

Illinois Forestry Development Council – Meeting Minutes

September 9, 2020

Location: Online Zoom Meeting

Attendees: Eric Holzmüller (IFDC Director), Jay Hayek (IFDC Chair, SIU), Paul Deizman (IL DNR-SAF), Kim Watson (ILDOC/Rep for Chris Miester); Lisa Helmig (FS/Shawnee); T.J. Benson (Wildlife Society); Lydia Scott (Environmental); Dale Shumaker (AISWCD); Dave Gillespie (SAF), Wade Conn (NRCS), Jenny Lesko(SAF); Elliot Lagacy (IDOA); Mike McMahan (IFA), Logan Wilhelm (IL Finance Authority); Austin Omer (IFB); Joel Pisoni (Procurement Forester); Steven Graves (Private Landowner); Robin Hanna (IIRA, WIU); and, Patti Cludray (Recorder-SIUC); Late additions: Rob Sproule (Urban); Casey Calvert (Private Landowner, Walnut Council).

Call to Order: 10:05 a.m. – Jay Hayek, IFDC Chair welcomed members and guests.

AGENDA ITEM: Review of Minutes of the July 8th IFDC Meeting-as recorded by Patti Cludray Meeting Agenda and Minutes of July 8, 2020 meeting of the IFDC were sent by email to members by Director, Eric Holzmüller.

- Council members were asked if any errors or omissions were noted in the minutes as distributed. Noted that Steve Felt should be listed as a (Private Landowner)
- *MOTION.* Dale Shumaker makes motion to approve the minutes as written; motion seconded by Mike McMahan. With no further discussion, Motion carries, minutes of the July 8, 2020 Meeting of the IFDC are approved as written.

AGENDA ITEM: Executive Director Report

Eric Holzmüller presents this report.

- The IFDC Annual Report
 - Report was printed and a hard copy was sent to the IL Legislature. Report posted online as well. Report has met with positive feedback.
- IFDC Budget
 - As previously reported, in FY20 the IFDC was under budget due to COVID 19 restrictions on travel, and the switch to virtual meeting format.
 - If the same restrictions remain in place in FY21 it stands to reason that there would be leftover funds in this fiscal year as well. Some of which should be available for the next round of the small grants.

AGENDA ITEM: Forestry Development Council Member Update

Eric Holzmüller presents this update.

- Working with Mike Brunk to make sure the member listing is updated on the website.
- IFDC has not received official approval of new members by the Administration. Will stay on top of this and report approvals to membership as received.
- Continuing to work to fill vacancies; and make sure updates are in place on website.
- Jay H. asks if there are any questions for Eric regarding his executive report.
 - Question is asked if it would be appropriate to ask questions regarding the status of funding of the FY20 round of small grants, or if this should be tabled until it is addressed later in the Agenda.

AGENDA ITEM: Forestry Development Council Small Grant Program; moved up on the Agenda. This report is submitted by Eric Holzmüller.

- Eric does not have confirmation of funding being distributed at this time. Question on funding is directed to Paul Deizman.

- Paul reports the receipt of emails confirming the approvals of funding is in the works. Waiting on CFO for official approval. As soon as the Director approves we will be good to go with the distribution.
- Eric to council members:
 - Eight small grants projects have been completed; all invoices for these have been submitted to the ILDNR and reports are being submitted (i.e. Heartland Conservancy has completed their report).
 - As reported none of the grant recipients have received funding yet, however, they all realize that this takes time.
 - Presented to the council for consideration: Let the Sunshine in has re-designed and re-submitted their proposal. Since the Council has an additional \$15,000 leftover in budget, the Council is looking for approval for \$3,000 in funding to redesign the Let the Sunshine in website. Jay asks if there is a motion.
- **MOTION:** Lydia Scott makes a motion that the council approve funding in the amount of \$3,000 for updates to the “Let the Sunshine In” website. Mike McMahan seconds motion. Jay H. calls for further discussion.
 - Council discusses the updates that will be made to the website, including the story-map. .
 - Question is raised regarding whether or not there will be copyright issues with the “let the sunshine in” nomenclature as copyright work can be expensive (\$90.00 per hour).
 - Eric is tasked to find out if this is of concern, since State funds are going to be used. Paul questions if anyone knows if “let the sunshine in” had previously been under copyright, by Forest Service, etc.
 - The thought is that grant names cannot be copy written so there should be no need for concern.
- Jay asks for further questions or concerns regarding this motion. None noted. Motion carries. Question about the copyright will be address and reported.

Jay H. thanks Eric for these reports and update, and asks for any questions or further discussion. None noted.

