

## Illinois Forestry Development Council (IFDC) – Meeting Minutes

**Date/Location:** March 10, 2021 | Online Zoom Meeting

**Attendees:** Eric Holzmueller (IFDC Director, SIUC), Jay Hayek (IFDC Chair, U of I), Lisa Helmig (FS/Shawnee); T.J. Benson (IL Chapter Wildlife Society); Lydia Scott (Morton Arboretum / Env.); Dave Gillespie (IL Forestry Association), Wade Conn (State Forester/NRCS), Jenny Lesko(IL-SAF); Elliot Lagacy (IDOA); Mike McMahan (IL Forestry Assoc.), Logan Wilhelm (IL Finance Authority); Austin Omer(IFB); Adam Schaufeber (Sen. Barickman’s office); Patrick Windhorst (IL State Republican- House Representative); Steven Graves (Private Landowner); Robin Hanna (IIRA, WIU); Rob Sproule (IL Arborist Assoc.); Paul Deizman (IL-DNR) indicates he will need to leave early and, Patti Cludray (Recorder-SIUC)

**Call to Order:** 9:03 a.m. – Jay Hayek, IFDC Chair welcomed members, guests, and members made brief introductions.

### **AGENDA ITEM: Review of Minutes of the November 4, 2020 and the January 13, 2021 IFDC Meetings-**

as recorded by Patti Cludray

March Meeting Agenda and Minutes of both the November and January meetings of the IFDC were sent by email to members by Director, Eric Holzmueller.

- *November 4, 2020 Minutes:* Council members were asked if any errors or omissions were noted in the minutes as distributed. None noted. Rob Sproule makes a MOTION to approve the minutes as written; motion seconded by Mick McMahan. With no further discussion, Jay Hayek calls for a vote. Motion carries, the minutes of the November 4, 2020 minutes are approved as written.
- *January 13, 2020 Minutes:* Council members were asked if any errors or omissions were noted in the minutes as distributed. None noted. Rob Sproule makes a MOTION to approve the minutes as written; motion seconded by Mick McMahan. With no further discussion, Jay Hayek calls for a vote. Motion carries, the minutes of the November 4, 2020 minutes are approved as written.
- Jay thanks Patti for the preparation of the Minutes.

### **AGENDA ITEM: Executive Director Report**

Eric Holzmueller presents this report.

- IFDC Budget
  - Once again, other than wages no funds have been spent from the SIU portion of the FY 21
- Information was sent passed along to members regarding small projects funding.
- Eric has been in discussion with project partners telling them to move forward. Progress in being made on projects.
  - Dale Schumacher reports the schools project is coming along with planting happening soon, an Open House will be held mid-May and pictures will be shared.
  - Mike Baltz sent video about the Let the Sunshine in project progress. Eric will send members a link / summary.
- Small Project Proposals.
  - Eric acknowledges the time and effort that Mike Brunk has made in his effort to track down unpaid monies that were owed for previous years projects. It is the hope that these allotments will be better handled in the future and gives many thanks to Mike for his efforts on IFDC project partners behalf.
- Economic Impact Analysis Report: Paul D, has been working on a final draft of regulations and state level revisions. Forest products industry is a big contribution to our economic impact. IL is competitive given the size of its forest products areas; it appears that secondary processing is where improvements can be made.

- Review of a 2-page summary: Jay, Paul and Eric discussed taking the data and using it to produce a more user-friendly pamphlet. The IFDC has the resources to do this and it would be a good use of resources which is in-line with the IFDC mission for funded projects.
- Question raised by Robert H., do you have, or can you share costs of the Economic Course analysis to the IFDC.
  - Eric H. reports that this was done as part of a regional grant; he is not sure what the cost was, but no Illinois Forest Development Council funds were spent
  - Jay H., reports that sometimes Division of Forestry uses pass through funding for projects like this.
  - Representative Windhorst, does not recall receiving the report. He would like this emailed if possible(patrickwindhorst@gmail.com).
  - Economic impact is in the billions of dollars that is why IL needs representatives on the side of Illinois.

