**Louisiana Forestry Commission**

**5825 Florida Blvd.**

**Baton Rouge, LA 70806**

**June 19, 2012**

**Minutes**

**Call To Order**

The Louisiana Forestry Commission meeting was called to order by Chairman Sam Pruitt at 10:06 a.m.

**Roll Call**

The roll was called by Scarlet Arceneaux.

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

**Not Present:**

A quorum was present.

**LDAF Staff Present:** State Forester Wade Dubea, Epney Brasher, Scarlet Arceneaux, Don Smith, Charlie Greer, Mark Singleton, Randy Rentz, Jeremy Coffey, Gus Rowland, Dena Ginn.

**Others Present:** Buck Vandersteen

**Approval of Minutes**

**Motion**: Dr. Allen Rutherford made a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting for March 13, 2012.

Vice Chairman Scott Poole seconded the motion. All were in favor.

**Budget**

Associate State Forester Epney Brasher presented the budget and stated that they have two weeks left until the end of this fiscal year and the budget is really good. The cut they received came to around $300,000, and she said they were able to meet the cut with funded vacancies.

Epney Brasher also stated that next year their budget will be $300,000 less than their state general fund appropriation. Epney also stated that next fiscal year Forestry should be on target, unless they have cuts in October. The projected budget for next fiscal year will be around $16 million. Discussion followed.

**Division Reports**

Wade asked if anyone had any questions on the division reports:

Aviation

Scott Poole asked about the Aviation division and how things were going there. Jeremy Coffey reported that they had an aircraft engine malfunction on one of the planes. The manufacturer is saying that it was a spark plug magneto problem and they are stating that it was an impulse coupling that malfunctioned and fell apart. The various metal components in the back of the engine broke apart and the engine lost all the oil. When this happened the pilot made a safe landing at the hangar before the engine completely shut down. The new engine has been received and will be replaced sometime next week. We also have an additional engine coming for one of the aircraft in north Louisiana. Then we will have 11 of the 12 aircraft with new engines. The 12th engine will be changed toward the end of the next fiscal year. Jeremy also said that they are in great shape as for as the aircraft and maintenance. As far as the budget they are looking good, but he is keeping a close eye on it. Discussion followed.

Protection

Don Smith reported on the dozers that were overheating. Don stated that half of the radiators have been delivered and the other half will be delivered by the end of the month. As soon as they are all delivered we will began replacing them. Wade Dubea stated that Texas has already been through this and has agreed to send one of their mechanics to guide our mechanics through a couple of the installs. This is so they don’t have to go through all the problems that Texas went through during installation. Texas has also agreed to send us a parts list to our shops. There will be a total of seventy radiators that will be replaced. Discussion followed.

Enforcement

Charlie Greer reported that there was a four wheeler stolen at Lacassine but no arrest has been made.

GIS

Gus Rowland went over the GIS report and the various activities that his division is assisting with.

I & E

Wade stated that the Teacher Tour went really well. They had thirty teachers this year and it was a diverse group. Whitney Wallace did a television interview with Farm Bureau on the Teachers Tour. It was her first interview and she did really well.

Reforestation

Wade Dubea reported for Randy Rentz who could not make the meeting today due to a last minute engagement. Wade said that the Longleaf Initiative is now underway. Wade said he spoke to the USFS about renegotiating some grant narratives and moving some funds from stewardship monies over to the nurseries. Wade said they received a green light on that from the Forest Service and will be moving forward with it. We will now be able to purchase some equipment and materials to increase the containerized longleaf capacity as well as other species. This year’s sale went well and is at a break-even point.

Management

Chairman Sam Pruitt asked about the FPP program. Wade Dubea reported that Pat Aronstein has 143 applications to date for a total of $1.5 million dollars and has an additional 38 approved and ready to be funded. The acres for those applications are 15,633. The total obligations for the two year cycle are $2.2 million dollars.

Wade Dubea reported that there has been a confirmed outbreak of southern pine beetles in the Homochitta National Forest. They are doing some salvage work at this point; they have had numerous outbreaks over the years but nothing this size. They are keeping a close eye out on this problem and working on the situation. Discussion followed.

**Public Comments**

Mr. Buck Vandersteen with the Louisiana Forestry Association commented that he appreciated everyone for a successful Teachers Tour this year.

Mr. Vandersteen also reported that congress and the EPA is looking at the Ninth Circuit Court on Forest Road. There is a commenting period out through the end of this week about state BMP’s and the La. Forestry Association will be making comments on that. Mr. Vandersteen asks Wade Dubea if all the state foresters will be commenting on it as well. Wade said that David Campbell sat in on the Water Quality Committee and this issue was mentioned at the meeting. The Southern Group of State Foresters is going to comment on the issue as a whole and will be representing all of them.

Mr. Vandersteen asked about the BMP assessment and Wade Dubea stated that it was already underway. Don Smith said that they are going to do some more training during the next fiscal year. Discussion followed

**Old Business**

No old business at this time.

**New Business**

State Forester Wade Dubea reported that last week at their Southern Group meeting the Forest Service met with them and spoke with them about the grants. The Forest Service told them that based on the formulas they use for the grants; Forestry will only be awarded around $2 million dollars on their allocation. Wade stated they had asked for much more than that.

All of the southern groups were told to expect by August 2012, the Forest Service will be recalling the lion’s share of that money for western wildfires. Last year’s fire season and what they are predicting and seeing for this year is going to warrant pulling that money and diverting it out west. Wade Dubea said that he thinks that about half of the money allotted to them will be pulled back and be sent out west. He said that they will be looking at this closely the next couple of weeks.

Buck Vandersteen wanted to know about the auditing for all of the grants. Wade reported that they had three discussions with Mr. Hubbard and he explained the audits to them. Wade said that it is not looking good the way they are being handled. Wade stated, Mr. Jim Shannon, State Forester for Arkansas stepped down in light of an audit that took place. They decided that the way the funds were used was not in accordance with an OMB circular. That prompted all of the grants to be audited and reviewed. It seems that if you are not in compliance subject to their interpretation, you will have to give back not just the money in question but the total amount of money allocated to your agency. Wade also said they found out that they are responsible for any sub-grants that they write. He said that he was not aware of this. We are responsible for the accounting system, invoice retention, and the way the money is spent. If we write a grant to a volunteer fire department and they do not have their documentation in order when they come to audit us, Forestry will be responsible. They can ask for our entire consolidated grant money back. The Inspector General’s offices are leading the audits. Discussion followed.

**Adjournment**

**Motion:** Motion was made by Mr. Scott Poole to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Allen Rutherford seconded the motion.

All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 p.m.