

~Final~
Committee for Family Forestlands
Minutes
April 16, 2009

A meeting of the Committee for Family Forestlands (CFF) was held in the SunPass Room at ODF's Salem compound.

Committee members present:

Gary Springer	Rex Storm
Craig Shinn	Susan Watkins
Sarah Deumling	Greg Miller
Rick Barnes	Brad Withrow-Robinson

Staff present:

Julie Welp	Jim Paul
Peter Daugherty	

Agenda Items:

1. Approval of Minutes from February Meeting
2. Revenue/Budget Update, Federal/Stimulus Update
3. Budget Policy Implications and the Effect on Family Forestlands
4. NASF Publication, A Stewardship Handbook for Family Forest Ownerships
5. CFF and Family Forestland Owners in the New ODF
6. Annual Report to the Board of Forestry
7. Communications/Other Business

Approve minutes from February 18, 2009, meeting

Approved with corrections

Miscellaneous Business

Craig carried the CFF's message to the Board of Forestry meeting and the new Board was receptive to what they heard. They appreciated the committee's efforts. Rick liked knowing the committee's hard work is going somewhere and that the work the committee is doing is useful.

Gary was concerned that the budget discussion is on the Board's consent agenda for the next meeting, rather than the regular agenda as something that needs to be discussed. He can't think of anything more important for the Board to be discussing right now. Craig will draft a brief letter to the Board recommending the topic be moved to the consent agenda.

Budget

Peter presented the agency's 30% reduction plan. At a 20% reduction, Private Forests took the first 15% and Protection from Fire took the remaining 5%. With the 30% reduction plan, Private Forests will take the first two-thirds of the cut and Fire will take the remainder. Peter was asked to create a minimum level program, just enough to build from, not really to function. This results in seven stewardship foresters state-wide, with two each in the northwest and southwest areas, and three in the eastern part of the state. Three FTE would be left in Forest Practices. Enough of the Insect and Disease program would be left to tackle SOD eradication. This would bring in federal dollars. The program would retain enough

capacity in the aerial survey to do a check every two years, instead of relying on stewardship foresters to perform that function. Rick asked how the agency would staff the fire overhead teams. That would be difficult. All of the stewardship foresters are fire qualified. The NW Incident Management Team has six key positions that are filled by stewardship foresters and perform key initial attacks. This impact on the department has been emphasized in each version of draft budget. Peter handed out a summary of what the Private Forests Program would look like in reductions in 5% increments. At the 30% agency reduction level, the program is reduced to 12%. In addition to the large negative effect on fire fighting, there would also be resource damage. There won't be enough foresters to assist family forestland owners in interpreting the FPA or to provide necessary information for them to make appropriate harvesting decisions. Greg asked what the forestland owners' reactions have been to a possible shift in the 40/60 cost-share to a 45/55 cost-share in the fire funding program. Peter replied that ultimately 45/55 would be harder on landowners because there isn't a 25,000 board feet exemption like there is with the 40/60. Greg commented that the committee needs to weigh in on this since the governor's recommended budget calls for the 45/55 split for fire funding protection. Another risk is the legislature saying that the agency wants all these programs so the agency needs to pay for them. The department needs to advocate that the State use all of its rainy day fund and the federal stimulus dollars. Sarah said that the department can't ask for more money from the small landowners when they can't sell any timber right now. She suggested that family forestland owners familiar with the FPA could help out their neighbors and the department by stepping in when the department is unable to provide adequate on-the-ground assistance for landowners. She would rather help out her neighbors with written plans than pay more money. Rex thought the small landowner community needed to draw a line in the sand and state how much they can pay, with a 20% reduction in ODF's general funds. The landowners need strong arguments that they are already paying their fair share and more, compared to other states. Forestland owners provide public good for their land by providing clean water, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, etc. There's been a cooperative relationship between ODF and forestland owners, yet now the State wants to renege by stripping 80% of Private Forests budget. Landowners need to object to the State renegeing so suddenly. Peter commented that even prior to the downturn in the economy, Private Forests was understaffed. The POPs that were submitted earlier were to bring the program to full funding. At the 5% reduction level, the agency can still provide the basic required mandates with reduced service. Rick stated that small forestland owners can't increase their share. Look at other required agency programs, and consider approaching the legislature with postponing those that aren't as critical at the moment. Peter agreed that there are some areas where efficiency could be improved, but there have been so many cuts in the past several years that we're to the point where funds cannot be reduced any further without cutting services.

The discussion turned to grants and federal stimulus dollars. Grant coordinators from various ODF programs met to discuss streamlining grant applications. The agency has applied for \$252 million from the USFS, and partnered with OWEB to apply for \$14.5 million from NOAA. The federal stimulus dollars are moving slowly and are not included in the agency budget. State Forester Marvin Brown has talked to the National Association of State Foresters regarding the delayed release of the federal stimulus funds, and the match issue. Craig commented that now is the time to get political, contact legislators, senators and representatives. Also, there hasn't been contact with any other agencies, such as ODOT, for such things as road maintenance. Rick pointed out that the deadline for 7-day shovel-ready projects has passed, yet no funds have been distributed.

Gary handed out an update of the Ways and Means Committee's meetings around the state. He commented that interested parties need get on the committee's record regarding the impact ODF's budget reduction would have on fire fighting and forest conditions, or the committee will think no one's very interested in them. Several CFF members agreed to attend various meetings to voice their concerns. If there isn't time available for everyone to testify, it's important to hand in a written statement or email it to the Ways and Means Committee members. The CFF discussed the high points that need to be emphasized in these communications.

Peter commented that as hard as the cutbacks are going to be, it is going to make the program and department make some decisions on how they can improve efficiency and effect some changes that maybe should have been done years ago.

Gary suggested the agency graph out the history of FPA, from 1971 to today, listing the major implementations during that time. Then, with the different levels of possible budget cuts, indicate on the chart just what year the program would be taken back to, in terms of staff and resources. Peter's suggestion was to make simple changes, such as waiving all non-statutory written plans. These plans take time, yet give the agency very little value.

NASF Handbook

Peter asked the CFF for feedback regarding the NASF Handbook supplement that's designed to help family forestland owners. The writer of the supplement is looking for observations and comments on the document. Peter will send out the handbook and the supplement to the committee members for their review.

CFF and the Family Forestland Owners and the New ODF

Gary introduced the topic with the question of what the committee and department can do to help forestland owners in light of budget reductions. What is still sustainable with such a small number of stewardship foresters remaining after the cuts? Is the work of CFF and other advisory committees still sustainable? Peter suggested talking with the Board, asking them what they want out of the CFF. Gary wondered if some members of the Board or the Board chair could attend one of CFF's meetings and discuss some of these issues.

A lot of self-policing will need to be done during this lull in the economy. Landowners can help their neighbors, especially new landowners. Education is very important. Let people know that the rules still apply, and many resources are available.

Brad commented that it will be impossible to replace the expertise and knowledge of the 50 stewardship foresters who could be laid off.

Peter explained some of the lay off procedures and that State Forests will be starting the process first, in just a few weeks.

Greg suggested a cheat sheet for new forestland owners that could be made available through real estate brokers. Sarah offered to visit some brokers that she knows.

Next Meeting

April 21, 2009, in Salem