### **AGENDA ITEM: Forestry Development Council Member Update**

Eric Holzmueller presents this update.

- Working with Mike Brunk to make sure the member listing is updated and correct will add new members once the appointments are official.
- Members are aware of the issues regarding official approvals, there are technically 29 voting members on the Council.

Jay H. asks if there are any questions for Eric regarding his executive report or member update. None noted, Jay thanks Eric for this the Executive Report and Member Update.

### **AGENDA ITEM: Legislative Issues Update:**

Jay Hayek opens this up for group discussion; asking members if they are aware of legislation impacting environmental or conservations in natural resources.

- Austin O. –Farm Bureau does not have any updates at this time. related to natural resources and forestry issues to report.
- Elliot L. – IDOA does not have anything to report currently.
- Lisa H. – FS USDA reports being in on call with the new Secretary of Agriculture, he served under President Obama and his vision aligns with that of the new administration. The Forest Service Chief was also in on that call.
  - Golconda Complex (fka: Job Core Center) is going to be used as a COVID vaccination site.
  - The FS is doing a survey on no-bid timber sales.
  - Southern tier forests are going to be working with ecologists; the southern tier initiative is to better understand Oak ecosystems; prioritization on how to categorize (this is a collaborative effort). Looking to professional input to making important determinations/decisions on policy for this ecosystem.
- Lydia S., - Reports no known Environmental side legislation. Senate House Bill 1893, is legislation about nuisance tree removal for communities, however the language was just too vague and it has sent back for revisions.
- Dave G / Mike M, ILFA no new legislative updates.
- Rep. Windhorst reports that the House is just not getting up and going. Bills are starting to go up for review. Going back to Springfield on Thursday – there will be remote committee hearings through March. April may be back on the floor. Right now there are no specifics; if anything needs to be brought to the attention of the House, let him know.
  - Eric H., questions Rep. Windhorst about the allocation of the Timber Tax dollars and giving some money back to IL landowners. How is the process looking for the coming year.
  - Rep Windhorst is collecting basic information about the Timber Tax. A lot of federal monies will be coming into Illinois due to COVID allowances. It is hard to say what this will mean for funding; don't know if perhaps some of this funding to go toward helping landowners.

- To Rep. Windhorst: It is clear that our IL landowners need someone like you to champion this cause for our them. This is a cost-share; the dollars stay here in IL and this can be an observable boost to our economy.
- TJ Benson reports that House Bill 27 (re-classifying feral hogs from an invasive species to a hunted species) made no progress. These feral hogs can cause severe damage and be a real impact on forest and natural area ecosystems.
  - Members discussion: There is not a good geographical pattern of areas with feral hog problems; appears there are small pockets. Not sure change would be good, considering that right now they can be treated as invasive (not game). This change could make this issue into a bigger problem if they are a protected species (allowing for hunting).
  - Eric H. – is there strong support for this bill? TJ Benson, reports that he will keep an eye on this bill and will keep the membership posted.

Jay asks for any further legislative issues to report. None noted. Thanks to all for sharing these updates.

### **AGENDA ITEM: Urban Committee Report:**

Rob Sproule presents this report to the Council.

- Committee met through zoom on February 12. The meeting was well-attended, and a number of issues were addressed.
  1. Trying to modernize urban/community tree ordinances. Mike Brunk (Tree City USA) looking forward to these updated ordinances. Protection of trees as a green structure.
  2. Group is exploring present day practices and modern ordinance language; working to develop a standards document on revisions of existing tree ordinances which is distinctive to Tree City and other partners.
- The committee looks forward to meeting again in May.

Jay asks for any questions for Rob, none noted. Jay thanks Rob for this report.

- Lydia S., what ordinances are being reviewed. Rob reports that some community ordinances in general are just out of date and need to be updated. Lydia will send Rob the updates they have been working on so he can take a look and be sure that all are on the same page.

