

LOUISIANA FORESTRY COMMISSION
BATON ROUGE, LA
MARCH 7, 2023
MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The Louisiana Forestry Commission meeting was called to order by Michael Hudson at 10:02 a.m.

ROLL CALL

The roll was called by Epney Brasher

Members Present:

Gradon Clemons, Peggy Hagan, Michael Hudson, and Glynn Pittman

LDAF staff present: Epney Brasher, Steve Bary, David Campbell, Patricia Dayberry, Roy St. Pierre, and Jade Saunders

PUBLIC COMMENTS - There were no public comments at this time.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Gradon Clemons made a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting held on December 5, 2022; Glynn Pittman seconded the motion. All were in favor.

BUDGET

Epney discussed the budget. Not much changed on the budget. Budget Authority is needed to buy the equipment we need. No issue with cash flow, just with budget authority. The purchase of two trucks from the hurricane supplemental funds needs to be done before the end of this fiscal year. The other we have been waiting on is the transport trucks with the beds for the new dozers. Financially we are ok. It is the time frame that is a gamble. The radios should start coming in next month. It will be a slow start to get them programmed and installed.

DIVISION REPORTS

Protection Branch – More fires in report now. Matt Polk was hired into the fire program manager position. Bret Lane has expressed that he would like to retire this year. Matt is being trained in his position along with the grant information. There are three grants this year for the Volunteer Fire Departments. The new forester replacing Matt is John Baxter Rowley in Washington Parish. There was much discussion on hiring foresters, the degrees, and the salaries even among the already hired personnel.

Enforcement Branch - Roy gave the report. There should be 4 to 5 hearings for the June meeting. Compliance is coming up on the loader's log standpoint. The number of investigations we do is approximately 125 to 145 per year.

Management Branch – Tyler Cloud has been promoted to the forest management position. He is working on Forest Health and will be trained on FPP, Stewardship, CRP, Forest Legacy and BMPs. We are hoping to close out the second legacy project within the next month with the price of \$2.3 million. David is looking to retire at the end of the year. The Legacy program was explained. The FPP program was discussed in relation to the destruction in western Louisiana and the numbers of applications and expenditures for the fiscal years of 2023 & 2024.

Jade Saunders was introduced to the commission. She is the new forestry attorney.

Forest Health - Southern Pine Beetle traps have been deployed. Cogon grass spraying will hopefully start soon, maybe by April.

Aviation – The report was discussed. The new pilots are working well and finding fires. Two engines are on order and should be here in November. The next two won't be in before June 2024. Two of our pilots are flight instructors. There are twelve planes and nine pilots. Aviation is fully staffed.

OLD BUSINESS

The fee structure change was discussed. The fee for prescribed burning was suggested to \$30 per acre and site prep burning to \$75 to \$110 for heavy. It would be put into practice by December if the proposed changes are accepted at the next meeting. The proposal will be ready for the June meeting. It was advised to keep rates with pace to the market and not to lose money by providing the service and to achieve the goal of the FPP program too.

Severance tax recommendations analysis - Wade has not been able to talk with the department of revenue concerning the information needed. This topic will be discussed at the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

The Southern Group of State Foresters meeting conflicts with the June 13 Forestry Commission meeting. The decision to move the meeting will be made soon. It is preferable to move to the 6th if necessary.

PUBLIC COMMENTS - There were no public comments at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Glynn Pittman made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Gradon Clemons seconded the motion. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 11:18 a.m.