

Forest Practices Advisory Board

October 25, 2023

Attendees: Bruce Spaman, Dr. Jeff Ward, Chris Martin, Brennan Sheahan, Barbara Kelly, Ian Branson, Joan Nichols (joined at 9:30)

Absent: Dr. Mark Ashton

Guests: Nick-DEEP Forestry, Sheila Hoefle-recorder (DEEP Forestry)

Chris called the meeting to order at 9:07am. Board members reviewed the minutes from the June 28, 2023 meeting. Motion to approve the minutes as written by Barbara, seconded by Jeff. Unanimous vote to accept.

FPA Regulations Update – Following the adoption of the 60-day grace period Forestry staff have continued to work on submitting required information to the Legislative Review Committee to enact a \$100 fee to be associated with the grace period. At this time there is no fee, practitioners are able to submit their application for renewal up to sixty days past their certification expiration date.

BIL/IRA – IRA Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) State Allocation received (\$2.65 million). UCF partners, Urban Resources Initiative, Groundwork Bridgeport, and Knox Parks Foundation have also received generous funding. IRA Stewardship Allocation and NOFO pending. Nick is working with Connecticut Conservation Districts to implement a portable skidder bridge loan program.

FPAB vacancies – The Board currently has two vacancies. Chris continues to work on having replacements identified and then appointed. Chris to If anyone has recommendations, please let Chris know.

Enforcement Actions and Exams – CT River Valley State Park – staff are working on an enforcement action along with CT River. The homeowner removed trees on the bank which potentially destabilized the railroad tracks. The activity is visible from the CT River. DEEP Forestry staff are in continued discussions with the Office of the Attorney General regarding penalties and acceptable remedies. A stipulated judgement has been issued. Trial has been scheduled for September 11, 2024.

A Notice of Violation has been issued to James Thompson, he is no longer a certified forest practitioner. He submitted bids on two timber sales that were offered by DEEP. Nick is looking into a potential encroachment in Ridgefield CT on State Property.

Forest Practitioner Exam was held on October 4, 22 applicants (18 foresters, 4 supervising forest product harvesters). Five individuals did not attend the exam. Four of the fourteen individuals that took the forester exam passed. Two of the three that took the SFPH exam passed. Currently certified individuals stands at 395 (145 F, 220 SFPH, 30 FPH). Nick is forming a committee to revise the forest practitioner exams.

Brennan recommended that PA490 Forester Training return to an in-person training.

The board discussed the recommended values for PA490 forestland. Joan recommended utilizing an anonymous survey to gather information on stumpage that can be used in the calculation of values.

NIC CT is creating an app similar to VT AMP app that will be used for CT BMPs. Funds for the development are from the No Markets No Management Grants as well as collected fines.

Nick and DEEP legal staff continue to work with municipalities with unauthorized forest practice regulations. Ten of the twenty municipalities have corrected or retracted unauthorized regulations with hopes of an additional six to do the same by the end of the year.

Forestry Division Staffing – Tom McGrade has been hired as the state lands forester working in north central and northeast Connecticut. Interviews are being conducted for the Outreach Forester position. Interviews will be scheduled for the Fire Control Officer and Forest Protection Supervisor position. Two positions are pending approval for the Urban Forestry Program (Volunteer/Partnership Coordinator and Grants Administrator). An internal promotional opportunity was posted for a Forester 2 in eastern Connecticut, this individual will act as a working lead.

Timber Harvest Notification Form – The Board discussed the form and recommended that updates are needed. Nick to work on updates as well as an instruction sheet that would clarify what information should be provided. The updated Form will be circulated to the Board for their comments/review.

Chris noted that Jeff Ward has been recognized as a Fellow by the Society of American Foresters. The Fellow Award is a prestigious award that recognizes SAF members for long-standing service to SAF, the profession, and who are ambassadors for the advancement of forestry.

Meeting closed at 11:55