

**MINUTES
ALABAMA FORESTRY COMMISSION
January 10, 2008**

PRESIDING - Don Heath, Chairman

SECRETARY - Linda Casey, State Forester

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT - Don Heath, Chairman, Jerry Smith, Vice Chairman, Jett Freeman, Jerry Lacey, Kenneth Real, Melisa Love, and Randy Gilmore.

ALABAMA FORESTRY COMMISSION PERSONNEL PRESENT - Linda Casey, Bill Baisden, Tom Conway, Regina Miller, Neil Letson, Tara Johnson, Charles Rawls, Stephen May, and John Pirtle.

GUESTS - Steve Guy.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER - Chairman Don Heath called this regular meeting of the Alabama Forestry Commission to order at 10:00 a.m. on January 10, 2008 in the Commission's Executive Conference Room located at 513 Madison Avenue, Montgomery, Alabama 36104.

ROLL CALL - Regina Miller called roll. All Commissioners were present. A quorum was declared.

Miller announced that the meeting was properly advertised.

MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 25, 2007 MEETING - MOTION NO. 399: Randy Gilmore made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 25, 2008 meeting. Jerry Smith seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE - Nominating Committee Chairman Kenneth Real presented the committee's selections for Commission officers for the coming year – Jerry Smith as Chairman and Melissa Love as Vice-Chairman. MOTION NO. 400: With no other nominations, Randy Gilmore made a motion to accept the slate of offices as presented. Jett Freeman seconded the motion and the motion carried. Jerry Smith and Jerry Lacey abstained.

Chairman Jerry Smith presided over the meeting at this point.

WUI MEDIA CAMPAIGN - State Urban Forestry Coordinator Neil Letson addressed the issue of Urban Sprawl and the need for governmental entities, neighborhoods and individuals to address and plan for the changing landscapes already underway. A Forestry Commission committee is developing strategies to address the need to plan for urban sprawl through training, newspapers editorial board visits, meetings and presentations.

GIS - GIS Coordinator Bill Christie reported on the Commission's progress toward implementing advanced GIS capability and techniques and the need to do so. The AFC is required to present a Strategic Resource Assessment in 2010 on all aspects of our work. The plan to be submitted to Virtual Alabama must include action items and a response plan. Alabama is the only state forestry agency in the nation without ESRY GIS capability.

GRANTS - State Forester Linda Casey explained that the US Forest Service has redesigned their grant process from outright allocations to a competitive process based on grants submitted in each of the four Forest Service geographical regions in the US. Funding was based not only on need, but on widespread application such as multi-state partnerships.

Three of the AFC's grants were approved – Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), Invasive Species, and Longleaf Restoration. Alabama was ranked higher than other states in the Southern Region with the amount of funding to be received. These grants are allotted on a three-year cycle; therefore, Alabama will only receive one-third of the total amount allotted in FY '08.

Tara Johnson reported that the Underserved Landowner Grant that which was not funded included the development of an underserved landowner database which is already in progress (Auburn University), training applications, and a resource brochure describing AFC assistance programs. For a grant to be funded, states must partner with other states in developing a mutual program. There was no opportunity for the AFC to meet this obligation.

Johnson also presented a chart outlining grants/potential grants showing details of the status of each grant solicited.

BUDGET - Assistant State Forester Bill Baisden discussed the FY '09 SMART Budgeting Request and the FY '09 Budget. Needs for the coming year include staff size/available firefighters to carry out our firefighting mandate and an aging equipment fleet.

REVENUE ENHANCEMENT – Linda Casey mentioned that including severance tax on biomass needs to be reviewed to increase revenue as biomass becomes more prominent. An increase in tax assessment on forestland could be another way to increase funding but there would be opposition to this effort.

SILVO-PASTURE PROJECT – John Pirtle discussed a silvo-pasture demonstration project at the Hauss Nursery site. The AFC is partnering with Auburn University and Alabama A&M on this project aimed to assist landowners and provide research data.

At 11:52 a.m., Chairman Smith recessed the meeting for lunch.

At 12:45 p.m., Chairman Smith reconvened the meeting.

ACCOMPLISHMENT SCORECARDS – Linda Casey reviewed the final 2007 Accomplishment Scorecard with Commissioners.

FIRE UPDATE - Fire Division Director, Stephen May reported on activities of the Fire Division. He also stated that the number of wildfires in the state is currently low due to adequate rainfall in the state.

CENTRAL SHOP - Charles Rawls, Fleet Equipment Manager, presented an overview of the Central Shop and the equipment maintenance handled at the shop.

STATE FOREST ANALYSIS - Forest Management Division Director, John Pirtle reported on state forest properties owned by the Commission and presented timber sale transactions on Geneva State Forest and Stauffer Nursery (Attachment #1.)

MOTION NO. 340: Don Heath made a motion to approve the timber sales as presented. Randy Gilmore seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

Pirtle presented Land Sale Proposals for tracts on Baldwin State Forest, Crawford State Forest and Washington State Forest (Attachment #2.) MOTION NO. 341: Randy Gilmore made a motion to approve the land sale transactions as presented by first obtaining a Fair Market Appraisal on each property. Don Heath seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

STATE FORESTER'S GOALS FOR 2007 and 2008 - Don Heath asked Commissioners to review the State Forester's Goals and give their feedback at the next Commission meeting.

Commissioner Randy Gilmore addressed an item from the previous meeting regarding an Alabama TREASURE Forest Association grant report. Gilmore explained that the amount of money questioned in the report was a Federal Income Tax Withholding payment for salaries.

DATE AND LOCATION OF NEXT MEETING - Commissioners scheduled the next meeting at 10:00 a.m. on April 17, 2008 in the state office Executive Conference Room.

MEETING ADJOURNED – MOTION NO: 341: Don Heath made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ken Real seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.