

Illinois Forestry Development Council Meeting – May 8, 2002

Chairman Gary Rolfe called the meeting to order. Ten Council members and 19 Task Group members and guests were present.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the March 20, 2002 meeting minutes.

Financial Report – Dick Little

Dick distributed copies of the FY02 budget. The balance remaining in the budget is \$11,622. The Forestry Development Fund has collected \$637,182 from July 1 – May 7, 2002 which is approximately \$75,000 less than last year. The proposals for Council support, field support and newsletter activities were submitted for approval and funding

Project Report Updates

Illinois Sustainable Forest Criteria and Indicators Project – Lyle Guyon

Lyle gave a brief summary on criteria 6 and 7. There are 38 indicators in these two criteria. Criteria 6 has been completed and work is in progress on criteria 7 which should be completed by July 1.

Forest Resources of Illinois Atlas and Analysis Project – Scott Bretthauer

Scott reported he has two or three minor changes to make in the report and then it will be ready to go to the graphics editor.

Newsletter Update

Dick reported the Spring issue of the Newsletter was in progress and should be completed and mailed out by the end of May. The FY2002 Annual Council Report will be on page 2.

Liaison Report – Dick Little

- ✓ Attended the Central Illinois Hardwood Conference which was hosted by Illinois.
- ✓ Attended a public meeting on the Shawnee at Belleville.
- ✓ Preparing a letter for Gary's signature regarding the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Revised Forest Plan.
- ✓ Met with Steve Bylina, Chief, Bureau of Forestry in Chicago.
- ✓ Attended the IWPA Annual Board Meeting.
- ✓ Met with John Phelps at SIU regarding the assessment project.
- ✓ Traveled to Chicago for the Tree Planting Celebration.
- ✓ Attended the RC&D Board meeting.
- ✓ Set the Council exhibit up at the Illinois Envirothon at Allerton Park.
- ✓ Plan to attend the Biomass Energy Workshop in Wisconsin on June 6.
- ✓ Plan to attend the National Forest Sustainable Ag Workshop.
- ✓ Will set the Council exhibit up at the State Fair in Watershed Park.

Presentation – John Dwyer

John Dwyer from the US Forest Service, North Central Experiment Station located at Evanston gave a presentation on the current activities of the urban forestry research program.

Old Business

Update on HB 1006 (Timber Buyers Licensing Act)

Currently out of Senate and back in the House. Lee Rife testified at the Senate hearing on behalf of IWPA; Dick Little and representatives from Law Enforcement and IDNR also attended. Some questions have been raised in the House.

New Business

2003 Council Issue Proposals

At the March meeting there was some discussion about having someone produce issue/policy papers from the work of the Task Groups. Dick met later with Stu and John to discuss this idea further. It was suggested working with some faculty from the U of I and SIU to prepare these papers.

2002 Farm Bill

Three handouts were distributed – Summary of the Forestry title of the Farm Bill, the actual Forestry title itself and the Farm Bill summary. Stu summarized the points in the various sections on the one-page document that was distributed.

- Repeals the Forestry Incentives Program and the Stewardship Incentives Program.
- Purpose of New Forestry Title: strengthening the commitment of the Secretary to sustainable forest management, etc.
- Establishes a Sustainable Forestry Management Program for the purpose of providing financial assistance to State Foresters.
- Objectives: investment in practices to establish, restore, protect, manage, maintain and enhance the health and productivity of NIFP land, etc.
- NIPF owners are eligible if they agree to develop and implement a forest plan developed in coordination with and/or approved by the State Forester.
- State Forester and the Stewardship Committee to develop and submit to the Secretary a 5-year plan that describes the funding priorities of the state and makes this requirement a condition of receiving funding.
- State Forester and “appropriate” committee to develop list of approved forest activities and practices eligible for cost-share.
- 75/25% cost-share or lower percentage as determined by the State Forester; Secretary to determine maximum payment to any one owner.
- State Foresters to develop a nationwide funding formula for the program.
- \$100 million from Commodity Credit Corporation 6-year program.
- States to report on program one year prior to reauthorization of the program.
- Renewable Resources Extension Activities reauthorized through 2006 authorization increased from \$25 million to \$30 million.
- Various provisions regarding fire prevention, control and community protection.

IDNR/Forestry Reorganization

Reorganization is tentatively scheduled for June 16. Job descriptions have been reviewed. There is a possibility of some early retirements which will leave vacancies. Possibly 50 percent of the field staff could be vacant. Not much information has been shared with anyone to date. Chairman Rolfe said as soon as there is more information about the reorganization, early retirements and vacancies, the Council will need to work with IDNR formally in terms of the need for flexibility in filling some of these positions and restaffing quickly because of these new programs.

Fall Tour

Ideas for a Fall tour (late October) were discussed –

- ✓ Chicago – urban area
- ✓ Oregon, Illinois along the Fox River
- ✓ Western Illinois (Quincy)

The Fall tour will be discussed further at the September meeting.

Agency Reports

DCCA – Terry Weldin-Frisch

Continue to work with the universities on the five-year State and Regional Development Strategy. Finalizing some grant agreements that the universities will be working on over the next year.

DNR – Stu Pequignot

- ✓ Update on new building in Springfield – have been plagued with construction problems, i.e., electrical, rain, moisture/water problems with the windows, etc. Plan to move in June or July.
- ✓ Budget – waiting to hear what will happen. Possibility of shutting down some parks. There are more than 100 vacancies throughout the agency.

