

**Forest Practices Advisory Board
October 6, 2016**

Members attending: Ben Oko (Phone), Patrick Comins, Mark Ashton, Doug Emmerthal (Acting Chair)

Guests: Eric Hammerling (CFPA), Jennifer Hockla (DEEP), Brennan Sheahan – CT TIMPRO President, Brenda Marquez – (DEEP recorder), Casey Watts (DEEP), Jerry Bellows – (CT Logger) (9:40am)

Introductions

Doug Emmerthal explained he would be Acting Chair for the meeting in Chris Martin's absence. Those present introduced themselves. Ben Oko joined via telephone.

Review/Approve Minutes of June 23, 2016

Copies of the last meeting minutes were distributed. A quorum was not met, therefore the minutes from the last advisory board were not approved.

Although not approved, Doug asked if there were comments on the minutes from the last meeting.

Eric Hammerling mentioned that an agenda item that was discussed (a letter to the Commissioner) at the last meeting didn't have a person assigned for the action recommended. He suggested for future reference that a person be assigned to any actions discussed.

At this point a state budget conversation developed and the possibility of generating additional funds for the Forestry Division. Doug explained if it were to occur, all funds would be allotted to the general fund, it would not necessarily go to the Forestry Division.

Concern regarding the \$800,000 reduction was expressed and the likelihood that it might be more next year, especially those depending on general funds will have a greater impact.

Legislative Proposal

Doug went over three legislative proposals, the purpose is to make changes that are sensible. It was clarified that the proposals on the handout are concepts and not written in final form.

1. The purpose of the change to Section 23-65(b) is to clarify who the appointment authority for each board position is.

It was pointed out that while the legislative proposal would resolve future such issues it would not remedy the current situation of not having forest products industry representation on the board. It was suggested that the law could be amended to provide for two additional board positions one being an industry person.

2. The purpose of the change to Section 23-65(h)(c)(6) is to accept the Society of American Foresters (SAF) Certified Forester (CF) as substitute for the CT Forester Certification exam. SAF CF has received similar recognition in other states.

Eric Hammerling questioned if it will not replace the current exam. Doug explained if an applicant possesses SAF CF it would substitute for the present exam. However, the applicant would still will go through the application process and prove that they are knowledgeable about

the laws regarding forest practices in CT. Doug explained if there is reciprocity with the particular state we already have the authority to certify.

3. The proposed change to Section 23-65 (h) is to establish a 60 day grace period. This proposal takes a burden from the Division, as the practitioner has already taken and passed the examination. As it stands now if the renewal date is missed, the exam must be taken again. Many times it takes months for the next exam to occur. Jennifer pointed out late renewals creates a problem, many practice illegally until all the documentation is in.

Doug solicited ideas regarding the proposals.

Eric Hammerling asked if there are other things that should be included if we are going through this process. Doug mentioned most changes would be regulatory rather than statutory. Eric Hammerling suggested adding a late fee to benefit the Forestry Division and to write it broadly so the Commissioner has the authority to consider other appropriate credentialing authorities other than SAF CF in the future

Mark Ashton commented that Massachusetts has very light certification, however it doesn't have reciprocity with Connecticut. Most New England states require certification. We shouldn't close the door on other credentialing organizations such as SAF if we can include the language.

Jennifer pointed out there are states that have language for a lapsed license. Brennan expressed if individuals go through all the process to be certified the grace period is helpful for those who forget but he would limit it to no more than a year.

Jerry Bellows asked about the possibility of using an open book for the exam. He believes there will be less resistance.

Doug indicated that he hopes the future exams will be delivered via touch screen exams. Patrick Comins asked if this could be included now. Doug explained the technology is available and we are looking into it but it will take some setting up and we are missing the resources to carry it out.

Inland/Wetland Brochure

This brochure has been in the works for two years. Delays occurred as we were waiting for litigation that might impact the brochures language to finish up. The brochure will be available online.

Gypsy Moth Update

Agricultural Station is awaiting software before they can calculate and release an acreage estimate of damage. We expect a high number. Massachusetts had a high number as well as Rhode Island. Salvage operation could start occurring as soon as next year. Foresters are seeing mortality. It is dispersing quite rapidly. Discussion continued on egg masses, spraying, and the possibility of tree mortality being high in Eastern Connecticut.

