

Forest Practices Advisory Board Meeting
September 12, 2018

Members Attending: Chris Martin, Dr. Mark Ashton (departed meeting at 11 am), Joan Nichols, Tom Degnan, Jr., Ben Oko, M.D. (telephone), Ian Branson

Absent: Joe Theroux, Bruce Spaman, Patrick Comins, Peter Nieman

Guests: Doug Emmerthal (DEEP Forestry), Lawrence Rousseau (DEEP Forestry), Phil Chester (Town of Lebanon), Sheila Hoefle (DEEP Forestry) - recorder

Circulated Material

- Summary of legislative changes
- Draft minutes of the June 20 meeting.
- 2018 CT Tree Mortality Information sheet

Chris thanked Joan and the Farm Bureau for use of the conference room and coffee.

Approve minutes from June 20, 2018 FPAB meeting. Tom made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Joan seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

2019 Forest Practice Act Legislative Proposals (see handout) ([SB102](#))– The forestry division intends to submit the same legislative proposal as last year, (2018 SB102). The proposals are being reviewed at DEEP and have been forwarded to OPM. The proposal passed unanimous in the Environment Committee last session but failed to receive a final vote in the General Assembly prior to the close of the 2018 legislative session.

Sec 3 – Discussion regarding the specifics of accepting the certification/license from another state and how to ensure that the process used is similar to what is done in Connecticut. Doug reassured the Board that he currently reviews all other state processes. This mainly deals with the forester certification level. No requests have ever been received for the supervising forest products harvester and forest products harvester as few other states have licenses for loggers. All such certification requests would need to confirm that Connecticut specific laws and regulations are understood and that the requester is in good standing with their certifying state of origin.

Proposed Municipal Forest Practice Regulations – Recently Stafford and Willington submitted proposed forest practice regulations. Stafford’s regulations were approved by DEEP on September 11. Willington is undergoing further review. . Staff from DEEP will be meeting with Willington staff members to make recommendations and anticipate another draft will be submitted. Any town that develops municipal regulations will need to ensure that the regulations reside with the Inland Wetland Commissions. Board members expressed concern over how municipalities will inspect for compliance and perform enforcement work if necessary. Chris indicated that the towns can require the applicant to bear the cost of any professional required for inspections (forester or soil scientist). Citation follows;

Sec. 23-65k. Municipal regulation of forest practices. (f) *An inland wetlands agency authorized under subsection (a) or (b) of this section may require a reasonable filing fee to be deposited with the agency for any application to conduct forest practices. The amount of such fee shall be sufficient to cover the reasonable cost of reviewing and acting on applications, including, but not limited to, the cost of certified mailings, publications of notices and*

decisions **and monitoring compliance with registration conditions** or agency orders provided such fee is no greater than the comparable fee charged by the commissioner.

Phil Chester asked the Board questions about inland wetland regulations and how they relate to forest practices. The Board referred Phil back to Darcy Winther at the DEEP Inland Wetlands Division as she is the authority regarding the Inland Wetlands and Watercourse Act. Doug is also planning to discuss the situation with Darcy and will inform the Board of the result.

Mark suggested that the state look at the overall philosophy and develop a vision that is more efficient in regulating forest practices and wetlands with the hopes of moving toward a more cost effective and streamlined process.

2018 Tree Mortality-(see handout) – Connecticut has experienced a considerable amount of tree mortality due to storms, emerald ash borer, gypsy moth and drought. Mortality has taken place across the state but causes differ. Chris distributed a handout with specific information that was shared with the Governor’s Office at a meeting to discuss the status of trees in CT. Multiple state agencies, and utility companies were present at the meeting. DOT Commissioner Redeker understands the considerable amount of funds that will be required to mitigate any hazards that will arise as a result of dead/dying trees along State highways. FEMA funding is available to address some costs that are associated with the tornado in New Haven and Fairfield counties. The Dept of Public Health is inquiring if additional federal funds may be available due to the increase in injuries after the storms from chainsaw injuries. DEEP will be conducting a rapid assessment of trees within DEEP owned high use areas (recreational areas, boat launches, campgrounds, picnic grounds, etc) before leaf drop. Agency staff have developed an app that will aid in data collection and analysis.

Doug contacted NRCS to propose making adjustments to EQIP practices to facilitate forest restoration efforts in forests that have been decimated by gypsy moth, drought and EAB. In particular, funding invasive control after significant disturbance in the forest by gypsy moth, drought and EAB.

