

## Illinois Forestry Development Council – Meeting Minutes

March 13, 2024

**Location:** Virtual Zoom Meeting

**Attendees:** Eric Holzmüller (IFDC Director), Lorrie Karcher (IL Finance Authority), Dennis Wilson (SNF), Scott Swisher (Forest Industry), TJ Benson (IL Wildlife Society), Amelia Cheek (IL Farm Bureau), Scott Schirmer (IL DOA), Dale Shumaker (AISWCD), Tricia Bethke (IFA), Avery Viadero (SIU Urban), Mike Brunk (IL DNR), Kim Watson (IL DCEO), Brad Petersburg (Private Timber Grower), Kenneth Jolly (IL DNR), Mike Brunk (IL DNR), Aric Phelps (IL DNR), Chris Meister (IL Finance Authority), Scott Swisher (Industry), Joel Pisoni (Industry), and Casey Calvert (Walnut Council)

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

- Members gave a brief introduction of themselves to the group.

### **AGENDA ITEM: Review of the previous meeting minutes**

Meeting Agenda and Minutes of January 10, 2024 meeting of the IFDC were sent by email to members by Director, Eric Holzmüller.

- Council members were given time for review and asked if any errors or omissions were noted in the minutes as distributed.
- MOTION to accept by Casey C., SECOND by Scott Sw. Motion PASSES unanimously.

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

Eric H. presents this report.

- Attended Tri-State Forestry Conference – well attended event with over 200 landowners.
- Website updates are taking place and they will continue.

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

- Eric H. - TBLA update – A letter outlining the concerns was submitted to DNR legal counsel. We can expect to hear a response within the next two weeks.
- Several bills were discussed including: HB5237 – Axe the Timber Tax, HB5117 – Deforestation Free Procurement, SB2942 – Wildlife-Forestry Development, and HB 4717. All bills are in various committees at this time.
- No other legislative issues discussed.

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

Report by Mike B. reported on IL DNR urban activities.

- Thanks to multiple partners that greatly expanded outreach of IL DNR UCF.
- Tree City USA programs had over 400 applicants.
- UCF secured nearly \$4 million in IRA funding – 3<sup>rd</sup> most in the nation.
- Working on revising the UCF section of the IL Forest Action plan to increase competitiveness for federal funding.
  - Brad P. proposed a new threat to IL FAP – lack of knowledge for new forest owners.

## **AGENDA ITEM: Illinois Department of Natural Resources Forestry Report**

Kenneth J. reported on IL DNR forestry activities.

- Kenneth J. visited SIU Forestry Program in Carbondale
- Personnel positions continued to be worked on.
  - Aric Phelps hired as the new Executive Secretary to provide support for Program Managers.
  - The Jackson and Johnson County DF positions should be filled soon.
  - Hoping to renew funding for 6 forest ecologist positions through NHS
- Division is committed to getting the cost share program reinstated in some form. Seeking feedback from IFDC on prioritizing three cost share practices for funding: timber stand improvement, site prep for natural regeneration, and invasive species control.
  - Eric H. will send out a survey following the meeting to provide comments on this proposal.

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

- Chris M. - The Illinois Finance Authority/Climate Bank (IFA/CB) is working with J.C. Kibbey, Illinois State Climate Advisor, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA), to secure competitive federal funding (\$2M to \$500M) provided by Climate Pollution Reduction Grants (CPRG) through the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). They are also seeking funding from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. Funding winners should be announced within the next few months. These programs could potentially provide funding for nature-based solutions that benefit forest landowners while also improving the climate.
  - Eric H. will send out more information on these programs following the meeting.
- Eric H. – we will be seeking input for the FY25 small projects RFP. If there are changes you would like to see or suggestions you would like to make, please be prepared to discuss them at the May 8 meeting.
- Roundtable discussion was opened to members.
  - Casey C. – IL Walnut Council along with IFA will be hosting their family field day on April 13 in Douglas County.
  - Tricia B. – IFA is working on a handout to promote the FDA program to disperse to new forest landowners.
  - Dale S. – The AISWCD has been promoting invasive species awareness by passing out the Illinois invasive species guide. More booklets are needed to meet demand.
  - TJ B. – Annual Meeting of the Illinois Chapter of the Wildlife Society will be held April 14-16, 2024 at Utica, IL.
  - Joel P. – Timber prices have not recently changed.

## **AGENDA ITEM: Next meeting**

May 8, 2024 – will be a virtual meeting – Eric H. will send out a calendar invite.

## **MOTION to ADJOURN: Motion carries.**

The March 13, 2024 virtual meeting of the Illinois Forestry Development Council is adjourned at 10:50.