

**MINUTES
ALABAMA FORESTRY COMMISSION
May 25, 2010**

PRESIDING – Don Heath, Chairman

SECRETARY - Linda Casey, State Forester

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT – Don Heath, Johnny McReynolds, Melisa Love, Jett Freeman, Ken Real, and Randy Gilmore.

ALABAMA FORESTRY COMMISSION PERSONNEL PRESENT - Linda Casey, Tom Conway, Neil Letson, Otis French, Dan Jackson, Steve May, LeaAnna Meadows, and Regina Miller.

GUESTS – Steve Guy, Roy McAuley, and Rick Oates.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER – Chairman Don Heath called this special meeting of the Alabama Forestry Commission to order at 10:00 a.m. on May 25, 2010 in the Forestry Commission's State Office Executive Conference Room located at 513 Madison Avenue, Montgomery, Alabama 36104.

ROLL CALL– Regina Miller called roll. All Commissioners except Jerry Smith were present. Miller announced that a quorum was present. Commissioner Ken Real made a motion to excuse the absence of Commissioner Jerry Smith due to unforeseen medical circumstances with his son.

Miller announced that the meeting had been properly advertised.

MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 27, 2010 MEETING – Randy Gilmore made a motion to dispense with the reading of the minutes January 27, 2010 minutes and to approve them as written. Johnny McReynolds seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

WINSTON COUNTY OFFICE PROPERTY – Legal Counsel, Tom Conway, explained that the Commission had been offered a \$100,000.00 grant to purchase a building in Winston County for our county office. The Commission had voted against the purchase at the January meeting due to the Commission's budget restraints. Conway stated that the grant stipulates that the funds can only be used for the purchase of the building. MOTION: Ken Real made a motion to accept the grant under the stated condition to purchase the building. Randy Gilmore seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

WHITE PLAINS COMMUNITY CENTER LAND DONATION REQUEST - Tom Conway reported that the Commission had received a request from the White Plains Community Center to donate 387 acres of Choccolocco State Forest to their organization. Following discussion, Commissioners agreed with Conway that the Commission has no authority to donate the property to a private organization as was requested by the organization. If the Commission chooses to sell the property, it must be done by sealed bid to the highest bidder. MOTION: Randy Gilmore made a motion that the Commission not donate or sell the stated property to the White Plains Community Center. Melisa Love seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

STATE FORESTER'S REPORT –

SALARY & HEADCOUNT CHANGES – State Forester, Linda Casey reviewed agency headcount changes from FY2007 to FY2010.

STATE OFFICE:

With consolidated and eliminated positions and classification changes in personnel,

the total impact to state office personnel resulted in a \$212,000 savings with a minus 3 change in headcount.

FIELD:

1. Reduced Region overhead by 12 positions (Assistant Regional Foresters, BMP Coordinator, Fire Specialists, etc.)
2. Consolidated law enforcement and dispatch to state office, 26 positions (some transferred to Montgomery, others reassigned)
3. Increased field by 20 positions, 10 positions vacant.

As of today, there are 213 field positions with 10 vacant positions.

State Forester Casey informed Commissioners that she had made eight presentations to employees throughout the state explaining the Commission's budget situation and the layoff process that will likely occur due to reductions in severance tax, federal grants, and from the general fund.

(Attachment #1)

Personnel Manager, Tonia Stephens explained the layoff process to Commissioners and stated that State Personnel should finish their process by mid-June. State Forester Casey added that the first layoff notices might be given in July with all layoffs expected to be completed by October 1, 2010.

(Attachment #2)

REVIEW OF SOUTHEAST REGION – SE Regional Forester, Otis French presented an overview of the Southeast Region. He stated that the region consists of eleven counties with approximately 3,301,839 forested acres which includes a 7,000-acre state forest. Characteristics include thirty-nine personnel, lowest wildfire region in Alabama, and active landowner organizations.

ALABAMA FOREST ASSESSMENT AND RESOURCE STRATEGIES UPDATE – Forester Neil Letson discussed the development of the Alabama State Assessment which is a mandate from the USDA Forest Service that must be developed and submitted by May 10, 2010. States were challenged to develop a plan that identifies each state's strengths and weaknesses and addresses objectives and strategies to improve forest resources. Letson noted that some states internally addressed issues while Alabama chose to collaborate with partners to fully address Alabama's resources and challenges. As a result of this process, 27 goals, 64 objectives, and 210 strategies were developed to address the issues.

Chairman Heath adjourned the meeting for lunch at 12:45 p.m.

Chairman Heath reconvened the meeting at 1:15 p.m.

OIG AUDIT & UPDATES ON ARRA GRANTS – Linda Casey discussed the Office of Inspectors General assigned to the USDA Forest Service audited the ARRA grants that the Commission had been awarded. The audit was held March 30 - April 6, 2010.

The review consisted of examining documentation and on-site inspections and interviews for the ARRA Longleaf and the ARRA Cogongrass grants.

Results of the audit included:

- 1) The financial software used by the AFC/State of Alabama does not contain sufficient tracking/reporting features,
- 2) The sub-award to the AL Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources should not have been awarded based on the narrative submitted. A clarification of the narrative should be submitted to resolve the issue, and
- 3) Documentation of clear Direct Administrative Costs for each grant is needed.

ARRA PRESCRIBED BURNING GRANT – Protection Division Director, Dan Jackson, and ARRA Prescribed Burning Grant Coordinator, Steve May, reported that the Commission had received a \$5 million grant to offer prescribed burning grants that will be available to landowners. A process will be developed in which landowners may apply for these grants and might be available in June or July. The grant expires September 20, 2012.

FIREWISE AUDIT - Dan Jackson FIREWISE Communities/USA is a national organization developed to encourage America's fire-prone communities to prepare themselves to prevent destruction by wildfire. The program encourages small communities, developments and residential associations to take actions to prepare for wildfire before it hits.

The audit group reviewed records and visited four designated FIREWISE Communities in Alabama to learn how Firewise is implemented in communities in Alabama:

1. Canterbury Estates in Bay Minette – Designation in 2006
2. Terry Cove Harbor in Gulf Shores – Designation in 2009
3. Historic Blakely in Spanish Fort – Designation in 2009
4. Alapine Village Subdivision, Unit 2 in Cherokee County – Designation in 2010

OIL SPILL – Protection Division Director, Dan Jackson reported that the Commission's role in the disaster has been to provide daily activity reports to the Governor. The Commission is working closely with other agencies such as the Alabama Department of Environmental Management at the Unified Command Center (Mobile Civic Center.)

SELLING YOUR TIMBER EDUCATIONAL CAMPAIGN PROGRAM – Media Team Leader, Mike Kyser discussed the campaign which includes an instructional brochure with recommended steps for selling timber. Many Commission partners are participating in the campaign through input and resources, as well. Kyser explained that to be effective, other components will be utilized such as workshops/events, PowerPoint presentation, pocket guide, table top display, and a CD.

DATE AND LOCATION OF NEXT MEETING – Commissioners scheduled a regular meeting of the Commission at 10:00 a.m. on July 22, 2010 at the state office.

ADJOURNMENT – Ken Real made a motion to dismiss the meeting at 2:38 p.m. Johnny McReynolds seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.