### **AGENDA ITEM: Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Report**

**(Item moved forward on the Agenda due to Paul Deizman needing to leave the meeting early)**

Paul Deizman presents this report to the Council

- Legislation: Proposal is going forward to change the Timber Buyers fees; getting rid of agents, fees charge through Conservation Police Officers (CPOs). A legal committee has been working for 2 years on the language of this legislative change; as soon as this can be shared, Paul will share it.
  - This will be a great opportunity for the DNR to interface with IL landowners. Right now there are too many timber buyers. In part this proposal will require landowners with 5+ acre plots or more to get a free identifier which allows them to get educational materials on selling timber, etc. This will put the DNR more in touch with IL landowners. This a good outreach, we will need to see if the law is introduced; the ILDNR Director is in support of this proposal.
- Still short-staffed, interviews are starting shortly – 9 positions need to be filled.
  - Hoping to continue interviews for district forester positions which began before COVID.
- CRP will be a big issue this summer.
- Tree planting bids are going out.
  - Watching how the COVID stimulus package and climate change funding comes in. Need funding and people to produce 6 million seedlings a year.
- DNR is hoping to develop bigger, better relationships with our consulting foresters.
- Mike Brunk is doing an amazing job – He will be giving his own report to the Council.

Jay Hayek asks if there are any questions for Paul before he has to leave for another meeting.

- Eric H. – is curious about the need for identifiers, being required under the new proposal; how do they know they need this? What are the repercussions on Timber Buyers if there is no identifier?

- Paul D., - Buyers will can't buy from a landowner without an identifier. These identifying numbers will be issued instantaneously, they will be easy to get. If a landowner cannot get online to complete the form to get the identifier, they can call a toll-free number and they will be issued a number right away.
  - This will be a priority dedicated phone number (costing about \$3,500 per year).
- Paul D. – The benefits will be to protect IL resources, and landowners, it will allow for monitoring of the sales.
- Question to Paul. Is part of this program is to get the 4% back to our landowners? Paul explains.
  - This is not so much about the 4% it is more about tracking and monitoring IL resources better. We support out timber buyers but, just want to be sure sales are fair to our landowners.
  - We do not think that this will be a burden on the landowners – contact info is entered anyway. We just really want to be proactive and support the forest industry.
  - We would like the Councils support; when don't know how many buyers are doing things properly; how many are paying the 4%.
  - This will allow us to collect information in a more efficient way.
- This isn't a bill yet, but we do want to get it introduced soon.

Jay H., thanks to Paul for his report.

#### **AGENDA ITEM: IDNR Forest Stewardship Report including Legacy Report**

Paul D reported during the IDNR Report that unfortunately Chris Whittom is unavailable today; so there will be no Stewardship or Legacy reports. Chris has been very busy with a number of projects and the FDA. Later this year some exciting projects are in the works.

#### **AGENDA ITEM: IDNR -Urban and Community Forestry Report**

Mike Brunk provides this report to the Council.

- Doing year end reports for 2 “core” federal grants, FY 19-partners included Trees Forever, IL Arborists; Openlands.
- We are 6 months into the Morton Community grant program; this is going very well.
- The Forest Resiliency Grant comes out this coming Monday.
- Tree City USA has added 13 more communities than last year.
  - Happy with growth of the Tree City program. Would love to be #1 in the USA (just short – with 29 pending applications).
- FY 21 Federal “Core” grant program will begin in July, we are presently previewing partner organizations and program ideas.
  - Will be busy spring/summer as current federal UCF Core grant is ending in September.
- Keeping in touch with our partners is key to good projects and growth.
- Working a lot with the IL Division of Forestry.
  - Reforestation program; resources for tree planting for the spring
    - 10 mile Creek; Burning Star (old coal mines); Silver Springs (20+ acres).

Mike indicates the end of his report.

Jay asks it there are any discussion or questions for Mike Brunk, none noted. Thanks to Mike for this report.

