

Forest Practices Advisory Board

June 18, 2020

Present: Ian Branson, Tom Degnan, Joan Nichols, Bruce Spaman, Chris Martin, Mark Ashton, Patrick Comins

Absent: Joe Theroux, Benjamin Oko, M.D., Peter Nieman

Guests: Doug Emmerthal (DEEP Forestry), Nick Zito (DEEP Forestry), Liz McAuliffe (DEEP), Eric Hammerling (CFPA)

Circulated Material: [Minutes from February 27, 2020 meeting](#)

Meeting called to order at 9:04am. Chris thanked members for participating and being flexible with meeting electronically.

Minutes from the February 27, 2020 meeting. Board members were given the opportunity to review the minutes. Patrick made a motion to approve the minutes as written, Ian seconded. Members voted to approve minutes; Joan abstained from the vote as she was not an attendee for the February meeting.

2020 Legislative session – the regular session was cancelled due to COVID-19. The legislative proposals from the Division of Forestry were not included in the Agency submission. The Division will put them forward for the 2021 session.

[Governor's Council on Climate Change \(GC3\) - Working and Natural Lands Working Group Forests Subgroup](#) Update. The working group has had bi-weekly meetings since February. Some members of the working group are also members of the Forest Practices Advisory Board. Expert presentations have influenced the draft recommendations. Recommendations will be combined with other sub-groups in the Working and Natural Lands Working Group.

CT Forest Action Plan Update – The Farm Bill requires that each state have a forest action plan. The first plan for CT was written in 2010, with minor revisions in 2015. A full re-write will take place this year and is due December 31. Having an action plan in place allows federal dollars to flow to states through the forest legacy, fire, and stewardship programs as well as landscape scale restoration (LSR) grants. CT has received more than \$6 million in LSR grants since 2010. Dan Peracchio, Forest Planner, has been working with stakeholders and program staff at DEEP to gather information for the plan. Board members discussed.

COVID-19 Impacts to the Forest Practices Program and CT Forest Practitioners – At the onset of COVID-19 restrictions when the Governor declared essential businesses Forestry was included on the list due to the potential supply chain disruptions that could have taken place. Joan shared that the farming communities have been significantly impacted due to COVID-19, many states were more heavily impacted than CT was. The Board discussed potential future impacts on more rural landscapes with people moving away from densely populated areas. Patrick noted that there may be additional tools in place to assist in land protection. The [Great American Outdoors Act](#) would be used in part for to fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Occupational license extension and executive orders – Governor Lamont and State Agencies have issued Emergency Orders due to COVID-19. One of the orders was the extension of professional licenses including forest practitioner certifications. There are about 500 certified forest practitioners in CT. Certifications that expired between March and May have had their expiration date extended to June 28. The Division of Forestry has requested additional extension periods to allow time for staff to return to working in the office before certification renewals can be processed. Liz McAuliffe, DEEP Legal, has been instrumental in ensuring that the needs of the Division are being taken into consideration. The Division appreciates the flexibility and understanding on the part of the practitioners as we work through this time.

FPA Exams and CEUs, future training opportunities – Chris thanked Doug and Nick for their tireless work and creative solutions for FPA Exams, continuing education opportunities and future training events. The May exam was cancelled and it is likely that the July exam will be postponed. The Board discussed PA490 Forester Training that took place via webinar. Ian suggested to give participants a preliminary exam and not require full participation in the training if practitioners can substantially prove that they have a full understanding of the program.

[NEW DEEP Inland Wetland Agency/Commissioner online training](#) – The training is a free online course designed to instruct and guide wetland agency members and staff about their roles and responsibilities under the CT Inland Wetlands and watercourses Act. Portions of this course are also appropriate for forest practitioners and will be assigned CEUs.

Proposed Municipal Forest Practice Regulations – Willington has submitted final proposed regulations for approval. Haddam has regulations in place with DEEP Commissioner approval. Haddam's regulations were brought to FPA staff member's attention by an anonymous practitioner. Nick has corresponded with Haddam and will work with them on developing regulations.

Enforcement Actions – All respondents that have been issued consent orders are currently in compliance.

DoF Operations/Retirements and New Hires – Frank Cervo has been hired as a Service Forester to cover the eastern third of the state. Larry Rousseau has retired as the Service Forester for the western third of the state. The Service Forester position for western CT has been posted and Doug has the applications to review. He hopes to have interviews scheduled before the end of July. The Division expects several retirements prior to 2022. The State Lands program has recruited for two seasonal resource assistant positions. The Agency continues to advocate with the Department of Administrative Services for increased pay for seasonal resource assistants.

Other items –

Joan noted that CT Timber Professionals (<https://www.timproct.org/>) has a new website. The site was paid in part for by a grant from the Northeastern Loggers Association for community outreach. Timpro plans to hold the log-a-load campaign this fall. To date the log-a-load campaign, typically held during Celebrating Agriculture and the regional Game of Logging competition, has contributed over \$40,000 to the CT Children's Medical Center.

Meeting closed at 10:56.