

Meeting Minutes

Illinois Forestry Development Council

July 9, 2025

Location: Virtual Webex Meeting

Attendees:

- Lydia Scott (Env Issues)
- Lorrie Karcher (IL Finance Authority)
- Steve Graves (Private Timber Grower)
- Mike Brunk (IDNR)
- Casey Calvert (Walnut Council)
- TJ Benson (IL Wildlife Society)
- Avery Viadero (SIU)
- Scott Swisher (Industry)
- Dale Shumaker (AISWCD)
- Tricia Bethke (IFA)
- Wade Conn (NRCS)
- Felipe Cano (USFS)
- Justin Dodson (USFS)
- Kenneth Jolly (IDNR)
- Chris Whittom (IDNR)
- Kyle Burkwald (IDNR)
- Chris Evans (UIUC & IFDC Chair)

Call to Order: 9:00 AM – Chris E. – IFDC Chair

- No new members/individuals present

Agenda Item: Review of the previous meeting minutes

Meeting agenda and minutes of the May 14, 2025 IFDC meeting were sent by email to members by Chair, Chris E.

- 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 Casey C, SECOND by Lydia S, Motion PASSES unanimously.

Agenda Item: Chair Report

Chris E. Presents this report.

- Chris E. and Mike B. have been reviewing the IFDC roster for updating and vacancies.

Agenda Item: Liaison Report

Mike B. presents this report

- **State Mandated Training:** Working with the governor's office to determine if training can be completed before being officially appointed as a member of IFDC. Also exploring Adobe Sign as an option for electronically signing training certifications.
- Aric Myrick will be assisting with the collection of state mandated training signatures and taking meeting minutes going forward

Agenda Item: Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources Forestry Report

Kenneth J. presents this report.

- **Federal funding:** it seems very possible the IDNR will not be getting any federal funding for FY25, per published media reports that OMB may be implementing a "Pocket Recission" strategy. Kenneth J met with Congressional representatives in DC to stress the importance of funding to assist private landowners maintaining their forested property. More meetings are forthcoming in the next few weeks.
- Kenneth J has communicated the need for state funding to be included in the FY27 State Budget to support the Forestry Division, but the outcome of that is uncertain
- **INHS Forest Ecologists:** Unfortunately, the five INHS Forest Ecologist contract positions that were terminated in June due to a disruption of NRCS Grant funds will not be able to be replaced. However, the Forestry Division has submitted a request to add an additional \$1.5 Million to its Cooperative Agreement with NRCS, which will cover \$300,000 of unpaid costs associated with the INHS Forest Ecologist positions, and \$1.2 million to support Forestry Division staff moving forward.
- **Re-engaging with the EFRP** to help with restoration efforts following a derecho tornado in southern Illinois
- IDNR sent a fire engine to San Juan National Forest in Colorado for a two week assignment, with plans in place for a crew swap pending a renewal for another two weeks. The Forestry Division participated in 5 mobilizations in 2024 and expects similar numbers for 2025.
- **FDA Cost-Share:** Forestry Division staff addressed comments from JCAR staff that were received on the first draft of the Rules submitted in March, and submitted a second draft of the Rules in May. The new administrative rules passed on June 17 and are in effect. Next step is to revise internal cost-share application. Hope to have the program operational before the end of the year.
- **State Forest Action Plan:** the Forestry Division is in the process of reviewing and revising our plan. Updating Urban section and Forest Legacy assessment of need section. Plan review and revision is due January of 2026. IFDC members are encouraged to review the Forest Action Plan and provide input to the upcoming revision.

Agenda Item: Program Manager reports

This report is presented by Kyle B.

- **TBLA/Wood Utilization/Marketing**
 - 157 active timber buyers this year as of July 7th. Total of 236 timber buyers in 2024.
 - Total of 343 licenses issued/applied for in 2025
 - YTD board footage: 17.2 million
 - YTD 4% fees: \$771,000
 - Avg. timber sale value: \$23,187.03
 - Avg. Illinois Timber Value Index: \$1.12/bd ft

- Timber theft investigations ongoing, unlicensed buyer investigations including “Stealth Mills”, or mills that are producing high volume of board footage with no license and no reporting.
- Kyle B. and Suzanne Griffiths were Invited to train CPO recruits on TBLA at the Decatur facility
- EF4 tornado in Williamson county. Submitted PSA for salvage harvests for storm damaged timber
- FSA is looking to start W-MAP. Opportunity for us to help provide local mills to promote their business.
- Utilization & Marketing IRA grant is still active. Committed a \$10,000 grant match for staff time to help with utilization research, marketing research, and outreach
- Next year’s state fair highlight will be wood utilization. Working on mill operation demonstration. IFDC members are invited to suggest other small displays for the Forestry tent.
- Ginseng
 - 499,137 pounds certified this year including both dry and wet converted to dry
 - Increase in theft and trespassing complaints
- State Forest management
 - Pine being sold at Sand Ridge State Forest for canopy removal and reforestation with oak and hickory
 - Approval for Hidden Springs State Forest harvest is pending
 - Luke Koett conducted a drone inventory demonstration. Pictures and videos forthcoming
 - Inventories completed: Spoon River, Hidden Springs. Seeking grant funding for invasives removal and habitat improvement at Spoon River. Inventory is ongoing at Sand Ridge State Forest. Inventories have yet to be completed at Big River, Wildcat Hollow, and Trail of Tears.
 - Management plan has been submitted and is currently under internal review for Spoon River
 - IDNR/IDOT tree mitigation planting at burning star completed this spring. 63,000 hardwood saplings were planted to replace habitat trees removed in the course of road improvement projects.
- State Nursery
 - Currently in the middle of wildflower seed production and tree propagation

Agenda Item: Legislative Update

This update is presented by Kenneth J.

