer Gagnon, Terry Godwin, Carolyn Mulligan, Bill Osl, Heather Richards, Ralph Sampson Jr. and Scott Shallenberger

Members Absent

Mike Harold and Chad Shelton

Adoption of Agenda:

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

Recognition of Guests and Visitors:

Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF) Present

State Forester Rob Farrell, Chief Human Resources Officer John Habel, Chief of Administration Amanda Davis, Communications Director Greg Bilyeu, Forest Management Director Dean Cumbia, Forest Management Program Manager Todd Groh, Executive Assistant Mary Weaver

Recognition of Guests and Visitors

Other guests were Secretary of Agricultural and Forestry Matt Lohr, Deputy Secretary of Agricultural and Forestry Travis Rickman; Lesley Mosley, Virginia Forest Products Association; Corey Connors, Virginia Forestry Association

Hearing of Citizens:

None

Approval of Minutes:

A motion was made to approve the June 21, 2023, minutes as presented; seconded. All present were in favor.

Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry (SAF) Update:

Secretary Lohr briefed the Board on the events since the last Board meeting.

- ◆ Welcomed the new Board members; Terry Godwin, Andrew Brown and Scott Shallenberger.
- ◆ Introduced the new Deputy Secretary of Agricultural and Forestry Travis Rickman.
 - Deputy Secretary Rickman will be working closely with Secretary Lohr and Forestry. He spoke briefly on his previous service.
- ◆ Beth Green is now the Chief Deputy Secretary of Agricultural and Forestry.
- ◆ Recognized State Forester Farrell and his team for their hard work with all the ongoing fires.
- ◆ General Assembly is coming up and will be very challenging.
- ◆ Thanked Lesly Mosley for her leadership with Forest Product week.
 - Toured the Sussex Nursery and Franklin Lumber with the Governor.
 - Visited Robert S. Coleman Lumber Company, Inc.
- ◆ Agricultural Trade Conference is November 1 at the Richmond Trade Center.
 - 2022 was a record year with our exports at over 5 billion.
- ◆ Governor will roll out his budget in mid-December.

State Forester's Report:

State Forester Farrell reviewed updates since the last Board meeting in June.

- ◆ Quaker Run Road fire in Madison has caught the attention of the Governor.
 - The fire is believed to have been started by lightning.
 - Fire was in a very rocky mountainous terrain.
 - It was a great opportunity to tell DOF's story on how to suppress forest fires.
- ◆ It's been a very challenging fire year.
 - First DOF fatality this year in March. Investigation report is complete, and fatality has been ruled a tragic accident.
 - Fault that was found was a discrepancy in DOF policy as to what helmet should be worn, a UTV helmet or a firefighter helmet. Cause of death was not from a head injury.
 - Looking at a better system to keep track of all training
 - Chose to eliminate all ATVs and replace with UTVs for better safety. They are equipped with roll cages and seatbelts. Everyone using an UTV will wear a UTV/ATV helmet.
 - Had a dozer accident where the dozer hit a gulley and the seatbelt failed to restrain the employee. He suffered a neck injury.
 - Believe he accidentally buckled his Nomex jacket into the buckle. Investigation report ruled it an accident.
 - Have created stickers to be installed on the dozers to remind operators to check their seatbelts.
 - Going to emphasize the use of drones to verify fires in hard to access locations.
- ◆ Had a very successful Forest Management Academy in September. Director of Forest Management Dean Cumbia reviewed this year's academy training.
 - It was held at Sweet Briar College where 100 DOF staff attended.