Chris shared that the agency is working on getting word out about how to hire a tree removal contractor in the residential setting. Plans currently include using the DEEP webpages and Facebook posts. These communications will also remind residents of the danger of moving firewood and potentially spreading invasive insects/diseases. Ideas are circulating for developing information to distribute with regard to situational awareness including assessing your location for overhead hazards.

Dept of Transportation is having a difficult time hiring sufficient tree removal contractors to perform needed work due to the increased mortality. Tom shared that the utility company has increased the number of contractors that they are working with to address the same.

Joan asked that DEEP reminds landowners to use due diligence when hiring a logger/forester too. She suggests that a recommendation be made to reach out to your local service forester for advice on addressing dead and dying trees in a woodlot before engaging in a logging operation

Mark shared his observation that over the last 10-15 years there has been incremental wave of insects, diseases, climate issues, violent storms, and prolonged drought that have impacted Connecticut. He believes that the public is not aware of the marked changes in the forest; and that there needs to be a greater consortium of organizations that have a greater interest in the future of CTs forests involved. Including NGO, industries, universities and government agencies that can pool resources with common

visions with a bigger message to the citizens of CT. Chris interjected that during meeting at Governor's office he brought them back to the two storm panel and the list of recommendations that were made. He pointed out that some of the recommendations have been implemented but not all. One item of note is transition to a new Governor's office along with appointees post-election.

International Log Export Markets – There is significant concern in the timber industry about the slowing of the international log export markets. Brennan Sheahan's letter from Timpro highlighted the crisis brought about by international trade tariffs. Connecticut is experiencing a compounding situation due to the die off of trees landowners would like to be able to derive profit from the trees before they die and the market for higher grade timber being significantly harmed by the collapsed of the China export market. Domestic markets are full and have no room to absorb additional product partly because housing markets are down. A large percentage (50-60%) of the wood harvested in Connecticut is shipped out-of-state. Chris shared that he has reached out to the Forest Markets Committee at the National Association of State Foresters and that Connecticut is not alone in this situation. Joan recently was advised from a few saw mills not to put any additional timber sales out until spring with hopes that the market will turn around.

Members continued the discussion regarding the downturn in the market. Additional concerns were expressed due to the presence of oak wilt near the New York – Connecticut boarder. Joan shared that there could have been more of a market in biomass if it had a place in the Connecticut's Energy Policy. ISO New England issued a statement that New England is too reliant on natural gas for energy and needs to diversify the energy portfolio. A suggestion was made to bring up the issue of biomass to the Statewide Vegetative Management Taskforce. [New England must address fuel security risks - The Boston Globe](#)

FPA Enforcement Actions – Doug shared that the FPA program has been assisting more with encroachments onto state lands that is being dealt with by the State Lands Division.

Last month three forest wetland soil workshops took place behind Horsebarn Hill at UConn's Storrs campus. The workshop was a cooperative effort-initiated by the FPA program and NRCS and joined by DEEP Land and Water Resources and UConn Coop Ext. The workshop was well received by the 150 attendees. Timing of rain was optimal and was great to illustrate field conditions. The location at UConn was well received and placement with the runoff from the fields was excellent. Gave participants lots of experience with the web soil survey. Jerry Bellows was the practitioner on the job for UConn.

Division of Forestry Staffing & DEEP Budget Update – The interview panel of Doug, Will Hochholzer and Jennifer Hockla have completed interviews for three permanent positions in the Division of Forestry. Three Forester 1 positions are going to be filled, State Lands Management, Private and Municipal Lands and the Forest Practices Act.

The newly hired sawyer is looking at a WoodMizer for the new saw at the mill. Bonding funds are available for the purchase of the equipment.

Currently the state has a small budget surplus but overall the budget for the coming years does not look good. Attrition has had a positive impact on the budget at DEEP. Commissioner Klee has announced that he will be leaving DEEP with the administration change. Specifics have not been announced yet.

Other Items

Joan shared that Timpro will host a Log-a-Load fundraiser on September 22 at Celebrating Agriculture Days. The regional Game of Logging will also take place with 6-8 competitors. To date the fund raiser has raised almost \$30,000 for Connecticut Children's Medical Center.

Timpro is planning a CPR/First Aid training and have started discussions on a pre-sale mechanical harvesting operations training. Chris offered a state land sale for a site location if needed. Details still need to be worked out.

"Vote Yes on #2 to protect your public lands" Tom shared the previous message with the Board and noted that the ballot language will be convoluted and confusing. A lot of outreach is taking place on this issue. There has been no opposition to the question but there is concern that residents won't understand what the question is and may vote no as a default.

Tom made a motion to adjourn at 11:48am seconded by Ian, unanimous vote to adjourn.

Chris will send out information about the first meeting of 2019 next year.