Pete Skuba announced the applications for the Volunteer Fire Assistance Program have been sent out to fire departments. The Department administers this federally funded 50-50 cost-share program. There is approximately \$333,000 allocated out to fire agencies. This money will help fire agencies upgrade their fire equipment as well as training. One of the limitations is that the only fire departments that qualify are fire agencies that are providing protection to communities of 10,000 or less. The application is also on the DNR website: <http://dnr.state.il.us/conservation/forestry/index.htm>

Forest Service – Skip Starkey

- ✓ New regional forester in Region 9 – Randy Moore. He was previously the Forest Supervisor on the Mark Twain National Forest in Missouri.
- ✓ Frank Koenig, Manager at the Midewin National Tall Grass Prairie will retire June 1, 2002. Midewin is a Forest Service unit managed under a cooperative agreement with IDNR.
- ✓ Conducted five meetings/workshops to introduce the need for change and Nature of Intent for revision of the Shawnee National Forest Forest Plan (Eddyville, Chicago, Belleville, Evansville, IN and Marion). Very light turnout for the meeting. Have two more meetings scheduled for the Chicago area and Murphysboro. This is not zero-based planning, but rather is making changes to the existing Forest Plan. Currently the comment period for the NOI closes June 3, 2002. May get request to extend the comment period.

IWPA – Lee Rife

Attended a two-day workshop on April 2-3 in Columbus, Ohio on wood packaging material regulations. These regulations will become effective around September 1. All non-manufactured wood packing materials will be affected.

NRCS – Tom Ward

- ✓ There will be a tree identification workshop at Funks Grove on July 25.
- ✓ Hard copies of the direct seeding handbook, a project of the State Association of SWCD's, will be printed by Summer. This will include a chapter on Tree Identification.
- ✓ Nineteen NRCS employees completed a three-day prescribed burn-training session in Morgan and Effingham Counties in March.
- ✓ A Tri-State Forest Stewardship Conference Planning Committee meeting was held in early May in Keokuk, IA. The conference is scheduled for March 22, 2003 in Keokuk, IA.
- ✓ A two-day Midwest Special Forest Products Marketing Conference will be held August 23-24 at Sinsinawa Mounds, WI. (Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, northern Indiana). This will focus on forest landowners and sustainable agriculture producers. Fourteen different commodity areas will be covered. The first day will focus on the basics of marketing and the second day will be the 14 different commodity areas. A similar conference will be held at Cape Girardeau, MO on October 25 and 26. This conference will target landowners in southern Illinois, Missouri, western Kentucky, western Tennessee and northern Arkansas. Both conferences are being funded by a grant from the Forest Service.
- ✓ The annual Tri-State Forest Stewardship Conference is scheduled for March 8, 2003 in Sinsinawa.
- ✓ The Illinois Field Office Technical Guide is being completely revised and will be posted on the NRCS-IL website (www.il.nres.usda.gov). Several technical forestry standards will be revised.
- ✓ The 2002 Farm Bill may include opportunities to complete more forestry practices using the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). A new forestry cost-share program is also included in the Farm Bill and State Forest Stewardship committees will have an important roll in determining how the new cost-share program will be applied. (In Illinois the IFDC is the Forest Stewardship Committee).

Illinois Department of Ag – Rich Nichols

- ✓ The Council will have a display at Watershed Park. This is the 150-year celebration of the Illinois State Fair. A cross-section of a tree has been put in the forestry station at Watershed Park – any other ideas are welcome.

- ✓ If the Farm Bill passes in its current state it will have a significant impact on how DOA does business. DOA will not be able to obtain help from NRCS for cost-share programs.

Southern Illinois University – John Phelps

- ✓ No word on the department budget for FY03.
- ✓ Paul Roth, Professor Forest Protection and Forest Management retired in April. Hope to fill his position.
- ✓ Thirty forestry students will graduate in May. Job markets looking good.

University of Illinois – Gary Rolfe

- ✓ In the process of interviewing for a permanent Department Head. Budget problem is severe – possibly a 6.5 percent reduction.
- ✓ Mike Bolin has announced his retirement from the University of Illinois on September 30, 2002. Mike has been the primary person that has conducted extension education in forestry and natural resources for many years. Mike is unique in the quality of work he does and will be difficult to replace.

The Council would like to thank Mike for everything he has done for Forestry in the State of Illinois. This is a major, significant contribution to forestry.

Mike reported he traveled to Indianapolis to attend a pilot program for the Midwest extension foresters and Indiana forest landowners. It was a pilot workshop that will look at a new state tax publication that is being developed out of Penn State. The intent is to take the document and “train the trainer” program. The programs could be offered in various states.

Gary reported he continues to work on the Great Rivers Research and Education Center project. A copy of the new brochure will be sent to Council members. The concept is to establish a formal large rivers research facility at the confluence at the three major rivers in Missouri. A formal announcement was made that a \$100,000 grant was received for formal planning money for the establishment of the Great Rivers Research and Education Center. The focus of the Center is large river ecology. These rivers are used as transportation corridors, but there are major ecological issues related to the rivers as well. Riparian, forestry, watershed management, ecological management and all the topics related to what we do on the land relates to what happens in the river. This is a significant opportunity and Congressman Costello has pledged his support to provide up to \$12 million dollars to make this facility a reality. This is a partnership effort between the U of I, Lewis and Clark Community College, US Army Corp of Engineers, IDNR Natural History Survey, the Illinois River Coordinating Council, the Nature Conservancy, the Great Rivers Land Trust in the Alton area and other organizations.

IAA – Mike Brunk

Plan to have a draft form of the Community Ordinance for Utility Tree Trimming. It is hoped this will be adopted statewide.

Meeting adjourned.

Next meeting will be September 18, 2002.