

**LOUISIANA FORESTRY COMMISSION
BATON ROUGE, LA
DECEMBER 2, 2019
MINUTES**

CALL TO ORDER

The Louisiana Forestry Commission meeting was called to order by Chairman Scott Poole at 10:07 a.m.

ROLL CALL

The roll was called by Epney Brasher

Members Present:

Chairman Scott Poole, Gradon Clemons, Wayne Hagan, Michael Hudson, Bill Jenkins and Dr. Allen Rutherford

LDAF Staff Present: Wade Dubea, Epney Brasher, John Burris, Brent Cutrer, Damian Johnson, and Roy St. Pierre

Guests Present: Lindsey McMorris and Buck Vandersteen

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No Public Comments

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Bill Jenkins made a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting held on September 10, 2019; Gradon Clemons seconded the motion. All were in favor.

BUDGET

Epney gave a report on the budget and the process for purchasing crossing over fiscal years. She explained what they would consider different for the next fiscal year in order to get a better handle on what is being spent. There is a lot of time being spent now in going over the structures and buildings in our section making sure that they are structurally sound enough to be insured. Any that are not necessary, such as pump sheds, or are in bad shape are being removed. This should streamline the insurance process and hopefully, save some money.

Damian gave an update on the Garmin G5 installations for the planes. The new instruments are electronic and won't need to be replaced or repaired as often as the old analog instruments. The attitude indicator and heading indicator are being replaced by these new instruments. This was a very cost effective upgrade to the planes to increase safety and cut expenditures in the future. It cost a little more now, but we will get the cost back within a year or year and a half with the replacement of all the gyros as they were going out. Damian explained the engine replacement process on the planes. It is more cost effective to get a remanufactured engine from the dealer.

DIVISION REPORTS

The commissioners asked Roy to share the updates on violators with them whenever possible. Roy explained what was going on with the arrests on his report. The new enforcement employee, Charles Cotton, will be based out of Alexandria and covering the southwestern part of the state. He has prior law enforcement experience and will be very helpful to us. Enforcement is fully staffed now. There was much discussion on tracking severance tax. There was much discussion of requesting the

Department of Revenue to do an audit or verifying that the businesses are registered, particularly those shipping raw products out of the state. The request was made to get a person from Department of Revenue to attend the next meeting to explain the process on severance tax.

OLD BUSINESS

On the FPP plans, more were submitted this year than in past years. At this point very few plans have been completed. Most of the reimbursement requests will come in around February. Then we can tell how much help it has been to raise the cost share.

Wade shared that there will be bill drafted to update the written language in the law so that changes can be made in rules and not having to go the legislature to change the law. Right now, the law concerning FPP applies only to the reforestation, not the harvest side. The cost of subsidizing the loggers to offset their expense of setting up to harvest small tracts has been discussed. The landowner getting help with the harvesting would have an agreement to replant. The end goal would be reforestation, but would help the smaller tract landowners. The suggestion was made for a study or focus group to explore this matter and make a recommendation. The specifications would have to be very specific to work. There also needs to be a reevaluation of how to better serve the forest landowners with this program as the needs are changing. New mills, the location of mills, etc. need to be considered as a long term help.

NEW BUSINESS

After discussing the severance tax rates were set for 2020.

ADOPTED SEVERANCE TAX VALUES FOR 2020

<u>PRODUCT</u>	<u>VALUE PER TON</u>	<u>TAX RATE</u>	<u>TAX PER TON (2020)</u>
Pine Sawtimber	\$31.98	2.25%	\$0.72
Hardwood Sawtimber	\$35.00	2.25%	\$0.78
Pine Chip-n-Saw	\$16.87	2.25%	\$0.38
Pine Pulpwood	\$9.25	5.00%	\$0.46
Hardwood Pulpwood	\$8.50	5.00%	\$0.43

MOTION: Dr. Allen Rutherford made a motion to accept the tax rates as stated; Wayne Hagan seconded the motion. All were in favor.

There was a bid on the timber sale from the state forest that came within the range expected. So the contract will be coming on that to reduce the longleaf stands as requested by the Department of Wildlife & Fisheries.

The Forest Action Plan is being revised. It has to be submitted to the US Forest Service every ten years. After the rough draft comes in, it will be distributed to the commission and any changes or updates will be made. The final plan should be ready to distribute at the end of March or first part of April. There will be a 45 day period for public comments. After that, any updates will be made and the plan turned in to DC by the June deadline. There will be an update made to this plan in five years. This action plan is mandated by the Farm Bill for each state to do a Forest Action Plan along with a wildlife action plan and water conservation plan by Soil and Water.

Wade discussed the problems with St. Helena and East Feliciana parishes police juries requesting fees and permits specifically targeting timber harvesting. It has been pointed out to the police juries that the rulings they wanted to implement were illegal. The landowners and loggers are having a serious problem with the authorities not understanding. The police juries want to control the logging operations with bonds and are taxing it to pay for the roads, but the timberland taxes are already paying for the roads. The gravel and dirt haulers will not be taxed and they are carrying heavier loads than the loggers. St. Helena has no tax base. The millage and severance taxes are the only taxes they receive, so they are raising the costs continually. The attempt to legislatively pass a bill for a broader control above the police juries failed last year. The police juries want to be in full control. It will take a broader industry group to address this issue and help out the loggers and landowners and a statewide bill.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Buck Vandersteen brought up the issue of tree farmers losing out on their sales tax exemption by not being recognized as farmers. Much discussion followed.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Dr. Allen Rutherford made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Gradon Clemons seconded the motion. All were in favor. Meeting was adjourned at 12:55 p.m.