

## Forest Practices Advisory Board

September 24, 2015

Members present: Mike Bartlett, Joan Nichols, Christopher Martin, Patrick Comins, Thomas Degnan, Jr., Bruce Spaman, Ian Branson (via conference call)

Guests: Jennifer Hockla, Doug Emmerthal, Eric Hammerling (via conference call), Sheila Hoefle

Members absent: Dr. Mark Ashton, Joseph Theroux, Benjamin Oko, M.D.

Meeting called to order 9:15am

Good morning to all from Chris, thanks for coming. Introductions by all.

### **Review/Approve meeting minutes from June 25, 2015 FPAB meeting**

Minutes of the June 25, 2015 meeting reviewed. One correction noted on Page 2, second paragraph, 3<sup>rd</sup> sentence. Corrected to read: Open space bill to change watershed acquisition & adverse possession bill did pass (PA15-23). Motion to accept as corrected Mike Bartlett, Joan Nichols seconded, unanimous vote to approve with correction.

### **Agriculture forestry & wetlands in CT Brochure Update**

Brochure originated in the DEEP Inland Water Resources Division, Forestry assisted with the content. Currently the Brochure is out of print and is in the process of being updated. Updates should be completed soon with the resolution of the Indian Springs issue. Additionally federal language was removed that caused confusion.

### **Forester Annual Report On-line Format**

Staff in the Division of Forestry have been working with the IT Division using Google Survey Monkey to migrate Forester's Annual Reporting, including Forest Practices Act and PA490. Staff members have tested the tool and Doug requested Certified Foresters inform him if they would also assist, Joan and Mike agreed to test. We plan to have Forester online reporting ready for the May 2016 report.

Doug plans to develop a training webinar on how to complete the form, a sample PA490 report will need to be submitted separately. DEEP staff will research the ability of Survey Monkey to send a confirming email that the annual report has been received. Joan noted that Adobe worked well for collecting information with the Farm Bureau.

### **Legislative Proposal to Qualify SAF Certified Foresters for FPA Certification**

Doug asked the Board for their opinion about considering qualified SAF certified Foresters as CT Certified Foresters. Overall the Board was in favor. Doug to proceed with a legislative proposal to qualify SAF Certified Foresters for CT FPA Certification. SAF tests similarly to CT to certify foresters. Doug to contact SAF regarding the content of their test. Connecticut specific conduct regulations and laws and regulations review will be required. Other states utilize the SAF tests as their licensing mechanism.

Currently the State of CT Forest Practices Act doesn't have any reciprocity agreements. Should another state seek reciprocity staff would be happy to explore that.

### **Forest Practitioner Study Guide Update**

Updates are almost complete, still outstanding is some graphic work. Doug is working with Tom Worthley at UCONN to get the graphics completed. The updated Guide does not have significant changes. Reprinting should be completed by June 2016.

### **Enforcement Updates**

- A case had been referred to the Attorney General's Office and was slated to go to hearing mid-October for damages. Due to a court clerk error the case will go back to the deposition and discovery status.
- A case is in review at DEEP Office of Legal Counsel. DEEP is looking into utilizing a consent order with fiscal penalties plus a system of practice reporting and mandatory inland wetland commission appearances.
- In July a report was made about a practice in northwestern Connecticut. Staff are working on this with the municipality.

### **2015 Legislative Session Results**

[PA15-92 - An Act Concerning the Enforcement of Firewood Transport Restrictions by The Department Of Energy And Environmental Protection](#). Infraction schedule has been set for firewood transport. Commercial transporter \$200 per offense. Non-commercial transporter, 1<sup>st</sup> offense – written warning if the origin of the wood is disclosed, subsequent offenses - \$85 fine. About half of the Environmental Conservation Police Officers have been trained. Transporters need to have documentation of the origin and destination of the firewood and information on the transporter.

### **Southern Pine Beetle (SPB) Update**

The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station is the lead agency for this pest. Until recently, it was considered to be restricted largely to the southeastern states. In 2009, it was found in New Jersey Pine Barrens and, in late 2014, in extensive pine stands on Long Island. In March 2015, it was found in Connecticut. Connecticut DEEP aggressively removed trees in the known infestation in Wallingford (Wharton Brook State Park) then SPB was quickly found throughout the state from the shore to Canaan.

SPB prefers hard pines (2 and 3 needle pines), pitch pines, red pine, Scotch pine, Austrian pine and Japanese black pine as hosts but it has also been found in white pine and Norway spruce. SPB has been found to overwinter in CT along the shoreline; SPB has suffered mortality in more inland sections. Patrick Comins added that the CT birding community is upset about the loss of Japanese black pine in CT. Particularly along the shore due to salt spray due to Irene and Sandy for cone eating birds.

