

## Forest Practices Advisory Board Meeting

October 29, 2025

Members present: Chris Martin-Chair., Brennan Sheahan, Barbara Kelly, Rosa Goldman, Bruce Spaman, Mike Ferrucci, Joan Nichols, Lindsay Cannavo

Members absent: Dr. Mark Ashton

Guests: Nick Zito (DEEP Forestry), Sheila Hoefle (DEEP Forestry-Recorder)

Welcome & Introductions - Nick welcomed all board members and acknowledged the members appointed since the last meeting. Although Ian Branson was not at the meeting, Chris and Nick thanked him for his years of service on the Board. All board members introduced themselves. Chris provided background on previous board appointments. New members specifically acknowledged included;

1. Michael Ferrucci, representing an officer of an environmental organization headquartered in the state which is concerned primarily with forests
2. Lindsay Cannavo, representing a member of the general public.
3. Rosa Goldman, representing a professional forester in private practice.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes – Board members reviewed the minutes from the July 2, 2025, meeting. Joan made a motion to approve the minutes as written, Barbara seconded and unanimously approved.

2025 Legislative Session - Chris shared that the schedule for FPAB meetings is set in conjunction with the legislature's schedule. Meetings are typically scheduled in February, June and October.

### Proposed Wildfire Legislation Background

October 2024 fires followed by an unusually dry fall. Over 220 fire starts were recorded. Major incidents included: 40-acre fires, 127-acre fire at Lamentation Mountain, property losses in Roxbury and other areas, and a fatality on the Lamentation Mountain fire. Additional firefighting resources were brought in from across the U.S. and Canada. As a result of the very active fire season, Statutes were tested. The Governor could enact a state-wide burn ban; however, that would include restricting all public access to any woodland including privately owned. Proposed legislation will include updates to allow access during burn bans. They will also grant the DEEP Commissioner the authority to restrict burning within DEEP controlled properties.

Fire Department Reimbursement for Assistance with Wildfires. The current law has a 1-month deadline for wildfire-related reimbursement. There are times when fire departments and fire wardens require additional time to process reimbursement paperwork. A temporary fix after the fall 2024 fires was a Governor's executive order that extended the deadline to 90 days. We plan to amend the statute to allow a 3-month submission window.

Riparian Buffer Legislation & Working Group – During the 2025 legislative session the Riparian buffer law passed. Joan was appointed to the working group as a result of the new law. The working group comprises a diverse stakeholder group. The goal is to recommend whether additional riparian protections are needed. The group may propose amendments to the current Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Act.

Upcoming Presentation- Joan is scheduled to present information at the November 15 CACIWC Meeting. Nick and Barbara will also attend.

USDA Forest Service Skidder Bridge Grant - A \$500,000 grant was awarded to support cost-sharing for timber bridges used in forestry operations. Final paperwork is pending due to delays on the Forest Service's end. Expected within 10 days of reopening. Most of the grant funds will be passed through to TIMPRO who will be facilitating the program. The program is an 80% cost-share for timber mats and steel bridges. The program will be modeled after similar programs in South Carolina, North Carolina, Maine, and Massachusetts.

BMP Smartphone App - The app is live and available via a link on the website. The updated digital version of the BMP guide corrected previous table errors and includes mapping tools, cost estimators, and clinometer functionality. The funding source for the app was the "No Markets, No Management" grant. To date all feedback has been positive from practitioners.

Forest Practices Notification Form - The updated form has been being worked on for over two years but there is a current version in use. CACIWC has not given their approval for adding their logo to the form. Due to the ongoing delays waiting for CACIWC review Chris authorized moving forward with the form as it currently is. If/when CACIWC determines if they want to endorse the form their logo can be added. Ongoing for two years; current version has been in use informally. Chris noted use of the form is voluntary and is not required in regulation or statute. Its use over several years since inception has assisted forest practitioners provide necessary information to municipal inland wetland agencies making jurisdictional rulings.

CEU Regulation Change – Draft Forest Practices Act (FPA) regulations updating CEU requirements are still under internal agency review. A separate regulation internal review process took place during the summer into September, pausing all pending regulations. Legal review began last Friday. Minor edits and clarifications requested (e.g., formatting, language style). Currently 3 hours of class time = 1 CEU, updated 1 hour of class time = 1 CEU. It is anticipated that the updated regulations will leave the agency soon for further review. The timeline for implementation is in 2027. Nick will continue to keep the industry informed about upcoming changes.

eLicensing System Update - eLicensing is now live; paper applications are no longer accepted. Features of eLicensing include: Practitioners can log in, reset passwords, report CEUs, and submit annual reports, searchable CEU course database (proof of CEUs still required), ability to print wall certificates and wallet ID cards, and practitioners can update their own contact information. Due to the change to eLicensing all practitioner certification expiration dates were extended to January 31 of the year following the year that their previous certification expiration date was in. Nick plans to host a webinar or tutorial to support users.

Forest practitioner exams will now be offered three times a year, March, May and October. Forestry staff want to thank the Board and staff in the Pesticide Division for their support and encouragement through this transition.

