

Illinois Forestry Development Council (IFDC)

Meeting Minutes

Date: January 14, 2026 **Location:** Remote (Cisco Webex) **Presiding:** Chris Evans, Chair

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Chris Evans called the meeting to order. A roll call/introductions were conducted.

Attendees:

- **Chris Evans:** Chair, IFDC / University of Illinois Extension
- **Casey Calvert:** Illinois Walnut Council / White County Landowner
- **Lydia Scott:** Urban Forestry Consultant / Environmental Representative
- **Matt Pustejovsky:** Illinois Tree Farm Committee Chair / Mercer County Landowner
- **Tricia Bethke:** Illinois Forestry Association / Morton Arboretum
- **Lorrie Karcher:** Illinois Finance Authority
- **TJ Benson:** Illinois Natural History Survey / Wildlife Society
- **Justin Dodson:** Shawnee National Forest (USFS)
- **Tracy Glenn:** IL Dept. of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
- **Avery Viadero:** Community Forestry Outreach, IL Extension
- **Kenneth Jolly:** State Forester, IDNR
- **Fredric Miller:** Forest Health Representative, Morton Arboretum
- **Evelyn Stasinopoulos:** Morton Arboretum / CRTI
- **Joe Hansen:** IDNR (joined late)
- **Wade Bloomer:** Southern Regional Forester, IDNR (joined late)

2. Approval of Minutes (November 12 Meeting)

Minutes were reviewed. Two corrections were noted:

- Spelling correction: Lorrie Karcher (L-O-R-R-I-E).
- Addition of the Urban Forestry representative vacancy to the vacancies list.
- **Motion:** Approved as amended (Motion: Calvert, Second: Scott).

3. Chair's Report (C. Evans)

- **FY 2027 Small Grants Program:** Grantees for FY26 are wrapping up. Evans will send a Qualtrics survey to the council to determine if a specific theme or priority should be set for the FY27 call for proposals.
- **Oak Ecosystem Webinar Series:** Highlighted an ongoing free USFS series.
- **Liaison Report (on behalf of Mike Brunk):**
 - Work is beginning on revising IFDC bylaws to reflect current operations.
 - State mandated training will be pushed out earlier in the year to avoid end-of-year deadlines.

4. State Forester's Report (K. Jolly)

- **Cost Share Programs:** The FDA program received \$1.1M in applications in October. Payments are being processed. A second signup period for FY26 opened in January with \$400k budgeted.
- **Personnel:** Currently down 8 district forester positions.
 - One new District Forester hire is in progress (District 11/Carlyle prioritized).
 - Jim Tresouthick was finalized as Northern Regional Forester.
 - Suzanne Griffiths finalized as Assistant to Kyle Burkwald in the Timber Buyer Program.
- **FDA Enrollment:** Reached a milestone of over 600,000 acres state-wide.
- **Forest Action Plan:** Granted a two-month extension due to federal delays; final document due end of March.
- **Sawmill Directory:** Lydia Scott and Kyle Burkwald have nearly completed the updated draft.

5. Forest Health Report (Dr. F. Miller)

- **Oak Decline Study:** 80% infection rate state-wide across 40 sampled sites. Findings show a strong correlation between low zinc/nutrient levels and infection.
- **Pest Monitoring:** Spotted Lanternfly remains present in Cook County; expected to impact southern vineyards more significantly.
 - Monitoring for sawfly (multiple generations impacting elms).

- Thousand Cankers Disease not found in state to date.
- **Herbicide Drift:** Ongoing monitoring at Mason State Nursery, Sand Ridge, and New Salem.

6. Committee Reports

- **State Fair Committee:** Avery Viadero reported that logos have been collected. A mock banner will be ready by March. The leading slogan is "Uniting Illinois Forests for the Future."

7. Council Member Updates

- **Walnut Council (Calvert):** "Winter on the Wabash" event scheduled for Feb 28 at Beall Woods State Park.
- **Extension Forestry (Evans):** Maple Syrup workshop on Feb 7; Gateway Green conference (Collinsville) on March 4; Tri-State Stewardship conference (Dubuque) on March 7.
- **Illinois Forestry Association (Bethke):** Bat Habitat Webinar (Feb 4).
 - Field Days: April 18 (Dixon Springs), May 2 (Antler Ridge), May 16 (Family Forestry Day, Pecatonica).
 - Annual Conference: Sept 17-19 (Byron, IL).
- **Shawnee National Forest (Dodson):** Moving forward with a "Good Neighbor Agreement" with Pope County for road maintenance and timber sales.

8. New Business / Adjournment

Evans will follow up via email regarding the small grant priority survey. **Meeting Adjourned:**
~10:21 AM.