

**LOUISIANA FORESTRY COMMISSION
BATON ROUGE, LA
JUNE 13, 2017
MINUTES**

CALL TO ORDER

The Louisiana Forestry Commission meeting was called to order by Vice Chairman Mike Hudson at 10:08 a.m.

ROLL CALL

The roll was called by Wade Dubea

Members Present:

Gradon Clemons, Wayne Hagan, Michael Hudson, Bill Jenkins and Jack Montoucet

LDAF Staff Present: Wade Dubea, Lindsey Hunter, Damian Johnson, Don Smith, Roy St. Pierre, Dr. Brent Robbins, Gene Cavalier and Jim Jenkins

Guests included: Buck Vandersteen from LFA and George Tiley

Wade Dubea gave an update on Chairman Scott Poole's condition. He was the third person in Louisiana to be diagnosed with West Nile encephalitis and is working on recovering.

Public Comments: Wade stated that it had been proposed through the Department to add the feral pig trapping program as a potential practice for the FPP program. Gene Cavalier was there to give an overview of the program and how it would apply to reforestation.

Gene Cavalier gave the presentation to report on the cost of damages to agriculture crops and pasturelands along with the damage to forestry. He gave information on the number of feral hogs along with the traps used, the success of the traps and the costs of trapping and working with landowners.

There was a question about the Department having a nuisance animal trapping program to trap beavers. The Department stopped that program in 2010, but does keep a list of private trappers that will assist landowners.

The Commission would like to review the study that was done about the feral hogs and its application to reforestation.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Bill Jenkins made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 14, 2017 as printed; Wayne Hagan seconded the motion. All were in favor.

BUDGET

Wade gave the budget update. The FPP program report was given along with reports on the work being done to keep more of the statutory dedicated monies going back to the landowners thru the practices in the FPP program. The maximum cost share has been raised to \$15,000 and the cycle has been changed from a two year cycle to a one year cycle. Since the program began, there have been 5,501 applications with 461,000 acres have gone thru the program being

reforested with a cost of \$26.1 million being cost shared to help landowners. This program began in 1998. This program has been very successful, but there are still many smaller tract landowners that do not know about this program. There was discussion on how to help the smaller landowners learn about the program and how to get their timber cut and replanting done on the smaller tracts. Also there was discussion on keeping the statutorily dedicated funds going to what they were set aside for and not getting swept for other purposes. The budget authority will have to be increased to use more of the funds. The visual presentation of the history of the FPP program requests and payouts was given to the Commission.

The Office of Forestry is doing well on the budgeted amounts for this past year, mostly due to the weather, not allowing more wildfires and using the supplies budget for fuel.

The future of the next year's budget for the Department is still with the Legislature. Wade discussed how he responds to any budget cut requests from the Legislature. The Office of Forestry had 286 employees in 2008. Now there are 166 employees, basically half in the last 9 years. So he does not like to apply any scenarios to personnel cuts. The ability to make money from prescribed burns and working other state's fires is cut because we are short on personnel.

DIVISION REPORTS

All reports were given to the Commission to review. There are now eight parishes quarantined because of the emerald ash borer. The ash population in the delta area and the Atchafalaya Basin will be decimated if the infestation gets there.

Buck Vandersteen told about the Teacher's Tour going on in the Florida parishes now with 35 teachers participating. The teachers are learning about forestry, wildlife and fisheries and water using Project Learning Tree, Project Wild and Project Wet protocol. They are touring wildlife management areas and into the woods to learn.

OLD BUSINESS

No old business.

NEW BUSINESS

The only new business mentioned were the feral pig program and a bill in the Legislature regarding the master logger program. This is not a move to license loggers, but a recommendation for the Department to work with the master logger program to oversee the registration of master loggers. The severance tax is supposed to cover the road maintenance in each parish. The resolution was to give the master loggers a break on the road bonds. Louisiana is the only state to not license foresters.

Secretary Jack Montoucet was commended for attending the meeting. He is the first Secretary of Wildlife & Fisheries in an Ex-Officio position to attend a meeting since before Wade became State Forester. His participation will round out the Commission's expertise.

The next commission meeting will be at the LFA Annual Meeting in New Orleans on August 30, 2017, at 7:00 am.

ADJOURNMENT

Gradon Clemons made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Wayne Hagan seconded the motion. All were in favor. Meeting was adjourned at 11:20 am.