Next steps will include moving toward online exams. As a note social security numbers are required for those practitioners uncomfortable with providing that information a placeholder of 888-88-8888 can be used.

PA 490 Forest Land Valuation - New recommended value for forest land is \$200/acre, effective October 1. The 2020 value was determined to be \$390/acre. Values are set based on UConn survey data and published stumpage prices. UMass Amherst suspended their stumpage report after 2021 Q1. They will be starting stumpage reports again. UMass has a goal of 50 responses per quarter.

FPAB Vacancies - One vacancy remains on the Board. A Governor-appointed position from an environmental organization that is not primarily concerned with forests. It is anticipated that a candidate from the CT Land Conservation Council will fill this role. Chris recommended Vanessa Day from CLCC. The Board unanimously moved to endorse Vanessa for candidacy for the vacant position.

Enforcement Actions - Unauthorized Practice: A warning was issued to an individual who advertised as a forest management consultant without being certified. Services provided were urban-focused (e.g., invasive plant control, limb pruning). Violations could result in fines up to \$5,000/day.

Nick will continue to monitor Facebook Marketplace Ads for potential violations. There is one practitioner who regularly forwards Nick ads for forestry mulching services. Nick has found that most of the time, these services do not include forest management activities, and the operator does not need to be certified. However, Nick will respond on a case-by-case basis as needed. Other complaints include a land clearing activity in Easton, allegedly conducted by individuals who advertised themselves as arborists. That case has been referred to the DEEP Pesticide Division. There were other complaints in Warren along the Connecticut River that involved encroachments onto DEEP property.

Forestry Certification Exams – as shared above, there will be three exams per year going forward, March, May, and October. In the October 2025 exam, five individuals took the forester exam, and one passed. Three of the four individuals who took the supervising forest products harvester exam passed. Two individuals took the forest product harvester exam and both passed. Current certification counts: 143 Foresters, 200 Supervisors, 20 Harvesters.

Municipal Forest Practices Regulations - Woodbury has withdrawn its effort to regulate forest practices. East Haddam remains the only town actively pursuing regulation. There were 20 towns that were exempted from the 2015 law change that removed municipal authority to regulate forest practices. These towns' regulations still require agency review. Challenges that have occurred is when municipalities blend their forest practice regulations with zoning or wetland regulations. The goal is to prevent overregulation and maintain forest land ownership. Nick has created a section of the training for inland wetlands commissions/agents, but it is on hold until all towns are in compliance.

Division of Forestry Staffing – the Division is nearly fully staffed. The application period for a State Lands Management Forester closed earlier in October. We will be recruiting for a Forest Protection Supervisor once a decision has been made about the job class that will be used. Les Welker was hired as an EP Forester 2 in the Urban Forestry Program. One seasonal will be hired and will split time between the Forest Practices Act/Utilization & Marketing and State Lands Management. There is an internal promotional opportunity for the Forest Practices Act/Utilization & Marketing program to for a Program Specialist.

Additional items of interest:

Over 60 attendees are expected at the [Logging and Your Health Working with Wetlands Agencies & Avenza for Forestry](#) on October 31 hosted by TIMPRO at Sessions Woods WMA.

Joan attended the American Loggers Council Annual Meeting in Lafayette, LA. The conference allowed participants to visit an active logging site for southern yellow pine and included discussions on industry growth and innovations. Joan shared that there was concern at the meeting over mill closures in the southern states as well as continuing challenges in western states.

The 2025 Society of American Foresters Convention was held in Hartford. Events included workshops, plenary sessions and field tours. Attendance was excellent, with approximately 1,300 participants, including 450 students —the highest number of student participants in recent years. Chris was a speaker on the People, Policy and Popcorn panel. Joan attended sessions on women in forestry and noted the increased number of females enrolled in programs. Danica Doroski and Dan Evens also led and assisted with urban forestry and climate focused forest management field tours.

The 2026 Society of American Foresters Convention was scheduled to be held in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, but the location has been changed to Spokane, WA, due to political concerns.

NRCS & Land Stewardship Grant Challenges – a \$5 million land stewardship grant has been awarded to increase NRCS forestry practices. The federal government shutdown has stalled implementation of the grant. There was already a backlog of EQIP contracts, and the furlough will result in further delays. There is also a lack of Technical Service Providers to work with landowners to implement the practices. DEEP Forestry will use grant funds to train additional TSPs in coordination with NRCS. This program is on hold pending federal staff returning to work.

The SLM program has received tentative approval through New England Forest Foundation (NEFF) for work that would be conducted under a new initiative, the AMP program, (Advancing Markets for Producers). DEEP Forestry has proposed \$650,000 worth of non-commercial treatments across 21 stands encompassing 521 acres. DEEP and NEFF will be meeting over the next month to further discuss the award process and steps toward work implementation.

The CT Dept of Agriculture has turned the CT Grown Forest Products program over to DEEP. A Wood Utilization Team has been formed to connect producers with consumers. UConn to conduct a survey of over 1,500 secondary producers. The first meeting is scheduled for November 12. Nick asked Board members to forward any potential survey questions or industry contacts.

The meeting adjourned at 11:48 am.