

LOUISIANA FORESTRY COMMISSION

MARCH 11, 2025, 10:00 A.M.

**LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY
VETERANS' MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM
5825 FLORIDA BOULEVARD
BATON ROUGE, LA 70806**

CALL TO ORDER

The Louisiana Forestry Commission meeting was called to order by Michael Hudson at 10:14 a.m.

ROLL CALL

The roll call was conducted by Wade Dubea.

Members present: Glynn Pittman, Dennis Aucoin, Michael Hudson, and Peggy Hagan.

LDAF staff present: Wade Dubea, Epney Brasher, Roy St. Pierre, Matt Polk, Tyler Cloud, Jeannie Severio, Jade Saunders, Tabitha Gray.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Deferred to later in meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Dennis Aucoin made a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of December 2, 2024. Glynn Pittman seconded the motion. All were in favor.

BUDGET

Epney Brasher gave the budget update. There are many questions as to what will happen with the federal funds, whether they will be available or not. The USDA has been informed of our position and much discussion followed regarding funds and processing future expenditures. So far we are in line with our expenses with taking care of our fire fighting equipment. We are being cautious about the grants that we have received. We have not had to cancel contracts or lay off people. Because of our situation, we are in much better shape than other states. FPP payments are being made and applications for preapprovals are being accepted.

DIVISION REPORTS

Protection Branch: Wade Dubea gave the report. We have been working on the training. We just had our fifth heavy equipment academy to get everyone up to date on training. We will begin to offer this twice a year instead of quarterly and then move to once a year to maintain the training. These trainings are open to fire departments or others that are interested. Not all of the training applies to others, but it is valuable to our fire fighters. We are working on getting our employees certified for some sort of service. Not all will complete the arduous test to go out west to fight fires, but we also have incorporated the light duty test. About a third of our fire fighters are certified and completed the training to go out of state. We encourage our employees to get the experience, the extra pay, and bring what they have learned back to our agency. Fire numbers are fairly low. The volunteer fire departments grants are being processed as normal. We got notice that Oklahoma and Texas may need help to preposition forces for wildfires. They are expecting to have issues in the panhandle again. So they have reached out to the compact for help. The training of volunteer fire departments is being done as they

request. We will not red card them because then we would be responsible for their actions. We will only red card our own employees.

Enforcement Branch: Wade gave the report. Timber theft is the biggest number of complaints. Most of them are worked out on the civil level. Loaders log is still not being kept up with. Roy reported that Mr. Rowland paid his fine and now only faces the criminal charges. There are a lot of timber buyers and loggers that are keeping up with their records.

Management and Forest Health Branch: Expenditures and revenue are in play constantly with the FPP program. We encourage everyone to get their applications preapproved. It gets everything in line so that no one misses out because of a wrong signature or such. We have determined that \$10,000 is a good spot for funding and we do fund about 3.2 million each year. Whatever is not used will be rolled over into the next cycle. The number of applications has been consistent, but is lower this year. We are seeing a lot of land going back to pasture, but the timber market is going up and down. So that could be why the application numbers are down. If the federal programs lose some of their offices and personnel to work with these grants, our program may see more involvement. We are still working on prescribed fire to reduce the fuel availability. Because of the fire weather and such, we don't ever catch up on doing all the prescribed burns that are requested. The removal of dead beetle trees in the state forest have kept us busy. We have removed the dead trees along the roads and edges of the state forest, around 200 trees so far. We are trying to first get out the dead ones that may fall on someone else's house or property.

On Forest Health, we are going thru regular trapping on Southern Pine Beetles. Our pilots do watch out for bug problems when they do get to fly. When we do get the southern pine beetles in the traps, we also have enough of the claret beetles who help control them. We are participating in the forest health surveys.

Aviation Branch: We are down one pilot and down one mechanic. We have advertised a second time for the mechanic and got no applicants. This is necessary to do the diagnostics on the planes to get them into shops or make sure the planes are good to fly. We are trying to get the engines replaced as they are timing out. This is the first year we have had an actual budget for the aircraft maintenance.

NEW BUSINESS

The next BMP assessments are now in the summary stage and should be published in the next couple of weeks. Industry uses those state averages. Wade reminded the commissioners that they have to do the training on sexual harassment and ethics. The reminder will be sent out in April.

OLD BUSINESS

None

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Dennis Aucoin made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Peggy Hagan seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 am.