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TENNESSEE FORESTRY COMMISSION [FINAL] MEETING MINUTES

6/10/2020

Tennessee Forestry Commission meeting was held in the Tennessee Department of Agriculture Division of Forestry, Bruer Building Oak Training Room, in Nashville, TN, June 10, 2020.

Participants:

Forestry Commission Members: Johnny Heard, Chairman; Tom Midyett, Vice Chairman; John Charles Wilson, Secretary; Alex Richman (attended remotely), Bob Qualman, Mike Witt, Sharon Jean-Philippe

Forestry Commission Ex-Officio Members:

Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC):

Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency (TWRA): Brian Chandler, Forest Management Program Leader (attended remotely)

Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA): Deputy Commissioner Tom Womack; Samantha Jean, Director of Communications; Shannon Klonowski, Assistant Commissioner (attended remotely)

Tennessee Department of Agriculture - Division of Forestry (TDF): David Arnold, State Forester; David Todd, Assistant State Forester; Heather Slayton, Assistant State Forester; Tim R. Phelps, Communications and Outreach Unit Leader; Rachel Greene, Forest Data and Analysis Unit Leader; Savannah Motl, Administrative Services Assistant; Dyshea Brown, Executive Administrative Assistant; Philip Morrissey, State Forest Unit Leader (attended remotely)

Tennessee Forestry Association (TFA): Candace Dinwiddie, Executive Director

Chairman Johnny Heard welcomed everyone to the meeting. The meeting began at 9:00 a.m.

- An audio connection issue with one of the Commission members attending remotely did occur. The meeting was paused until audio connection was reestablished, at which time the meeting continued. Audio connection issues are required to be noted in the minutes per Executive Order 16.



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Roll Call

Tom Midyett motioned to acknowledge having a quorum of members with one member participating remotely. John Charles Wilson seconded the motion. All Commission members voted yes to approve: Johnny Heard, Tom Midyett, John Charles Wilson, Mike Witt, Bob Qualman, Sharon Jean-Philippe and Alex Richman (remotely). The motion passed. Meeting can be conducted.

Approval of the Minutes of the April 7, 2020 meeting

- Johnny Heard asked members to review draft of previous minutes
- Bob Qualman asked that four meeting dates be added for future meetings.

Tom Midyett motioned to approve minutes as presented. John Charles Wilson seconded the motion. All Commission members voted yes to approve Johnny Heard, Tom Midyett, John Charles Wilson, Mike Witt, Bob Qualman, Sharon Jean-Philippe and Alex Richman (remotely). The motion passed.

Report from nominating committee for new officers

Bob Qualman reported that the nominating committee recommended continuing with the officers currently in place.

- Johnny Heard thanked the nominating committee: Bob Qualman, Sharon Jean-Philippe and Mike Witt for their work.
- Current Officers – Johnny Heard, Chairman; Tom Midyett, Vice Chairman; and John Charles Wilson, Secretary

Approval to accept Recommendation that current officers remain in position

Tom Midyett motioned to approve nominating committee recommendation for current officers to remain in position. Bob Qualman seconded the motion. All Commission members voted yes to approve: Johnny Heard, Tom Midyett, John Charles Wilson, Mike Witt, Bob Qualman, Sharon Jean-Philippe. Alex Richman (voted yes remotely). The motion passed.

FY2020 and FY2021 budget situation

- Current budget FY2020

David Arnold



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David Arnold reported that Finance and Administration asked that spending be suspended, and a hiring freeze be implemented immediately for the current budget year.

- The Division of Forestry saved \$500,000 due to early hiring freeze and suspension of spending.
 - Timber Sales Revenue has impacted the budget. Revenue target: \$3.1 million. The division fell short of the target by \$600,000.
 - Domestic markets are down; especially red oak. Exporters purchased some wood and helped close the deficit gap. Division district staff contributed to closing the gap.
- Budget FY2021

David Arnold
Tom Womack

Fiscal year 2021 starts July 1, 2020. Tennessee Department of Finance and Administration (F&A) has asked each department within state government for a twelve (12%) percent budget reduction.

- The division along with the department are continuing to look at what reductions can be made with the least amount of impact to our employees and the services we offer.
- The department's budget is \$110 million and only \$40 million is state based appropriations of which the twelve percent is deducted.
- The department must look at people programs and services because the reduction can't be absorbed thru attrition only.
- There are a lot of unknowns and the situation is constantly changing. A reduction plan will be turned in to F&A by June 30, 2020.
- Mike Witt asked categorically where the cuts may come from and if the Nursery was safe. David Arnold stated they have looked at all categories, plans are still under development and details are not known at this time.
- Tom Midyett requested that the Commission be kept informed so they can fulfill their statutory responsibilities in supporting the Division's budget.

SFI Certification of State Forest

- Tennessee Division of Forestry's State Forests achieved SFI certification. The Division was FSC certified 2002 – 2007.
- It is very important to the division that we maintain public trust and how we manage our land. We also want to be transparent and engage others with our story.
- One of our needs is to complete forest level planning which requires public input. Being



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SFI certified shows the public that we meet a high standard and we can get meaningful input and move forward with our goals and objectives for State Forests.

