

## **Forest Practices Advisory Board January 28, 2016**

Members attending: Patrick Comins, Bruce Spaman, Christopher Martin, Tom Degnan (phone), Ben Oko (phone), Joan Nichols (phone), Mark Ashton (9:20 arrival)

Absent: Ian Branson, Joe Theroux

Guests: Doug Emmerthal, Jennifer Hockla, Sheila Hoefle (recorder), Eric Hammerling (phone), Brennan Sheahan

### **Review/Approve minutes of the September 24, 2015 meeting.**

One correction noted on minutes (page 3), change CT Audubon to Audubon CT. Chris M made a motion to approve minutes as amended, unanimous.

### **Member appointments & expirations**

Document detailing member appointing authority and board membership expiration date was distributed. Chris encouraged members to write a letter to appointing authority to request reappointment or request a replacement. Members should be aware that they are appointed unless otherwise notified. Chris thanked Brennan for his attendance today as we continue to seek approval for his appointment. Deputy Commission Whalen to send a letter to House Majority leader requesting appointment. The legislative committee that reviews Advisory Boards/Commissions noted that not all required meetings were held in 2011 and 2012. Chris offered reasons for unscheduled meetings; slow reappointment of missing members which caused a failure to have a quorum present at meeting. Since 2012 the Forest Practices Advisory Board has had the statutorily required 3 meetings per calendar year. Having a quorum present is less of a barrier now that approval has been given for conference call option for voting members.

### **Agriculture forestry & wetlands brochure**

DoF plans to print copies of the brochure. Once printing is complete DoF will distribute copies to partners and FPAB members. The new brochure contains less federal regulations and focuses more on Connecticut specific items. NOTE: Shortly after this meeting, DoF was notified by DEEP Inland Wetlands that a pending appealed court case may change the final brochure wording. Members were notified and asked not to distribute the brochure.

### **Legislative proposal to Qualify SAF certified Foresters for FPA Certification**

Forest Practices Act staff have reviewed the number of SAF Certified Foresters (CF) throughout the nation that could take advantage of the proposal. Jennifer noted that there is one certified Supervising Forest Products Harvester from CT who would be eligible to apply to be a Forester. Chris informed the board that this change would require a revision of the current Statute. 490 and SAF's CF are not connected. FPA staff will continue to explore this as an option. Staff will discuss how to ensure that CF will understand CT laws and regulations.

NRCS Equip Funding- Funding has been increased for Forestry to over \$600,000 with all allocation applied for in the first funding round. Funding is not sufficient to fund all applicants, depending on the particular NRCS program, the State Conservationist may determine to shift underutilized program funding to forestry.

The current Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) based on the 2007 Farm Bill between the DEEP Forestry Division, NRCS and UCONN Extension is being revised this year. Chris has begun working on a new MOU that will be based on the 2014 Farm Bill. Plans are for the MOU to be completed and to have a signing ceremony at the CT Conference on Natural Resources in March

New Private Landowner Info Packets – Doug has worked with staff to develop a packet of information for landowners. The information is presented in a tabbed folder with some printed material and more references to publications/information that are available on the internet. Doug anticipated printing in April. Chris noted that this type of information was consistently mentioned during the Yale Landowner Study. Chris would like all potential PA490 applicants to receive a copy of the folder. Joan suggested making the packets available to Certified Qualified Foresters. Eric mentioned that they CFPA could also distribute. Chris shared that the DoF has an intern that is going to help better organize the DoF Publications webpage and that the Packet will be available on that page as well.

Refreshed Forest Action Plan (FAP) & 150<sup>th</sup> BNR Anniversary – FAP has been refreshed. The 2010 FAP that was submitted to the Forest Service was a requirement of the Farm Bill and the DoF gateway to federal dollars for core formula funding and CARP grants (redesign grants). In 2015 states had the option to rewrite or update the 2010 FAP. CT chose to update, Dan Peracchio, Forest Planner, updated the FIA Data, invasive insect information, added contact information and changed DEP to DEEP in the plan. Dan will lead efforts for the 2020 rewrite. The updated FAP is available on the internet ([http://ct.gov/deep/lib/deep/forestry/assessment\\_and\\_strategy/fap2015.pdf](http://ct.gov/deep/lib/deep/forestry/assessment_and_strategy/fap2015.pdf))

