

**LOUISIANA FORESTRY COMMISSION  
BATON ROUGE, LA  
DECEMBER 4, 2017  
MINUTES**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The Louisiana Forestry Commission meeting was called to order by Chairman Scott Poole at 10:09 a.m.

**ROLL CALL**

The roll was called by Epney Brasher

**Members Present:** Chairman Scott Poole, Gradon Clemons, Wayne Hagan, Michael Hudson, Bill Jenkins, Jack Montoucet, to which a quorum was present. Dr. Allen Rutherford arrived at 10:18 a.m.

**LDAF staff present:** Wade Dubea, Epney Brasher, Pat Aronstein, David Campbell, Patricia Dayberry, Damian Johnson, Don Smith & Roy St. Pierre

Guests included: Buck Vandersteen, representing the Louisiana Forestry Association and Shirley Bon Coursene, representing the Louisiana Department of Revenue

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None at this time

**MOTION:** Mike Hudson made a motion to do away with the bylaws; Dr. Allen Rutherford seconded the motion. All were in favor.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**MOTION:** Gradon Clemons made a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting held on October 3, 2017 as printed; Bill Jenkins seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Severance tax rates were set for 2018 after discussion of how information is collected and reported to the Louisiana Department of Revenue, which is then forwarded to the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry. Department of Revenue sends information monthly, LDAF gathers and reports quarterly. Timber purchase volume and price paid in those reports assist in severance determination. Statue requires that the information shall be provided to LDAF office. Possibly we could come up with a template to be used to get information and statistics needed, since there is inconsistency of data factors being submitted and is used to average cost. Commission would like to be a part of the amendment to change the reporting with Department of Revenue and LDAF. We need to have comparable products whether it is stumpage versus delivered product, etc., and depending on how things are accurately being reported in order to give you the value that is needed to determine severance tax. Wayne Hagan suggest possibly enforce some penalty if reporting is not turned in. Wade explained that the mills do report tax, but not stumpage and that maybe we all could sit down and work toward a solution. Buck agrees to meet to identify how we can get the information to get the reporting back on track. The Commission has agreed to work with LDAF and LFA to form a committee to help revise the guidelines for collecting and reporting to include updating the reporting number board feet to tons and if necessary to update form and information. Consistency will be the key for gathering the necessary information.

**MOTION:** Dr. Allen Rutherford made a motion to accept the updated rates as proposed; Mike Hudson seconded the motion. All were in favor.

**ADOPTED SEVERANCE TAX VALUES FOR 2018**

<u>PRODUCT</u>	<u>VALUE PER TON</u>	<u>TAX RATE</u>	<u>TAX PER TON (2018)</u>
Pine Sawtimber	\$32.16	2.25%	\$0.72
Hardwood Sawtimber	\$37.05	2.25%	\$0.83
Pine Chip-n-Saw	\$16.88	2.25%	\$0.38
Pine Pulpwood	\$9.28	5.00%	\$0.46
Hardwood Pulpwood	\$8.13	5.00%	\$0.41

**BUDGET**

Epney reported that we are currently in good shape. The radio updates should hopefully be completed by spring. Our aviation fleet is 14 years old and we are in the process of getting four planes painted this fiscal year to address the corrosion issues that are present. We will continue over the next couple of years until the entire fleet has been repainted. We are in the process of purchasing brush units and slip in units that can be used on fires instead of dozers.

Brief explanation was given on how raises are being given at the beginning of the year. January 1<sup>st</sup> raises will be given to all employees affected by the new schedule pay rates that were implemented. January 2<sup>nd</sup> raises affect the employees that did not get the raises on January 1<sup>st</sup>. Any employees that are at the max of their pay schedule rate will not receive any raise; everyone else will receive a 2% raise. The next raises will come July 1<sup>st</sup> and will be out of Forestry’s budget, since we will not receive any additional appropriations for those raises. Currently there is a job study being conducted through Civil Service that could hopefully put us back in the game to be able to hire and maintain employees with the new pay scale to have a competitive salary.

A discussion about FPP and the possible changes to adjust the cost share rates, grants for reforestation, spraying with helicopters and new ways to look at the program. The balance in FPP is always a moving number. Buck Vandersteen suggested that we increase the cost share to be unlimited with a one year turn around. Wade reminded that this is a rule change and not a statue change. We will discuss adjusting the cost share rates at our next meeting. Wayne Hagan suggests that we should see a return if we raise the cost shares. The issue is to use the money for what it is dedicated for. Jack Montoucet reminded the Commission to use caution with the dedicated funds that we have and spend accordingly or they could be taken to help plug the hole in the state budget.

Wade discussed the meeting that was held in Clinton where Governor Edwards and Commissioner Strain met with locale farmers to address their needs were well received. The needs regarding forestry were mills to bring timber to, buyers needed for small tracts of lands and road bond issues. In reference to the needs for the forestry community Mike Hudson suggested that we need to market FPP through advertisement and that we need to get the word out in order to promote the program, whether it is through

LFA, the Market Bulletin or the Farm Bureau Weekly Show. In order to compete we must get the word out, even if we use a one page handout to give to timber buyers to advertise for reforestation.

### **DIVISION REPORTS**

Enforcement now has 5 officers currently, including Roy. The position in the southwest area of the state was filled by hiring Richard Caillier back. There will be one vacancy coming up in January in the Florida parishes, when the current enforcement officer retires. There was a brief discussion in regards to Roy possibly going back and checking on the cooperative agreement with the Louisiana Department of Revenue in regards to collecting severance tax and the possibility of utilizing other employees to do so.

Protection branch has burn bans issued as needed across the state.

Health – We can assist with a bulldozer much better than a chainsaw to assist in stopping the spread of any infestations.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

Questions regarding the nurseries – Texas, Beauregard and Columbia have been turned over to state lands to advertise for sale. A decision was made to sell, not lease and so it is out of the Department's hand, the Department to get the proceeds, not the Office of Forestry. Monroe is in discussion since it connects to LDAF property, LAFA is handling those discussions.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

None

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Buck wanted to thank the Department for the support, prescribed burning process, enforcement and the aerial protection that is received across the state.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** Dr. Allen Rutherford made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Wayne Hagan seconded the motion. All were in favor. Meeting was adjourned at 11:50 a.m.