- Candace Dinwiddie asked if there were other states that have State Forest that were SFI certified - Indiana, Minnesota, Massachusetts, South Carolina and a few others.

- Johnny Heard asked what the cost was to maintain the certification – Approximately \$40,000 for the SFI audit during the five-year certification period.

Multi-Agency carbon project

- This project is in two phases; The Nature Conservancy is subcontracting with Terra Carbon to produce this report.
 - Phase one involves a feasibility study to determining which lands to further explore selling carbon on.
 - Tom Midyett asked how many acres of public lands are there between TDF, TWRA and State Parks - 1.1 million acres; some of land may be leased acres.
 - Phase two will estimate the carbon credits for lands that are identified in Phase one.
- The feasibility study involves state lands that are owned and managed by TDF, TDEC and TWRA. There is a \$45,000 feasibility study fee.
- Terra Carbon has been provided with all our GIS layers and anything that they need regarding the portfolio of our land.

Greenbelt discussion

- Alex Richman asked if the Legislature will consider the Farm Bureau bill that would expand the max acres per county per landowner from 1500 acres to 3000 acres – Farm Bureau is currently not moving forward with the bill.

Developing partnership with TDEC State Parks and Natural Areas

- We are developing a partnership to utilize respective agencies' skills, knowledge and abilities to help with common and agency specific issues.
- Discussions will involve developing a currency to trade our services.
- Including TWRA in the process will be discussed.
- Goal is to build a good model to expand and engage other state agencies.

Good Neighbor Authority with USFS

- Good Neighbor Authority is authority given to federal agencies to work with state agencies



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to get work done on the ground.

- TWRA had the first Good Neighbor Authority agreement in Tennessee with Cherokee National Forest
- TDF currently has three supplemental project agreements –
 - Master good neighbor authority – allow the state to do business on behalf of the Feds – 5-year agreement.
 - Three supplemental agreements nestled under the master.
 - Forestry Best Management Practices (BMP) Water Quality check \$30,000 – Cherokee National Forest provides a list of timber sales that have been active or closed in past 12 months on the national forest. Forestry goes out to make sure that BMPS are in place and were done to their satisfaction using their own protocol.
 - Prescribed Fire \$150,000 – Offers our fire services at the rate schedule listed in supplemental agreement.
 - Common Stand Exam \$70,000 – Cruise Cherokee National Forest timber to assess general conditions. Process will be a general forest inventory. Cruising for value is not involved.
 - TDF is working on developing a Timber Sale Administration agreement for Cherokee National Forest. Currently 60,000 acres has been identified for future harvests.

Drone program update

- TDF received USDA Forest Service grant to investigate developing a drone program.
- Rachel Greene and Samantha Jean explained where they are in the process with the program.
- Funds are available to obtain 7 units. One unit will be dedicated to communications, a few units will be equipped with infrared detection of hotspots for firefighting, and last units will be all purpose to cover general program needs.
- Forestry Technician James Heaton and TDA Public Affairs Director Samantha Jean both have drone flying experience.

Approval to accept contacting USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) and other Federal agencies to seek opportunities to provide relief for disasters impacting forest landowners in Tennessee.

John Charles Wilson motioned for the Division to pursue contacting FSA and other Federal agencies to develop opportunities to provide relief for disasters impacting forest landowners in Tennessee. Bob Qualman seconded the motion. All Commission members voted yes to approve: Johnny Heard, Tom Midyett, John Charles Wilson, Mike Witt, Bob Qualman, Sharon Jean-Philippe.



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Alex Richman (voted yes remotely). The motion passed.

Public Comments

- Candace Dinwiddie announced the Commissioner's tour will be rescheduled for the month of October 2020. The situation with COVID-19 and issues with some of the mills has prevented travel.
- Johnny Heard stated that details for the Commissioners tour can be discussed at the September 2020 meeting.
- Tennessee Forestry Association 2020 annual meeting is planned for September 9 – 11 at the Westin in Chattanooga, TN. Itinerary was distributed to the Commission members.

Future Meeting Dates

- September 2, 2020- Approve Division budget (first Wednesday in September). *Note: Johnny Heard recommended moving the September date for 2020 it conflicts with Labor Day weekend. The next September meeting does not conflict with Labor Day 2020 (9/7/20).*
- January 12, 2021 – Discuss budget, timber sales (second Tuesday in January)
- April 6, 2021 – Approve Nursery seedling pricing and appoint sub-committee to nominate Commission officers (first Tuesday in April).
- June 8, 2021 - Approve Commission officers and field trip (Second Wednesday in June).

Mike Witt made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Sharon Jean-Philippe seconded motion. All Commission members voted yes to approve: Johnny Heard, Tom Midyett, John Charles Wilson, Mike Witt, Bob Qualman, Sharon Jean-Philippe. Alex Richman (voted yes remotely). The motion passed. Meeting was adjourned at 12:15PM CST.