

FOREST PRACTICES ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
VIRTUAL VIA ZOOM
Thursday October 28, 2021

Attendees: Chris Martin, Brennan Sheahan, Tom Degnan, Patrick Comins, Barbara Kelly, Bruce Spaman, Joan Nichols

Guests: Eric Hammerling (CFPA), Hallie Metzger, Doug Emmerthal (DEEP-Forestry), Nick Zito (DEEP-Forestry), Sheila Hoefle (DEEP-Forestry, recorder)

Absent: Ian Branson, Dr. Mark Ashton

Vote to Approve minutes from June 29, 2021 FPAB meeting - Joan moved to approve the minutes as written. Tom seconded the motion. Unanimous vote to approve the minutes from 6/29/2021 meeting as written.

[HB6688/Public Act No. 21-177](#) – An Act Concerning A Highway Use Fee. The bill passed and has been assigned a public act number. The CT Farm Bureau attended the hearing and strongly opposed the bill. Intrastate (within CT) carriers could be at a higher risk of enforcement action than interstate carriers. The CT Farm Bureau submitted an amendment that would exclude all agricultural vehicles, including forestry vehicles. The General Assembly was not in favor of exempting all agricultural vehicles and only exempted bulk milk tankers. There is no plan in place regarding administration of the fee, but it is felt that this could be an attempt to create tolls for CT roads.

FPAB vacancies & renewed appointments – Joan Nichols has been reappointed by House Speaker Matt Ritter. Board continues to have one general public vacancy. There is an effort to diversify the membership of the Board, Chris to consult with Eric on a potential candidate for that vacancy. Other Board members who want to seek reappointment should reach out directly to their appointing authority.

Pandemic Assistance for Timber Harvesters and Haulers (PATHH) Update – USDA's Pandemic Assistance for Timber Harvesters and Haulers program (PATHH) will provide financial relief to timber harvesting and timber hauling businesses that experienced losses in 2020 due to COVID-19. This new program is part of USDA's Pandemic Assistance for Producers initiative. PATHH provides up to \$200 million to support timber harvesting and timber hauling businesses that experienced a loss of at least 10 percent gross revenue from January 1 through December 1, 2020, compared to the same period in 2019. Individual loggers or truckers, or legal entities, may be eligible for up to \$125,000 in financial assistance through this program. Thirteen applications were received from Connecticut and there were more than 5,000 applicants nationally. Nick Zito is the Connecticut program person. Timpro, DoAg and FSA were instrumental in distributing information about the program in Connecticut.

2022 Legislative Session – DEEP Forestry has prepared and submitted proposed legislative updates/clarification for the 2022 Session. Proposed items include:

- clarification of appointments to the FPAB,
- adding provisions to allow opportunities for out-of-state certified/licensed foresters to become certified in CT as part of a national reciprocity effort for licensed occupations,

- to allow DEEP to set a 60-day window following certification expiration to reactivate certification without reexamination, and,
- pursue clarification for inter-compact fire response.

Once reviewed and approved by OPM Chris will share the draft legislation with Board members.

The Board discussed federal funding opportunities for CT for forestry, fish and wildlife. National Forest Products Week for 2021 was celebrated for the week of October 15 ([A Proclamation on National Forest Products Week, 2021 | The White House](#)).

Enforcement Actions and FPA exams – Grillo Services remains with DEEP Legal team for review. Riendeau is in compliance with the Consent Order. The Consent Order expires 1/1/2022. Exams continue to be held online. Complaints were received about several harvests during September and October due to the frequent heavy rain. No violations were found.

For the October exam the software was not available from the vendor, exams were administered in person. Forester examinees seem to prefer in person exams. Forester exams when administered electronically require 2 days for the exam, sections 1, 2 and 3 are electronic and section 4 is done in person. SFPH and FPH are fully electronic. Electronic exams save staff time grading the exams.

Update on Municipal Regs of FPA – Haddam draft Forest Practices Regulations were denied and returned to Haddam for changes. Haddam has resubmitted a revised copy on 10/26/21, those are currently under review at DEEP.

Division of Forestry Staffing – Four staff members have retired recently, 3 state lands foresters and one forest protection forester. The forest protection forester will be refilled as a fire control officer. Applications have been received and supplemental questions have been sent out for the fire control officer position. One of the state lands forester positions interviews have been completed and the interviewers report with being reviewed in DEEP. A second state lands forester position has been approved within DEEP and should be posted on the DAS employment opportunities page soon. The third vacancy will be available for refill next year. Additional retirements are anticipated before July 1, 2022 due to changes in retirement benefits.

Board members want to thank David Beers for his excellent service and assistance to private landowners, non-profits and NGOs.

Additional Items of Interest –

Chris M shared that one of the recommendations from the GC3 Forest Subgroup is No Net Loss of Forests. The name for the policy has been updated to Policy for Resilient Forests for Connecticut's Future.

A focus group assembled on September 1 lead by Eric H and CFPA. Several additional meetings have been held since. The group includes representatives from 15 organizations including organizations that aren't typically associated with forestry. There are several listening sessions scheduled. After consultation with states that have No Net Loss of Forest policies (NJ and MD) Connecticut has learned that the process is continually evolving.

CFPA with assistance from Doug Emmerthal and David Beers has published an online CT Forestry Services Directory. CFPA reached out to all of the CT Certified Foresters in August of 2021 and offered to host an online directory that would solely focus on those professionals who offer forestry services to private forest landowners. ([CT Forestry Services Directory | Connecticut Forest & Park Association \(ctwoodlands.org\)](https://ctwoodlands.org/ct-forestry-services-directory))

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