#### **AGENDA ITEM: Other Business New/Old**

Jay H. welcomes discussion of items or updates of interest to the Council.

Old Business: None noted.

New Business:

- Eric H. reports that the new RFP for small projects is coming along and that they have a good outline completed.
  - Would like this to go out in May – to get some good proposals in by July.
- Mike B. – reports that he contacted the Governor's office for an update on the status of the appointed IFDC positions; he sent out an email, and will get a copy of that to Eric.

- Thanks to Mike for his efforts, please keep at it.
- Lisa H. reports on FS news.
  - The Forest Service has a new website; the re-design looks good ([www.fs.usda.gov](http://www.fs.usda.gov)) Shawnee will go through a website re-org as well, stay tuned for that.
  - Wildlife Biologists found discovered a rare bird on the Shawnee; a report may still be seen on the website.
  - Feral hogs have been a real problem in Musk Creek. There was an eradication done last year and this year; more may need to be done this year.
- Mike McMahan reports for the Illinois Forestry Association.
  - Basically, proceeding as normal. Appreciate Mike B's hard work on getting past payments processed. Hopefully now that payments are being distributed for last years projects, that problem is fixed.
  - Working on ideas to put forth to the Council.
  - Looking at capturing another resource at SIU – Radio/TV to help with advertising for the IFA. Thinking about a way to get some semi-professional student advertising help without cost.
  - IFA newsletter was sent out electronically and by mail last week. This newsletter looks good.
  - Wish that the FDA letters would go out soon.

Jay H. encourages others to give additional updates on their affiliated agencies/organizations.

- Wade Conn (NRCS – State Staff Forester) Still figuring out path forward dealing with COVID; there has been a shift in the way that programs are being implemented.
  - CRP provided technical assistance with forest management implementation. Incentives for landowners with CRP's providing a bit more robust support in management measures through EQIP. However, there is not a lot of money for this program. Most dollars are going south to CRP acres. IL is primarily brush management and invasive species control.
    - Forest stewardship; timber stand improvement; RX burns; fire breaks are all available under this program.
  - Another CRP change: there is no longer mid-contract management. 4 years ago, they required those and it was paid for by the Forest Service. Now we are back to being exempt from mid-contract management.
  - There is a lot of changes going on with CRP. Will keep the Council posted.
- Elliot Lagacy has no news to report for IDOA.
- Logan Wilhelm has no updates from the Illinois Finance Authority.

Other Member insights:

- Tree Farm is still tentatively planning a field day on September 25<sup>th</sup> this year dependent on the COVID situation. Also, there is a Walnut Council field day planned for July 25 – 28<sup>th</sup> in Carbondale, IL (so far this has not been cancelled.)
- Lumber prices are on the increase.
- AG field days are still being navigated amidst COVID protocols. This spring it is hoped they will be happening in person.
- Steven Graves reports he is working with Lydia S., on landscape scale restoration project. Looking forward to getting back out there.
- Lydia Scott reports on the IL Invasive Species Council.
  - Meeting will be held on April 14, 2021.
  - Officers have accepted their positions.
  - Moving forward with assigning Council members.
- Patrick Windhorst thanks the Council for inviting him to this meeting.

Jay Hayek asks for any additional last-minute reports, none are noted.

Eric Holzmueller announces that the Council is approaching the time when it can meet again face-to-face, however the option for ZOOM meetings must still be a choice. The next meeting of the IFDC will be held virtually by ZOOM on Wednesday, May 12, 2021 from 9:00 till 11:00 a.m.

**MOTION to ADJOURN:** Jay Hayek, IFDC Chair, calls for a Motion to Adjourn.

- **MOTION:** Lydia Scott makes a Motion to Adjourn. Mike McMahan seconds the Motion. Jay H. asks for any further discussion, none noted. Motion carries.
- The March 10, 2021 meeting of the Illinois Forestry Development Council is adjourned at 10:40 a.m.