

FOREST PRACTICES ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
VIRTUAL VIA ZOOM
Thursday February 17, 2022
9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Attendees: Chris Martin, Brennan Sheahan, Patrick Comins, Barbara Kelly, Bruce Spaman, Ian Branson, Dr. Mark Ashton, Tom Degnan (joined at 9:35)

Guests: Eric Hammerling (CFPA), Sheila Hoefle (DEEP-Forestry, recorder)

Absent: Joan Nichols

Vote to Approve minutes from October 28, 2021 FPAB meeting - Barbara moved to approve the minutes as written. Patrick seconded the motion. Unanimous vote to approve the minutes from 10/28/2021 meeting as written.

FPAB Vacancies – The Board discussed current and future vacancies. There is an effort to mirror the population of CT with the makeup of the Board members. Chris to contact Colleen Murphy-Dunning (URI) for recommendations for Board members. Following the November 2022 CFPA Annual Meeting Tom Degnan will need to resign from the CFPA Board due to term limits. Tom will also need to resign from the FPAB and a new member will need to be appointed to fill the vacancy.

[Policy on Resilient Forests for Connecticut's Future \(PRFCT Future\)](#) – The group was established to make recommendations to the CT Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) related to the ongoing and future resiliency of Connecticut's forests. Working Group members represent a variety of organizations that have a direct interest in public policies that would lead to increased forest resiliency. See page 4 for information that was reviewed.

Board members also discussed the importance of invasive species control with a focus on lianas. The importance of accurate datasets was mentioned. Dr. Ashton shared that the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies has changed its name to the Yale School of the Environment. Chris noted that he will be meeting with members of the CT Green Building Council. Connecticut is adopting international building codes that will promote the use of multi-story wood buildings. The increased use of wood could mean an increase in demand for CT forest products.

2022 Legislative Session – [DEEP Streamlining proposal](#) – Sections 5 & 6 address aspects of the Forest Protection program and Sections 7-9 address the Forest Practices Act.

Dr. Ashton stressed the need to share information about the benefits of using fire as a tool for forest management and the lack of a set of educational tools to accomplish that task. Patrick shared that it is anticipated that this legislative session will have a lot of discussion about herbicides.

Eric noted that CFPA is tracking two raised bills:

- [Raised HB No 5116 – An Act Requiring the Creation of Utility Company Tree-Planting Funds.](#)
There is a public hearing scheduled on February 24.

- [Raised SB No 117 – An Act Concerning Tree Removal on Properties Under the Control of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection](#). There is a public hearing scheduled on February 25.

Enforcement Actions, Exams Update – The forest practitioner exam originally scheduled for March has been moved to April 6 due to staff members being unavailable to conduct the exams.

The Riendeau Consent order has been extended for six months because the Riendeaus did not submit all paperwork as required. There is no additional monetary penalty.

A Consent Order was issued to Kurt Lenahan for conducting a forest practice while not certified. He was previously certified and was involved with a site clearing in Bethlehem and Oxford.

Other forest practices have been identified where the operators were working as sub contractors for NRCS and weren't aware that the work they were completing would be a commercial forest practice. The technical service provider should have a certified forest practitioner onsite when the tree removals are being completed.

Staff are planning a workshop focusing on wetland soils and BMPs. The workshop will be scheduled for this summer and will be similar to the one done in 2018.

Municipal Forest Practices Regulations – Haddam submitted their final draft for review and comments. No big issues were found, there were minor formatting issues that needed to be corrected. Newtown has had forest practice regulations in place since prior to the Forest Practices Act being implemented. Newtown Regulations will need to be submitted and approved by DEEP Commissioner because there is no record of that ever being done.

DOF Staffing – Doug Emmerthal has retired. Quick approval was given for the authorization to refill his position. Alexander Amendola now works as a state lands forester out of Cockaponset State Forest. Two state lands forester positions are anticipated to be announced shortly. The Forest Protection program continues to suffer from lack of staffing. Amy Burgess, Western CT Fire Control Officer will be leaving state service on February 24. The interviewers report for the fire control officer to replace Kevin Grady is nearly completed. Eric will share a DEEP staffing report for the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation and Natural Resources with members of the FPAB.

Infrastructure Investment Jobs Act (IIJA) - The act was initially a \$715 billion infrastructure package that included provisions related to federal-aid highway, transit, highway safety, motor carrier, research, hazardous materials, and rail programs of the Department of Transportation. After congressional negotiations, it was amended and renamed to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to include funding for broadband access, clean water, electric grid renewal in addition to the transportation and road proposals of the original House bill. This amended version included approximately \$1.2 trillion in spending, with \$550 billion being newly authorized spending on top of what Congress was planning to authorize regularly.

The legislation invests about \$5.5 billion in lands and resources, about \$3 billion will be invested over five years to reduce the risk of wildland fire and restore ecosystems. The Forest Service has not specified what the funds can be used for yet. National Association of State Foresters to continue collaborating with the Forest Service about how the funding will be allocated.

Additional Items of Interest-

The Board members discussed proposed mountain bike trail system in Salmon River State Forest. Members expressed frustration that the current situation appears to reward previous illegal trails by making many of the trails approved. A similar situation is evolving in Nathan Hale State Forest. It appears that overall use of a portion of state land by one specialized user group may negatively affect the natural resources of the forest and additional user groups. Board members agreed that they would like to see the basic principle of using professional staff to develop plans that accommodate multiple uses while preserving the natural resources as a guide rather than allowing a self-interest group determine what should be done with the state forest.

Meeting closed at 11:06 am

DRAFT