

Illinois Forestry Development Council – Meeting Minutes

March 8, 2023

Location: Virtual Zoom Meeting

Attendees: Eric Holzmüller (IFDC Director), T.J. Benson (Wildlife Society), Lydia Scott (Environmental), Lorrie Karcher (IL Finance Authority), Steve Graves (Private Timber Grower), Tom Gargrave (IL DNR), Mike Brunk (IL DNR), Joe Hansen (IL Arborists Association), Matt Pustejovsky (IL Tree Farm Program), Justin Dodson (SNF), Lauren Lurkins (IL Farm Bureau), Amelia Gooding-Cheek (IL Farm Bureau), Joel Pisoni (Forest Industry), Casey Calvert (Walnut Council), Chris Evans (U of I), and Brad Harrisburg (Private Timber Grower)

Call to Order: 9:02 a.m. – Eric Holzmüller - IFDC Director

- Welcome of new members
 - Amelia Gooding-Cheek from Illinois Farm Bureau
 - Justin Dodson is representing the Shawnee National Forest. Mike Chaveas is currently on a detail in Washington DC. The Acting Forest Supervisor is Ellen Bogardus-Szymaniak.
 - Chris Evans is the new representative for U of I.
- Selection of new Chair
 - Previous IFDC Chair, Jay Hayek, has accepted a new position outside of IL and is no longer representing U of I on the Council.
 - Currently looking for a new Chair – if interested or can think of someone who could fill the role, please contact Eric H. prior to the next meeting

AGENDA ITEM: Review of the previous meeting minutes

Meeting Agenda and Minutes of January 11, 2023 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. None were noted.
- MOTION to accept by Steve G., SECOND by Tom G. Motion PASSES unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM: Executive Director Report

Eric H. presents this report.

- Most of his time has been spent on the TBLA
- Just received a request for an audit of IFDC from IL General Auditor Survey and will be working on this over the next few weeks

AGENDA ITEM: Legislative Update:

Eric H. leads discussion.

- TBLA update – The TBLA Ad Hoc Committee met with DNR on 2/6/23 and went over suggested modifications to proposed DNR changes to the current law. Several of our suggestions were incorporated, but most noticeably the use of 4% for cost share was not (Committee requested that a portion of the funds be returned to landowners rather than all of it being spent on Division of Forestry salaries). Over the next few weeks there were a

few more exchanges and modifications and last Friday (3/3/23) Senator Murphy filed the language as SB1560 which is unlikely to change. Overall, the biggest changes to the Act are higher license fees, replacement of bond requirement with liability insurance, and stiffer penalties for noncompliance. The Committee still thinks there are improvements that can be made, for example how 4% is calculated, that ideally would have been done in the bill to make it cleaner but will now have to be ironed out in the admin rules. They also believe there are some adjustments that can be made to make it easier for timber buyers to fill out the paperwork (seems to be one of the bigger complaints), particularly regarding the transport papers. This will have to be done in the admin rule process. Thanks to those who served on the committee and to the DNR for working with us on this issue.

- Tom G. – Confirmed the bill is in committee and added that the Division needs to do a better job of auditing.
- Eric H. – Supports the idea of auditing and recommends use of landowners in this process. One of the reasons for returning (at least some) 4% dollars back to landowners is that it would allow them to report what they received for a harvest and then the DNR could cross check that information with what Timber Buyers reported. This is the most efficient way to check for nonpayment and underpayment. Partners are available to help with the process.
- Lauren L. _ Thanks DNR for cooperation on this process and recommended an outreach effort to notify stakeholders if/when bill is passed.
- Casey C. – How many timber buyers are registered in the state?
- Tom G. – About 300, of which about 1/3 reported buying timber to DNR in 2022. DNR believes this is because licensed buyers are not reporting sales and paying 4% fees.
- Steve G. – Asked about urban wood
- Tom G. – DNR is working on a separate legislation to address this situation. Currently 4% would be due when a log is sold to a mill.
- Joel P. – This can make things unnecessarily confusing when dealing with landowners and tree service companies that directly bring logs to sawmill.
- Mike B. – Urban wood frequently turned into mulch
- Tom G. – Mulch, like firewood, is not subject to 4% fee.
- Other legislative issues: Lauren L. – Farm Bureau is keeping track on several bills that are currently in committee.

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

Mike B. reported on IL DNR urban activities

- Have over 193 Tree City applications currently approved – surpassing last number from last year.
- Have over 100 Tree City Growth Award applications.
- 15 Tree Campus applications approved.
- Inflation Reduction Act request for funding has been submitted
 - Goal of proposal is to grow urban forestry across Illinois
 - 82% of funding is targeted toward underserved and rural communities
 - 82% of funding will have match requirement waived

- Potential for another round of funding from USFS that would focus on other groups such as non-profits.
- Should know about status of request by next meeting.

AGENDA ITEM: Illinois Department of Natural Resources Forestry Report.

Tom G. reported on IL DNR forestry activities

- Stewardship currently has nearly 1,000,000 acres in approved FDA plans in IL
- Interviewing for four district forester positions, one regional forester, and a wood utilization position
- Sparta District Forester recently resigned and will have to be replaced
- Nursery nearly sold out of seedlings – continue to pursue opportunities for expansion with partners
- Prescribed fire operations taking place in southern Illinois, still a little wet in northern Illinois
- Division Foresters are working with agency to address the CWD issue
 - Eric H. – research indicates that deer present a challenge in promoting desirable tree regeneration and without deer control management actions such as prescribed fire, thinning, and invasive species control are often ineffective.

AGENDA ITEM: New / Old Business

- Lydia S. – Notified group about push from the White House to develop a national strategy to develop statistics for environmental-economic decisions
- Casey C. – Walnut Council is sending a survey to members gather better information on member demographics and properties. Field day planned with IFA and Tree Farm Association near Allerton Park in Piatt County.
- TJ B. – Wildlife Society is hosting state conference in April in Champaign. Several presentations planned this year pertaining to impacts of forest management on birds.
- Justin D. – SNF currently has 4 active timber sales but things have slowed down because of the weather. Planning a white oak progeny planting at Dixon Springs Ag Center in cooperation with U of I extension. Will focus on a future seed source to address climate change.
- Chris E. – U of I is looking to hire a tenure track faculty member specializing in Forest Management. Position will have an extension component. Hope to replace Jay’s extension position as well. 2nd year of beginning forest landowner program has started – looking to add a virtual component this year as well. Number of research projects taking place at Dixon Springs primarily focusing on invasive species.
- Joel P. – Timber markets remain steady from last meeting. Inventory is decreasing due to weather. Low grade markets continue to perform well.
- Steve G. – Number of different projects going on, thinning, spraying, etc. – reminder that this is a great time of the year to get activities done.

AGENDA ITEM: Next meeting

May 10, 2023 – will be a virtual meeting

MOTION to ADJOURN: Motion carries.

The March 8, 2023 virtual meeting of the Illinois Forestry Development Council is adjourned.