AGENDA ITEM: Legislative Issues Update:

Jay Hayek opens this up for group discussion. Are there any issues that need to be brought to the Council’s attention?

- Austin O. – wishes there were updates to report, however, it has been quiet. Has not heard of any upcoming environmental legislation.
- Paul D., - reports there are a couple of DNR sponsored bills slated for the January session.
- Wade C., NRCS does not have anything to report.
- Lisa H. – FS, will be involved with virtual meetings on the updating of the American Outdoors Act. All Forest Service grassland projects have been submitted. Lake Kinkaid project due to the joint chief in the next 2 week. Currently re-visiting all water/habitat protection projects. There has been some talk that Madigan may call the IL Legislature back into session next week. Austin O., the IFB is not sure this will happen.
- Elliot L. – IDOA does not have anything to report.

Note: Urban Committee Report: Rob will not be available until later; Council moves to next agenda item.

AGENDA ITEM: IDNR Forest Stewardship Report including Legacy Report

Chris Whittom is unavailable today; Paul Deizman presents this report to the Council.

- Working with Eric Holzmüller at SIU to map stewardship program
 - Recent study noted that a prioritized map as the most important area; that needs to be addressed. It goes back to spatial analysis.
- Delivering stewardship year in/out is the goal. Continuing to work closely with other programs, i.e. EQIP to reach goals.

- Chris is working on getting coordinated with annual letters, but getting updated emails has been a challenge. Work continues on the database.

Note: Paul will continue with the IDNR report at this time, moving it ahead in the Agenda.

AGENDA ITEM: Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Report

Paul Deizman presents this report to the Council

- Field staff are working and staying on track; budget looks to be virtually the same for FY 21 as in FY20. Some things are on hold at the Governor's office level, no control over that.
- Working to prioritize hires to fill critical needs; especially trying to push forward the hires for retirees (i.e. Tom Wilson)
 - Statewide Fire Program Manager actually closes today. Hope to be ready for interviews in about a month.
 - Looking to hire in Benton, IL, another priority is the Fairfield district.
 - Need to backfill at Utilization and a Regional Forester.
- DNR is tightly staffed; however, the CRP load will be completed, continuing to work with the NRCS. Hoping to work things out to, hopefully, boost resources.
- The fire team did get travel funds approved.
 - Team is back from working the Pine Gulch fire in August. If the level stays at five may be sending out another crew.
 - Reports are that we have a solid team, well respected.

Jay H. asks if there are questions for Paul or further discussion on either the stewardship or DNR reports.

- Lydia S. – notes that Morton Arboretum has aerial maps of the NE Illinois counties available if that would help with mapping historic forests. There is a link to find these online resources, approx. 117,000 acres-remnant oak-hickory ecosystems.
 - Jay asks Lydia if she will share the link; she is pleased to do so. Paul thanks Lydia for the offer to share those aerial maps.
- Mike B. – asks if there has been a response back on IFDC fiscal funding. Paul indicates that he just got word that IFDC appropriations were approved for FY21.
- Paul D. – relates to Council that he received 4-5 proposals for Federal monies, which have been allocated for state projects; these are due from Paul's desk by 9/15.
 - IL can send up to five proposals. When he gets those ready to do he will share with Jay and Eric so that they can share with the Council.
- Eric H. – asks if there are any allocations for the 4% program.
 - Paul has not seen division budget yet. Still looking at discretionary line items. If this would be approved it would open up cost share for landowners again. Paul will follow-up since they are still deciding on those discretionary funds. He will need to get back to the group.

Jay H. - Council asks that Paul keep us updated, thanking him for the reports.

AGENDA ITEM: Urban and Community Forestry Report

Mike Brunk provides this report to the Council.

- There was a recent deployment of the Urban Forestry Strike Team to N. IL in areas that were hit with derecho level winds, i.e. Ottawa, IL was hit with high winds and a tornado.
 - The Urban Strike Team; DNR partners with Trees Forever; members are trained to assess tree damage looking at public safety concerns as a priority. Looking for salvageable trees; preserving those that can be saved, looking carefully at degree of hazard.
- Working with our communities that are striving to be Tree Cities.
 - Reviewing Tree City ordinances;
 - Doing tree inventories and maintenance.
 - Seeking managers for community tree programs.
 - Idea is that communities need to pledge to improve urban forests over time.
- Trees Forever – just closed the small grant program for tree planting.

- Collaborated with Morton Arboretum doing tree inventories and management plans.
- Will initiate work on a regional effort to develop pest protocols for the Strike Teams (looking carefully at emerald ash borer, etc.) Striving to enhance abilities of our teams to access pest and disease while on assignment.

Jay asks if there are any discussion of this report or questions for Mike Brunk.