The Bureau of Natural Resources (BNR) is celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2016. In 1866 a Fisheries Commission was formed and was attributed to starting environmental awareness in Connecticut. Out of the Board of Agriculture came the Forestry Commission, State Forester, Agricultural Experiment Station, Connecticut Forest and Park Association. A kickoff event is planned for today at 79 elm. Chris apologized on behalf of the Bureau for the late notification/invitation. There are additional events to celebrate that can be attended. Chris to distribute the YouTube video about the 150<sup>th</sup>. Great effort to ensure that all 4 divisions get equal representation in the printed and digital info.

DoF Staffing Update – Dan Evans has filled the State Lands Management position based in Pachaug State Forest. Dan worked previously as a 2-year durational employee then at Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary for a few years. Dan excelled at his interview and we were able to hire with Pittman-Robertson funds and Timber Harvest Revolving Fund. Wildlife component covers early successional work in southeastern CT to support New England Cottontail restoration efforts. Chris and Tony Petrillo met with staff from the Hadley, MA office of US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The USFWS have a broad definition of forest improvement, 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> shelterwood or uneven aged management. Work that cannot be funded through the USFWS dollars are insect disease, amphibian, wildfire suppression those activities will be paid through the Timber Harvest Revolving Fund. This position does not refill the position that was vacated when Will Hochholzer accepted the position as State Lands Supervisor.

Current vacancies in DoF are in the service forestry, the forest practices act and forest protection programs. Bill Hyatt, Bureau Chief for the Bureau of Natural Resources, believes that we can request refill for the service forestry and forest protection programs. Matt Quinn accepted a transfer to the Parks Program as a Park Supervisor. Matt's departure and vacant position are cause for concern for the DoF, Bill Hyatt and Susan Whalen, Deputy Commissioner Environmental Conservation. Matt was the fire control officer for western Connecticut. As spring fire season approaches (February or March) the DoF will determine the best way to cover western Connecticut with a wildfire response coordinator. The

coordinator will not fulfill all of the requirements of the fire control officer but will coordinate wildfire response efforts, assist in the hose exchange program and ensure that equipment is ready for response.

Practitioner Study Guide Availability – The DEEP Store previously located at 79 Elm Street has closed its physical location and has transitioned to an [online store](#) only. The Study Guide is no longer available on a walk-in basis and will need to be ordered via telephone or online.

PA490 Regulation Update- In the fall of 2015 Chris started the process of updating the regulation. There were minor technical changes and some of the most common administrative changes to be updated. There were issues with the newly created e-regulation process which delayed the updates. Concurrently, additional questions were raised concerning PA490 as a result of the CT Tax Panel Draft Discussion Paper. At that time, Chris decided to suspend pursuing changes. Discussion regarding whether to further delay requesting updates. Decision was made to delay. The Tax Panel met and had further clarification concerning PA490. The Board will continue to keep this item on the agenda for further discussion regarding the timing of changes.

Northern Long Eared Bat (NLEB) Endangered Species Act listing update –USFWS issued the final 4d rule earlier this month. NLEB is a species that is affected by white nose syndrome; the 4d rule was implemented due to disease rather than habitat decline. The 4d rule includes less restrictive rules for private landowners with no federal nexus than are required for practices that have federal funding (NRCS practice). The DoF wants to ensure that CT Certified Forest Practitioners have information available to them regarding the 4d rule. Chris noted that CT has some of the best data on the presence of bats in CT in New England. If the project is more than 150' from a known roosting tree, cutting cannot take place within 150' of the tree between June 1 – July 31. If near a hibernaculum no disturbance is allowed within ¼ mile. Survey work is not required for practices. Practitioners can contact DEEP Wildlife Division Natural Diversity Database Program to determine if a hibernaculum is present. Training on this subject is planned for this spring and will be coordinated effort of DEEP Wildlife and Forestry Divisions

Other business:

Joan shared The Board of Control at The CT Agricultural Experiment Station appropriated funding to build a timber frame pavilion at Lockwood farm. The pavilion is 90% complete. Plans for the pavilion include a ribbon cutting ceremony at Plant Science Day and CFPA will utilize the pavilion for meeting.