- Legislation proposed by Forestry Division to update the Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Act passed. Mike B. was the lead on this successful Legislative initiative.
- The Tree Transportation act was amended and passed. Kenneth J thanked the IFDC members who participated in the legislative process for their helpful suggestions to ensure Urban Tree Service companies were not inadvertently impacted.
- Legacy Tree Task Force was passed last year. Mike B. is involved in moving that Task Force forward.
- Also from last year, the “Axe the Timber Tax” legislation was converted to the “Illinois Forestry Fix” legislation, which requires the Forestry Division to report annually how FDA

funds generated from 4% timber harvest fees are expended. This was the first year that Report was required. It was submitted as required by the March 1 deadline.

- IDNR is currently soliciting internal proposals for the next legislative session.

Agenda Item: Grant Proposals

The list of Grant submittals received, ranking high to low, is provided below:

Grant Letter	Proposal Title	Proposal Organization	Amount Requested	Avg. Score	Running total
K	Forests forward: Education, Events, and Engagement	Illinois Forestry Association	\$10,000	44	\$10,000
C	4-H Green Communities Tree Program	Extension 4H and AISWCD	\$7,500	43.63	\$17,500
F	Using Private Forestry Professionals for Tree Farm Inspection Backlog	Illinois Tree Farm	\$10,000	42.86	\$27,500
E	Forestry Practice and Career Exploration Day	FFA Calhoun County High School	\$6,575	40.38	\$34,075
M	Forest and Environmental Education in a Unique Camp Setting	University of Illinois 4-H Memorial Camp	\$10,000	40.38	\$44,075
G	Walnut Council National Meeting 2025 – “Future in Forestry”	Illinois Walnut Council	\$6,097	39.57	\$50,172
H	Sparkling Prescribed Burn Associations	Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever	\$10,000	33.38	\$60,172
A	Restorative Forestry and Community Renewal on Post-Mined Lands at WRSC	IDNR World Shooting Complex	\$10,000	32.75	\$70,172
L	Oak Savanna Restoration – Establishing a Resilient Herbaceous Layer	Campton Township Parks & Open Space	\$10,000	32.38	\$80,172
D	Peoria Wildland Fire Training & Field Day	Peoria Park District	\$10,000	32.25	\$90,172
B	B.J. Hoddinott Wildlife Sanctuary Woodland Enhancement	College of DuPage	\$10,000	29.88	\$100,172
J	Johnson Demonstration Farm: Showcasing Cooperative Forest Management for an Oak-Hickory Forest Restoration	Shirley Johnson, landowner	\$10,000	28.25	\$110,172
I	Oak Decay at Norris Woods Nature Preserve	St. Charles Park District	\$6,000	27.63	\$116,172
N	Grow Bag Use in Bottomland Hardwood Restoration	Pete Hofelich, landowner	\$9,900	27.25	\$126,072

- MOTION to approve the funding of 9 highest scoring grants (K, C, F, E, M, G, H, A, and L) by Lydia S. SECOND by Scott Swisher. MOTION PASSES by unanimous vote.

Agenda Item: New/Old Business

- Kenneth J. proposes that the IFDC should hire a contractor to update the sawmill directory as the most current one was developed in 2016.
- MOTION for IFDC to produce an Illinois Sawmill directory using an outside consultant with IFDC funding by Casey Calvert. SECOND by Dale Shumaker. Motion PASSES with a unanimous vote.
- State Fair: Kenneth J mentioned the IFDC would be represented at the 2025 State Fair via a “Partners Banner,” but encouraged the IFDC to increase its presence at the 2026 State Fair. The IFDC will form a sub-committee to advance this goal.

Roundtable discussion was opened to members.

- Wade C.: The U.S. Supreme Court lifted an injunction preventing the Administration from implementing an Executive Order signed in February directing large-scale staff reductions and broad restructuring of several government agencies, including the USDA. Federal labor unions and advocacy groups had challenged the Executive Order in court, and a U.S. District Court had issued the injunction staying the Order. The Administration appealed and the Supreme Court agreed and lifted the injunction.
- Tricia B.: IFA has partnered with IAA to provide 4 comprehensive urban tree health trainings in Virden, Carlyle, Peoria, and Effingham. IFA also tabled at a forestry field day in Elizabeth, with a number of speakers highlighting cost-share programs and restoration of woodlands. IFA has released the Illinois Forest Landowner Guide on the IFA website, developed to assist any forest landowner with comprehensive information.
- Casey C.: IWC is hosting a meeting July 27th-29th in Rockford with over 100 registrations to date. They have also hired a new Executive Director.
- Felipe C.: Shawnee National Forest is expecting voluntary reassignment to forests and districts throughout the nation.
- Chris E.: Extension Forestry’s first Forestry Stewardship Webinar is scheduled for the afternoon of July 9th, with 3 more webinars to follow on subsequent Wednesdays. They also have started a certificate course for invasive species management. It is a two day course, with a webinar scheduled for August 5th, and field days for the second day in the following days. They may also be expanding their chainsaw trainings in the future.

Agenda Item: Next Meeting

Potentially September 10, 2025 – attempting to coordinate an in-person meeting in Champaign – Chris E. will send out meeting updates via e-mail.

Motion to Adjourn: Motion carries.

The July 9, 2025 virtual meeting of the Illinois Forestry Development Council is adjourned at 11:02 AM.