

**MINUTES
ALABAMA FORESTRY COMMISSION
APRIL 23, 2009**

PRESIDING – Melisa Love, Vice Chairman

SECRETARY - Linda Casey, State Forester

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT – Melisa Love-Chairman; Don Heath-Vice Chairman, Jerry Smith, Jett Freeman, Ken Real and Johnny McReynolds.

ALABAMA FORESTRY COMMISSION PERSONNEL PRESENT - Linda Casey, Bill Baisden, Tom Conway, Jerry Dwyer, Neil Letson, Tonia Stephens and Regina Miller.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER –Chairman Melisa Love called this special meeting of the Alabama Forestry Commission to order at 9:00 a.m. on April 23, 2009 in the Forestry Commission's Executive Conference Room located at 513 Madison Avenue, Montgomery, Alabama 36104.

Regina Miller reported that the meeting had been properly advertised.

MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 23, 2009 MEETING - MOTION: Don Heath made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 23, 2009 meeting. Ken Real seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT – Neil Letson provided an update on the statewide assessment by reviewing results of the public opinion survey revealed there were 1,157 visits with 865 participants answered all questions on the survey. Also, 120 other participants completed partial surveys. Information obtained will be used with other data and analysis to develop critical issues regarding Alabama's forest resources. The results will assist stakeholders in identifying critical issues of our forests and develop strategies to resolve these issues.

9:18 a.m. – Commissioner Randy Gilmore joined the meeting.

AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT (ARRA) GRANTS – These grants are established to support the retention of jobs and to develop new jobs.

Linda Casey reported that she had received word that the Forestry Commission's applications for a statewide Cogongrass Grant and a multi-state Longleaf Pine Restoration grant have been approved.

COGONGRASS Grant –This statewide cogongrass grant will be funded at \$6.2 million dollars. The Commission will administrate these funds with the cooperation of the Alabama Task Force on Cogongrass operating under the Memorandum of Understanding signed April, 2008 by partnering agencies and educational institutions. Funds will be used to eradicate this invasive species.

LONGLEAF PINE CORRIDOR RESTORATION Grant – This regional project for Alabama, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina and North Carolina will provide funds to for the establishment and restoration of longleaf pine in priority areas of these states.

RANGER CAREER LADDER – Bill Baisden explained that a study group was formed to identify avenues to enhance and acknowledge Rangers employed by the AFC. He emphasized the importance of recognizing educational accomplishments, demonstrated work abilities and leadership potential of AFC Rangers. Ultimately, the AFC will have a stronger work force.

BUDGET – Linda reported that even if the general fund budget remains flat, the AFC's overall budget is declining. We are estimating a \$1 million dollar reduction of 4 million dollars in severance tax in 2009 and a 2.5 million dollar reduction is expected in 2010.

GRANTS – Jerry Dwyer reported that AFC grants to partners have been made in the area of urban forestry with one in the area of wildland fire prevention and another for the establishment of longleaf academies.

BIOMASS – Linda reported that she had met with Alabama's Congressional delegation to urge that the definition be changed to something close to the 2008 Farm Bill definition instead of the narrow definition written by the National Defense Council. The legislation passed in the House but did not in the Senate.

STATE FORESTER'S REPORT – Linda reported that the Forestry Study Committee was being revitalized and explained the process.

Linda reviewed her attendance at meetings along with the purpose which included the SGSF Water Resources Committee as the state forester liaison, NASF Forest Resource management Committee and the SFI Executive Review Committee and the Independent Standards Review Committee.

MACEHMEYER TOWER SITE – Tom Conway reported that this 20-acre parcel in Escambia County. The heirs of the property want to buy the property since AFC is not using the tower. In return, the heirs want to give the Forestry Commission access to the existing fire tower with a lease up to 20 years to maintain our communications equipment. An alternate proposal was recommended, whereby, a geophysical examination firm be hired at the rate of \$15 per acre to perform seismic tests on the property. If oil or recoverable products are present, the potential sale of the property to the heirs would be brought back to Commissioners for consideration. MOTION: Don Heath made a motion to authorize the state forester to sell the site. Randy Gilmore seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

FUTURE COMMISSION MEETINGS – Commissioners would like to recognize members of the media team responsible for publishing the magazine at the next Commission meeting. They would like an overview of what goes into publishing the magazine.

The Commissioners asked that regional foresters and division directors take turns in presenting an overview of their region/division; one presentation at each meeting.

Commissioners and AFC staff left the state office at this point to tour the new dispatch center located adjacent to the East Central Regional Office. Roy Mott, Communications Officer explained the inter-workings of the dispatch center and the system. Also at the site were Dan Jackson, Balsie Butler, Bruce Springer and the dispatch center staff.

DATE AND LOCATION OF NEXT MEETING – Commissions decided to meet on July 23, 2009 at 10:00 a.m. in the Executive Conference Room at the state office.

MEETING ADJOURNED – MOTION: Ken Real made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:22 a.m. Don Heath seconded the motion and the motion carried.