Whip-poor-will Woods Legacy project has been approved to receive \$2.5 million in funding. That funding will secure approximately half of the project area (700-800 acres of the 1500 acre project). It is expected that the project will take a year and a half to complete. The DoF anticipates the remainder of the funding (\$1 million) to be approved during FY17. To date, this will be one of the larger Forest Legacy Projects approved in Connecticut. A press release will be completed together with the USDA FS to announce the project once completed. Patrick questioned if other funding options are available for Mt. Riga. He shared that the Highlands Program experienced a significant increase in funding and there is a proposal for a new National Wildlife Refuge in Connecticut, the Great Thicket, which will focus on early successional habitat. The Great Thicket is composed of two areas in Connecticut, northwestern Connecticut in the Ten Mile River Watershed (Sharon, CT and Amenia, NY border areas) and Pachaug State Forest in southeastern CT. Audubon CT is planning to submit comments that the area be enlarged and additional acreage added. Chris noted that the Community/Open Space Grant Program received three applications from Connecticut.

Discussion took place regarding a proposed rail corridor that could potentially affect Nathan Hale State Forest and Goodwin State Forest. There are three options on the proposal. In general there are several proposals that create fragmentation impacts, the potential to negatively affect public drinking water supply and there is no account for easement properties.

Chris shared that a workshop sponsored by the Southern New England Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society will be scheduled to present information regarding water quality protection within easements and utility line construction & maintenance. Chris to present on timber mat bridges and best management practices for water quality.

Chris has been working on contingency plans DOAG and DEEP regarding avian flu. The avian flu is transmitted by migratory birds and has decimated chicken flocks in Indiana. Chris participated in a planning exercise. CT has approximately 5 million chickens. Disposal options for the birds in the event of an avian flu outbreak are composting and incineration. To compost the volume of carcasses 50,000-70,000 yards of woodchips would be required. Areas have been identified for composting, local officials have not been contacted yet. Large volume chip producers in CT are CT Mulch, Scotts Paper and Supreme Industries. There are plans to contact those producers before an outbreak. DoF staff are also drafting changes to the timber sale contract to potentially buy back timber. An outbreak would be declared emergency and USDA will pay for chips. Joan noted that the CT Farm Bureau is concerned about avian flu. Commercial poultry operations in CT are mainly in Lebanon, Bozrah, Franklin and Colchester. Also affects domestic turkey flocks. Joan added that the CT Dept of Agriculture has asked anyone with backyard chickens to register their flocks.

Patrick – Audubon CT going to have granting program for wetlands acquisition and restoration including buffers. Statewide \$1.3 million available. The State of CT is an eligible applicant. The program can pay for a portion of project or an acquisition. Audubon CT is planning to send out an announcement of pending availability then actual availability through the CT Environmental Leader List.

Mark – Yale will be hosting educational opportunities through the summer. These include: Yale Forest Forum Leadership Lunch Series; Yale Forest Forum Special Series on Forest Health; Yale Forestry and Environmental Studies Research Seminar Series; Environmental Film Series at Myers Forest; series of public workshops primarily with Peabody museum; field ecology day in June. Mark and Eric are beginning with USDA FS State & Private where students and professional grad degree program staff have worked with private landowners have built up enough interest where work with CFPA and local land trusts to explore a legacy program (1000-1500 acres). Students have acted as glue to the process. New statewide WAP going through priority species of birds can bolster legacy applications. A Yale faculty member received funding to develop a strategic assessment of how to develop conservation plans in a time in changing climate. Of value in this project is the forest is sandwiched between Natchaug State Forest and Nipmuck State Forest. They are working with the Department of Public Health because they are located within a prime drinking water watershed. Yale is going to give Audubon CT data about the changing pattern of birds in shelterwood cuts. Audubon CT is going to develop quantitative information.

CEU/Training Opportunities for Cert Forest Practitioners – discussion regarding chainsaw training and timber frame production

Meeting adjourned at 11:15.

Next meeting June 23.