- Three training tracks were offered based on experience: newer non-field employees, newer field employees and experienced field employees.
 - A variety of sessions were offered: Executive Team and Senior Leadership Team introduction, Customer Service and Sales, field trips, basic field skills, tree planting and complex training.
- Offered a special female career presentation for Sweet Briar attendees.
- Hiring more employees with less forestry experience. It is critical that we train our staff.
- Will offer it again next year and hope to broaden it with other agencies in the future.
- ◆ Forest Products week was very successful. Thanks to all that helped organize the tours.
 - Governor visited Sussex Nursery and Franklin Lumber.
 - Secretary Lohr visited Robert S. Coleman Lumber Company, Inc. and landowner Matt Dowdy.
 - Deputy Secretary Rickman visited Forest Pro, Inc. and Huber Engineered Wood OSB Facility.
- ◆ Received a hardwood breeze dried lumber stick from Robert S. Coleman Lumber Company, Inc. and would like to have it in the board room for use as a pointer with a QR code to tell the story of breeze dried lumber.
 - Chairman Osl suggested that if anyone would like to donate wood products to the DOF HQ building it would be nice to see more Virginia wood products in the building.
- ◆ Initiated a local meeting between the DOF staff and loggers to get to know each other.
 - It was a great success with 106 people in attendance
 - Discussed hardwood and BMPS.
- ◆ Have two ideas for getting more wood into the DOF HQ Building.
 - Would like to see one plank of each different species of Virginia and put on one wall of the Board Room with a QR code to give information on what species, where it came from and story behind it.
 - Examples would be reclaimed longleaf, reclaimed chestnut, maple, ash, dogwood etc.
 - Create a Virginia Love sign and have a contest to decide what kind of forest and forestry theme could be done for each letter.
 - As an example, the O could be a circular blade saw.
- ◆ The HB206 Solar Mitigation workgroup, hosted by Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), is having their last meeting today. Assistant State Forester Terry Lasher is representing DOF. Several of our partners are attending that meeting also.
 - They are trying to figure out how to do industrial scale solar and minimize the impact on farm and forest land.
 - After this meeting DEQ will create a proposal that will go through a public comment period and is expected to be in place this time next year.
- ◆ This is Governor Younkin's two-year budget, and his administration is very engaged in the process.
 - There has been a lot of budget scrutiny.
 - This administration has focused on measurable deliverables which fall under Objective Key Results (OKRs). DOF has two OKRs.
 - Riparian Buffer accomplishments for the Chesapeake Bay. Getting more acres of riparian buffers done. Ahead of schedule on this OKR.
 - Increasing Pine Sawmill capacity by either current mills expanding their current capacity or bringing in other sawmills to use pine saw timber. Working with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP).
 - Identified pine sawmill companies in North America distant from Virginia and sent a letter to them to encourage them to look at expanding in Virginia.

- ◆ Engaged in one policy initiative this year.
 - Secretary Lohr hosting a meeting with the various associations and trade groups to discuss potential legislation. Farm Bureau expressed some concern that the Farmland Preservation program administered by Virginia Department Agricultural Consumer Services (VDACS) didn't have the resources need to be a strong Farmland Preservation program.
 - State Forester Farrell suggested that DOF has a very strong Forestland Preservation program and why don't we combine them and have it at DOF.
 - Farm Bureau has accepted that initiative and will be pursuing the initiative in the General Assembly.
 - DOF would just be taking the land preservation as well as the generational transfer piece of the farmland program.
 - In the process of hiring a Forestland Conservation Program Manager and will change the title to the Land Conservation Program Manager. Position will be posted shortly.
 - It would be the Farm and Forestland Working Land Conservation Program if accepted.
- ◆ The Utilization and Marketing position is vacant, and we are working on recruiting internally.
 - Jennifer Gagnon asked about the status of the one-pager about Forestry in Virginia.
 - It is complete, but undecided on how to use it. State Forester Farrell will send it back out to Board members see if anyone has ideas on how to use it.
- ◆ The Forestland Conservation Program Manager position is going out for recruit soon.
- ◆ The Governor signed a Forest Products Proclamation for Forest Products week.

Informational Items:

Consider new Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) cost-share rates for pine planting

- ◆ Director of Forest Management Dean Cumbia discussed the RT program and how the new IRA funding is affecting it.
 - Forestry management is very important and long-term. Cost-share is helpful in investing in the land.
 - Forests in Virginia are 80% hardwood and 20% pine.
 - Pine provides 34% net growth and 50% on the annual removal.
 - Small acreage but heavy hitter.
- ◆ Forest Management Program Coordinator Todd Groh discussed the Reforestation Timberland and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) incentive programs.
 - RT Program Revenue and Incentives for this year is 3.1 million dollars.
 - Have a cooperative agreement from 2022 – 2027 with NRCS for \$555,000. These funds are reimbursed.
 - DOF is promoting programs, looking to do reforestation, putting plans together for landowners that are a part of RT programs. Some of the programs are:
 - Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
 - Encourage new landowners to address resource concerns.
 - Designated for longleaf and shortleaf pine, hardwood management, invasive plant species control.
 - Receives approximately \$250,000/year.
 - Represents about 1% of total Virginia EQUIP funding.
 - Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
 - Reward existing landowners to improve existing conservation on their land.

- Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)
 - Nationwide NRCS will receive \$19.5 billion from IRA.
 - Virginia conservation financial assistance will increase by approximately 100%.
 - Virginia NRCS will offer EQUIP and CSP “Classic”, as well as EQUIP and CSP “IRA” for landowners. Good incentive opportunity for landowners.
 - Anticipate forestry EQUIP and CSP practices will increase.
 - Loblolly pine management will be allowed in EQUIP (IRA) and CSP (Classic) and (IRA).
- ◆ Concerned the increase of funds in the NRCS programs will affect the participation in the RT program.
- Doing an incentive comparison between the RT Program and EQUIP, the rates are extremely different for planting.
- Prescription: Aerial herbicide site preparation, prescribed burning, and planting loblolly pine.

Practice	RT Program	EQUIP (Draft Rates)
Aerial herbicide site preparation	\$60.00/acre	\$67.00/acre
Prescribed burning	\$30.00/acre	\$51.00/acre
Planting loblolly pine	\$22.00/acre	\$178.00/acre
Total	\$112.00/acre	\$296.00/acre

- RT Program only reimburses up to 75% of funding.
- The Farm Bill programs (EQUIP and CSP) have a \$400,000 maximum cap per program and \$180,000 per year.
- There is a potential of less demand for the RT program. The RT committee is going to meet and discuss potential enhancements to the program.
 - Increase project rates.
 - Increase eligible acres.
- Will bring ideas from RT committee meeting to the Board at the March meeting.
 - Can you piggyback the programs?
 - Secretary Lohr suggested having a conversation with Edwin Martinez from NCRS to make sure there is collaboration with these programs.

Update on the Carbon Life Cycle assessment and the biomass BMPs.

State Forester Farrell spoke about the process and update on the Carbon Life Cycle assessment and the biomass BMPs.

- ◆ At last year’s General Assembly the Virginia Clean Economy Act was amended to allow the three Dominion biomass plants to continue to operate - a tremendous legislative success for team Forestry and Agriculture.
 - Requires developing Biomass Best Management Practices (BMPs) specific to the utilization of wood to make energy and the carbon savings that results from doing so.
 - BMPs have to be developed by the State Forester by December 1, 2023.
 - A Carbon Life Cycle Analysis must be done.
 - Tricky part is figuring out the alternative scenario – What would happen to the wood if the biomass plants weren’t consuming it?

- No one harvests for biomass. Biomass is not the reason people do timber harvests. Biomass comes from the residuals of a timber harvest that the landowner is conducting for another reason.
 - We need to figure out what would happen to the biomass material if it didn't go to Dominion for the different harvest types.
 - The Virginia Loggers Association did a survey of loggers that send biomass to Dominion to see what types of harvest the biomass comes from.
- The State Forester will develop and enforce the Biomass BMPs.

Special Announcement

Jennifer Gagnon mentioned that DOF Forester David Powell was awarded the Presidential Field Forester of the Year at the Society of American Foresters conference in Sacramento, CA.

Action Items:

Appointment of member to the Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) Committee

- ◆ Chairperson Osl appointed Scott Shallenberger to the RT committee.

Appointment of Nomination Committee Members

- ◆ Chairperson Osl appointed Jamie Coleman and Jennifer Gagnon to the Nomination Committee to nominate a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson from existing board members by February 15 for selection at the March Board meeting.

Committee/Liaison Reports:

- ◆ None

Unfinished Business:

One-Pager for the Sustainability of Virginia's Forest Resource

- ◆ State Forester Farrell will send out the one-page Sustainability of Virginia's Forest Resource to the Board members for ideas on how we can best utilize this document.

New Business:

None

Schedule of Next Meeting:

The next Board of Forestry meeting will be held in March at the DOF Headquarters Building; a Doodle poll will identify a date.

Adjournment:

Chairperson Osl called for a motion to adjourn; motion was made and seconded to adjourn the October 31, 2023, meeting at 12:53 p.m. All present were in favor.

Minutes recorded by Executive Assistant Mary Weaver.