

Illinois Forestry Development Council – Meeting Minutes

January 8, 2025

Location: Virtual Zoom Meeting

Attendees: Eric Holzmüller (IFDC Director), Chris Evans (UIUC & IFDC Chair), Mike Brunk (IL DNR), Kenneth Jolly (IL DNR), Jenny Lesko (SAF), Paul Deizman (IFA), Joe Hansen (IAA), Lorrie Karcher (IL Finance Authority), Scott Schirmer (IL DOA), Avery Viadero (SIU), Steve Graves (Private Timber Grower), Phil Cano (USFS), TJ Benson (IL Wildlife Society), Tricia Bethke (IFA), Casey Calvert (Walnut Council), Matt Pustejovsky (IL Tree Farm), Lydia Scott (Env Issues), Scott Swisher (Industry), Kyle Burkwald (IL DNR), and Kevin Rohling (UIUC)

Call to Order: 9:00 a.m. – Eric H. – IFDC Director

- Brief introduction of members present.
- Welcome to Phil Cano. He is the new Forest Supervisor of the Shawnee National Forest.

AGENDA ITEM: Review of the previous meeting minutes

Meeting agenda and minutes of the November 13, 2024 IFDC meeting were sent by email to members by Director, Eric H.

- Council members were given time for review and asked if any errors or omissions were noted in the minutes as distributed.
- MOTION to accept following minor corrections by Scott Sch., SECOND by TJ B., Motion PASSES unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM: Executive Director Report

Eric H. presents this report.

- Reports received from FY25 project participants.
- In the previous meeting, there was a discussion of how much wood is leaving IL. The answer to (part) of this question is available from the Forest Service. The Forest Service allows access of [FIA tables to look at the raw data](#) and also creates summary reports for individual states ([Illinois](#)). The University of Arkansas at Monticello has created a report (from FS data) that looks at the [forestry economic contribution for each state](#).
 - Illinois imports some wood, but about half of the raw wood products harvested in the State are exported before processing.
 - In terms of the impact on the economy, Indiana, a state with a similar number of forested acres, employs nearly 18,000 more people in the Logging, Wood Products, and Wood Furniture industries compared to Illinois. This translates into a nearly double the amount of labor income (over \$1 billion).
 - In summary, the data suggests that Illinois isn't reaching its full potential to maximize the benefit of the forest industry in the State.

AGENDA ITEM: Legislative Update:

- Chris E. – The Exotic Weeds Act is now in effect and the next step is to work on the administrative rules. The biggest change from the previous act was to allow for an easier way to add species of concern to the list.
- Mike B. – The [Legacy Tree Task Force](#) was recently passed – “The Legacy Tree Program Task Force shall establish recommendations for the creation of a statewide legacy tree recognition program to promote the identification, awareness, commemoration, and preservation of significant trees in the State. Report be submitted to the General Assembly no later than June 30, 2028.”
- Phil C. – The USFS National Old Growth Amendment will likely be withdrawn.

AGENDA ITEM: Illinois Department of Natural Resources Urban & Community Forestry Report.

Report by Mike B. on IL DNR urban activities.

- Over 200 Tree City USA applications and over 100 Growth Awards (#1 in the Nation) were submitted.
- Promotional materials for Tree City USA are being developed.

AGENDA ITEM: Illinois Department of Natural Resources Forestry Report

Report by Kenneth J. on IL DNR forestry activities.

- Submitted two legislative proposals for consideration to Governor’s Office.
- Illinois was awarded \$5 million over five years for landowner cost share assistance from IRA funds. The plan is to have the new administrative rules approved soon that will govern priorities for this grant.
- The Nursery manager has retired and was replaced by the former Assistant Manager (currently looking to backfill this position).
- Fire Program is looking to update their Rx fire policy. Currently DNR burns about 20k acres each year.
- Federal excess property inventory is currently underway.
- Forest Health is tracking several ongoing issues, e.g. oak decline, spongy moth.
- Exploring the possibility of continuing support for the NRCS Forest Ecologists.
- Wood Utilization is reporting 50 million bd ft of timber harvested in IL this year.

AGENDA ITEM: New / Old Business

- A motion was made to extend the agreement between SIU and IL DNR to run the Illinois Forestry Development Council for FY26-28. In addition to the duties that were part of the previous agreement (FY23-25), this new agreement would include the coordination of the Small Projects Program by SIU. MOTION to accept by Lydia S., SECOND by Casey C., Motion PASSES unanimously.
- Roundtable discussion was opened to members.
 - Scott Sch. – The IL Department of Ag will be sending out a press release this spring for the elm zig zag sawfly.
 - Kevin R. – University of Illinois Extension is working on revising the Illinois Consulting Foresters Directory. They are also working with IL DNR to explore the use of drones for herbicide application to control invasive plant species (this

alternative appears to be a much cheaper than traditional methods although there are some time constraints on when this method can be utilized).

- Scott Sw. – Reported on a social media post that generated a lot of (negative) comments when a small sawmill owner was fined for transporting several logs on a trailer without at Timber Buyers License. More awareness needs to be made to ensure IL citizens are aware of the law and avoid this negative publicity for the DNR.
- Casey C. – The Walnut Council annual meeting will be in Rockford, IL on July 27-29 and will include talks and multiple field visits.
- Steve G. – Discussed the problems of planting pot-bound container trees and how the root bag tree system may be an alternative.
- Jenny L. – SAF is in the process of selecting a new State Chair.
- Matt P. – Illinois Tree Farm will have a meeting on April 5 at the McCully Heritage Project.
- Paul D. – IFA is in the process of hiring a new Director.

AGENDA ITEM: Next meeting

March 12, 2025 – will be a virtual meeting – Eric H. will send out a calendar invite.

MOTION to ADJOURN: Motion carries.

The January 8, 2025 virtual meeting of the Illinois Forestry Development Council is adjourned at 10:20.