Chris informed the Board that the NY DEC actively seeking buyers for hard pine on Long Island.

### **New England Cottontail Update**

USFWS did not list the species as endangered. Chris stated that is good for two reasons good 1) populations and habitat are at levels that seem to keep species as intact 2) there will be one less

regulatory burden on private landowners. Chris shared that efforts have been recognized in habitat work, but that those efforts need to be sustained for the population not to decline further. Acreage goals set for 2030. Patrick Comins added that the NEC has changed a lot of people's views on cutting for the better.

Northern Long-eared Bat – Ian updated the Board stating the Connecticut is doing well with habitat conservation. Chris added that CT is fortunate that NRCS assistance has stayed consistent which is not the case in all other states. CT has reliable data on bat habitat and can manage this successfully. DEEP has done evening transects throughout the state and there are ongoing mapping efforts. Patrick suggested that automated recording units could be placed in the woods where there is a planned activity to confirm that there are no bats in the area. Chris added that final Regulations should be available in January.

### **Draft Revisions regarding PA490 Forestland Classification Regulations Update**

The revisions were reviewed by the CT Society of American Foresters (SAF) executive committee then sent out to SAF members. Good outcome with SAF review, noting that if there are two dominant size classes the cumulative density will be used, not the average density. Chris is still accepting comments on the revision.

### **Other Items**

Joan shared that the CT Farm Bureau has been awarded an Ag Viability Grant and has revised the PA490 Guide and will publish 3000. The Farm Bureau will post an electronic copy of the Guide. An updated webinar on the PA490 program will be recorded and posted

Lockwood Farm Pavilion – The CT Agricultural Experiment Station at Lockwood Farm in Hamden, CT has been working with Steve Strong a CT timber framer to produce a 40' x 120' timber frame pavilion. The pavilion has a concrete floor and power is available. The pavilion has been building using Connecticut timber and will be registered with the CT Grown Program. The white pine used came from a DEEP Bartlett Brook Wildlife Management Area in Colchester. Emery Gluck from DEEP Forestry was the forester who managed the harvest. Joan would like to Board to have a meeting at the Pavilion.

PA490 Forestland Values - New value for forestland will be \$240 per acre, currently \$130 per acre. The formula used to determine the value per acre has been in existence since 1990. The formula uses data from the USDA Forest Service - Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA). The main contributing factor for such a dramatic change from 2010 is the frequency of USDA Forest Service FIA data. PA 490 forestland recommended values are updated once every five years utilizing the most recent FIA data for CT. Last time (2010) the most recent available FIA data Steve Broderick and Chris Martin used was from 1998. Since 2010 FIA data is calculated more frequently and for 2015 we are using 2014 data. That is 16 years of new growth and we know annual harvest levels are far below annual ingrowth. Other states, including Massachusetts, use the difference between the last update and the current update, that's what CT did for this update. Calculation formula is not set by Statute or Regulation.

Foresters For the Birds Project – Patrick updated the Board, the Project is in year 2 of 3. Audubon CT is partnering in with DEEP Forestry, DEEP Wildlife, CAES and Ferrucci & Walicki. The project is on target for all deliverables. Feedback from landowner participants is they like the assessments and reports. Full demands for assessments next year, just applied through preliminary for upcoming LSR grants. New

application submitted with this round of Landscape Scale Restoration Grants through DEEP Forestry for continuing the Project.

Forest Practices Advisory Board Members – There had been one vacancy on the Board that has been filled by Ben Oko (Member Representing the General Public). Mike Bartlett stated that he will be submitting his resignation from the Board but has found a replacement. Mike to work with Chris on submitting his letter and reference for a new Board member.

Two full-time permanent positions have been announced in the Division of forestry. Both are EP Forester 1's, one in the State Lands Management Program (SLM) and one as a Service Forester. The SLM position will be based eastern Connecticut. This position is funded with Pittman-Robinson funds. The Service Forester position will cover central Connecticut working out of Marlborough. Chris remains hopeful that the Division will receive approval to refill the position in the SLM program created when Will was promoted. There remains a vacancy in the Forest Practices Act Program, the remaining staff member plans to retire in the next two years.

Patrick updated the Board on the status of Tanager Hill in Simsbury. The Simsbury Land Trust holds the easement to Tanager Hill.

Whip-Poor-Will Woods – Is a Forest Legacy application property located in Stafford Springs, CT, consisting of 7 landowners. The project received \$360,000 funding from the FY15 funding. The remaining \$2,145,000 was recommended to be funded in FY16.

**Next meeting:**

Meetings for 2016 to be scheduled.

Motion to adjourn Patrick Comins , seconded by Thomas Degnan. Motion unanimous.