- What is the make-up of the Strike Team?
 - Our team originates through the Forest Service (FS) Urban Forest Strike Team program. Tweaked to meet needs here in Illinois. Made up of 30 volunteers. The team has had a number of trainings in addition to the original training program in 2014. The last training was in 2019. Striving to maintain a high level of training. 8 – 10 individuals go out on 1-day deployments.
 - Those who may be interested in becoming a part of the team should get in contact with Mike; he will get you on a list for the next training.
- Lydia S. requests that Mike B. provide a link/info that she can send out to network. Mike will do so.

Note: Rob Sproule is not available yet, council will move on to final agenda item, until Rob is able to log in to meeting.

AGENDA ITEM: Other Business New/Old

Jay Hayek opens this up to the group for discussion items or updates of interest to the Council.

- Dave G. / Mike McMahan (IFA update)
 - Working on setting up a virtual IFA annual meeting in October. Actually referring to this as a convention. Format will be a weeklong series of seminars (about 1 hour each).
 - Update on event will be posted to the website; visit website for more information.
 - This fall, Mike will be doing management on his forested property, area of 350 – 400 trees mostly oak. Mike will be documenting; if you would like to watch you are welcome, please contact Mike for more information.
- Wade C. (NRCS update)
 - George Henshaw is the new state resource conservationist; he supervises managers in the state.
 - Stacey Zubler is the new soil health specialist
 - Matt Burger was hired as a grazing land specialist; state level coordination of agencies and groups.
 - Wildlife Biologist position is open NRCS is still actively recruiting for this position. Looking to bring this search to a close within the next couple of months.
 - CRP is managed by the FSA, but the NRCS provides technical support.
 - Pilot program “Clear 30” launched this summer. IL and several other states are involved in this program.
 - Program offers farmers and landowners an opportunity to enroll in a 30-year Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contract. The program signup period is July 6 to Aug. 21, 2020.
 - Allows FSA to work with farmers and landowners to maintain conservation practices for 30 years, through easements and contracts.
 - Goal of program is to decrease erosion, improve water quality and increase wildlife habitat, provide better management of properties through thinning, pruning, and invasive control. Will be cost-share with the producers.
 - NRCS is trying to support this program; riparian forest buffer is a practice that is included in the program.
 - Through this program, FSA is moving to a more easement-holding program.
 - If interested in getting more information, please contact your local FSA office.

Note: Rob Sproule joined the Zoom meeting. New/ Old Business will continue after the Agenda scheduled Urban Committee Report.

AGENDA ITEM: Urban Committee Report:

Rob Spoule presents this report to the Council.

- There is not much to report at this time. Committee did not meet since last report.
- Rob needs to schedule time to meet with Mike to discuss moving forward with new activities.

Jay thanks Rob for this report.

AGENDA ITEM: Other Business New/Old (continues)

- Dale S., (AISWCD update)
 - The summer conference was cancelled due to COVID 19.
 - Steve Stierwalt stepped down; the new president is Tom Buyers.
 - The STARR program has caught on at the state/national level. Now working to hire a statewide coordinator.
- Robin H., (Institute of Rural Affairs)
 - Happy to be here, excited to be working with natural resource foresters. Looks forward to helping.
- Lydia S. (Environmental Rep)
 - The Invasive Species Council will be hosting a series of virtual workshops.
 - Review of assessment, management, treatments, etc. Looking for provide information to partners.
 - Good opportunity for organizations to present what is being done across Illinois.
- Jay H. (U of I)
 - Pleased to announce the hire of a new faculty member, Dr. Joy O’Keefe. Dr. O’Keefe is a renowned for bat research as related to forest management; this is also an extension appointment.

Jay H. asks if there is any additional new/old business. None noted. Thanks those who provided additional reports.

Agenda Item: Meeting Adjourned.

Eric Holzmueller closes the July 8, 2020 meeting of the Illinois Forestry Development Council.

- Next meeting of the IFDC is scheduled for November 11, 2020, due to this being Veteran’s day, it is agreed that the Council will hold the meeting on Wednesday, November 4, 2020. The meeting will begin earlier, 9 a.m. if the Council members concur, let Eric know. Eric will send out the agenda and Zoom link via email.
- Before closing Casey Calvert is recognized as a private landowner, representing the Walnut Council; his contact information is: ph. 815-431-1811; email/swcrops@gmail.com.
- With no further comments or discussion, there is a call for Motion to Adjourn.

MOTION to ADJOURN: Wade Conn makes motion to adjourn; Elliot L. seconds the motion. Eric asks for any further discussion, none noted. Motion carries. The September 9th virtual meeting of the Illinois Forestry Development Council is adjourned at 12:05 p.m.