

Meeting Minutes

Illinois Forestry Development Council

March 11, 2026

Location: Remote (Cisco Webex)

Presiding: Chris Evans, Chair

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Chris Evans called the meeting to order and conducted a roll call.

Attendees:

- **Chris Evans:** Chair, IFDC / University of Illinois Extension
- **Lydia Scott:** Urban Forestry Consultant / Environmental Rep
- **Matt Pustejovsky:** Illinois Tree Farm Committee Chair
- **Scott Schirmer:** Illinois Department of Agriculture
- **Tricia Bethke:** Illinois Forestry Association
- **Avery Viadero:** Illinois Extension
- **TJ Benson:** Illinois Chapter of the Wildlife Society
- **Casey Calvert:** Illinois Walnut Council
- **Mike Brunk:** IDNR Forestry (Urban)
- **Kenneth Jolly:** State Forester, IDNR
- **Tracy Glenn:** Illinois DCEO
- **Lorrie Karcher:** Illinois Finance Authority
- **Nathan Phillips:** Beaumont Lumber (Guest/Prospective Member)
- **Kyle Burkwald:** IDNR Forestry

2. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the January meeting were reviewed.

- **Correction:** Lori Karcher noted a typo in the adjournment time (listed as 1:39 PM; corrected to 10:21 AM).

- **Motion:** Approved as amended (Motion: Scott, Second: Viadero).

3. Liaison and Member Appointments

- **Nate Phillips Introduction:** Introduced as the owner of Beaumont Lumber. He discussed **HB 4883**, a bill to amend the Illinois vehicle code to include logging under agricultural weight limit exceptions.
- **Appointment Update:** Kenneth Jolly noted that federal partners (USFS, NRCS) will remain on the council as non-voting members to avoid conflicts with state-mandated training requirements. Nate Phillips will be treated as a member pending official gubernatorial appointment.

4. Chair's Report (C. Evans)

- **Small Grants Program:** FY26 grants are nearing completion.
- **Educational Presentations:** Evans proposed a new standing agenda item: short presentations from council members about their respective organizations to foster better inter-agency understanding and collaboration.

5. State Forester's Report (K. Jolly)

- **Personnel:** Permission granted to hire one new District Forester for the Carlyle district; a second position is pending budget review.
- **FDA Cost Share:** Since October, \$1.7M has been allocated across 5,800 acres. \$85k has been paid out for completed practices.
- **Forest Action Plan:** The five-year highlights report is due at the end of the month. Work has begun on the 2030 ten-year plan.
- **Federal Funding:** FY26 allocations are secure, but new USDA grant terms and conditions have caused national delays and legal reviews across all states.
- **Fire Incident:** A 500-acre arson fire at Green River SFWA led to an arrest by Conservation Police.

6. Sawmill Directory Update (K. Burkwald & L. Scott)

- A new 28-page Sawmill Directory has been completed.
- **Distribution:** Hard copies are available. A print-ready PDF will be shared with the council. Plans are underway to convert the document into an accessible, interactive web page (Story Map) within the next few months.

7. State Fair Committee (A. Viadero)

- A quote of \$115 was received for a 3x7 vertical banner.
- **Slogan:** "Uniting Illinois Forestry for the Future."
- **Action:** The invoice will be processed through IDNR.

8. FY 27 Small Grants Program Planning

- **Timeline:** The RFP will be released in late April/early May to give applicants more time.
- **Deadline:** July 1st submission deadline.
- **Funding:** Maintained a \$10,000 cap per project.
- **Motion:** To proceed with the FY27 RFP with a **July 1 submittal deadline** (Motion: Calvert, Second: Bethke). Passed unanimously.

9. Council Member Updates

- **Extension (Evans):** Successful Gateway Green and Tri-State Stewardship conferences (300+ attendees).
- **IFA (Bethke):** Working on TSI/Invasive contracts for the Garish property. Upcoming field days: April 18 (Dixon Springs), April 25 (Clayton), May 2 (Casey), and May 16 (Pecatonica).
- **Walnut Council (Calvert):** Successful "Winter on the Wabash" event; discussed the new Lower Wabash Partnership (TNC) for habitat cost-shares.
- **Tree Farm (Pustejovsky):** Re-elected existing officers. 16/40 backlog inspections completed to date.

10. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned following the updates.