Certified Program

We are wrapping up the October 1 renewals. About 25% of all certified forest practitioners renewed this past October 1. Many practitioners dragged their feet until the last days leading up to the deadline. It was pointed out that applicants for renewal must have their applications to DEEP at least 60 days prior to their certification expiration. Less than half did.

It was pointed out that Jennifer will be retiring effective April 1, 2017.

To that effect Brennan, on behalf of TIMPRO, expressed concern that funding is constantly decreasing. He complimented the Forest Practices Act program and Jennifer in particular and asked how her absence is this going to affect program. It's vital if the law continues that her position be refilled. If the Forest Practices Act demands forest practitioners be certified then this program should be given priority for the refilling the position. Patrick Comins suggested writing to the DEEP Commissioner as this is a crucial point.

Eric added writing letters also to legislative, governor as well as the Commissioner to advocate for program.

Patrick stated doing a package such as, "Cuts too DEEP" as other organizations will also be affected. Create a coalition as the concerns are many. Jennifer said it affects all levels from DEEP to the industry, can't just pick one group, it affects a large number of stakeholders. Continuity is important to meet their mission. Patrick mentioned timber production, revenue and open space goals would be affected as well. Jennifer added that private landowners may be tempted to sell and open space would be lost.

Jerry questioned, if no one is going to enforce why have the program? If there are no resources to enforce, why comply?

Doug explained that since 1996 there has been steady progress and benefits to the FPA program particularly continuing education. The Farm Bureau did a survey about 2001 and the results indicated that municipalities had more confidence in the industry.

Jennifer thanked everyone for making management aware of the future of this program. The adequate training and knowledge takes time. She has inform management of her future retirement..

Brennan mentioned members of TIMPRO were concern about the direction the program was going.

Doug encourage to let their voices be heard.

Brennan continued stating dishonest people aren't going to pay attention and there's concern from growing problems.

Discussion went on the necessity to remedy and seek solutions. A more cohesive way and advocacy is needed for this program.

Jennifer said to achieve objectives certified foresters and practitioners are needed. There must be a smooth transition when she leaves not only for DEEP but for the industry. It cannot be put on hold as many livelihoods depend on the program.

Mark Ashton stated a stronger political organization needs to be organized to generate funds for DEEP. There is a connection with clean water and Forestry. He questioned why we are not working close with the Department of Public Health.

Eric recommended that a broader coalition is needed. The government has vetoed laws when general funds are directed to DEEP. Six or seven recommendations are on the CFPA website for

ideas on revenue for DEEP. Broader concerted efforts is needed. Governors in the past have also resisted direct funding.

Mark Ashton suggested creating an external foundation to disperse funds to DEEP. Eric explained the concern is having separate regulations for its administration. A conflict of interest may arise. Similar ideas have not been successful in the past.

Patrick said there should be pressure to move funds that are generated for DEEP from the general fund.

Eric will draft a letter to start the conversation, the goal is to have the letter go to the Governor and the DEEP Commissioner.

Doug reminded the board that the certification fees were shifted from DEEP to the general fund in 2009.

October – Firewood Awareness Month

Doug informed that we are participating in awareness. Forest Service is continuing campaign of moving firewood.

TIMPRO Statement

On behalf of his members, Brennan began his statement explaining how the organization was created in 1991 due to the law. He expressed the member's extreme concern regarding missing representation on the board. The industry is required to be certification and appointing someone who does not adequately represent the industry does not sit well with his members. The concern is strong and the organization will do everything in its power to bring this to the Governor's attention.

Eric gave a brief history of how the representation was selected.

Doug stated that DEEP forwarded the appointment history and how it should be implemented. It is unclear why it was not followed. Work is being done to prevent this from happening again.

Brennan pointed out that although the law requires it is not being implemented.

Patrick asked if the organization has reached out to their representative as that would be a conduit for their concerns.

Before the meeting concluded there were a couple of announcements.

Eric informed the group of an upcoming conference on October 26 at the Aqua Turf, the 28th annual conference on Urban and Community Forestry.

Patrick mentioned the Conte plan has been proposed, initiative between timber producers and conservation areas. It may open an opportunity to work with private landowners, federal funds may be available.

The meeting concluded at 11:14 am. Doug mentioned that Chris Martin will notify the board of the date of the next meeting.

