

## **Illinois Forestry Development Council Meeting – March 17, 2004**

Chairman Gary Rolfe called the meeting to order. Ten Council members and 17 Task Group members were present.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the October 21, 2003 meeting minutes as submitted.

### **Financial Update – Dick Little**

Dick reported there were no changes in the budget since the last meeting. The 2005 proposed budget is currently being considered by the General Assembly which is under HB7252. There is \$118,500 budgeted for the Council. Dick noted that the four percent harvest fee was not in the Forestry Development Fund that is used to pay for the Council activities, pay for the cost-share program (is not listed in the proposed appropriation). Dick was told this would be put in the capitol budget. As it stands now there will be no cost-share money.

### **Liaison Report – Dick Little**

- ✓ Attended the Illinois Agriculture Legislative Roundtable meeting with Lee Rife.
- ✓ Represented John Phelps at the Conservation Congress meeting.
- ✓ Met with Carolyn Brown-Hodge, Director of Illinois Rural Affairs Council.
- ✓ Bob Sloan and Dick are on the Interstate RC&D committee. A Forestry Expo is being planned for September 2005 in Davenport, Iowa.
- ✓ Conference calls on Forestry Inventory.
- ✓ Attended the luncheon with Illinois Partnership Buffers for Trees Forever.
- ✓ Forest Service asked the Council to do the sawmill survey. The Illinois Forestry sawmill directory will also be updated.
- ✓ Involved in the Mississippi Forest Roundtable Conference.
- ✓ Tri-State Forest Stewardship Conference, March 27 in Keokuk, Iowa.
- ✓ Science Teachers Conference in April at Macomb.
- ✓ RC&D meeting, May 20 at IDNR in Springfield.

### **Newsletter – Jim Appleby**

Jim reported on the response he received from the newsletter survey. He encouraged people to send him articles for the newsletters (preferably by email attachment).

### **Guest Speaker – Michael Majeski**

Mike Majeski from the U. S. Forest Service, Northeastern area gave a talk on the Forest Stewardship Spatial Analysis project. This pilot project began in 2001 with the Forest Service. The Forest Service selected four states who had their forest stewardship plans digitized and on a GIS system (Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts and Missouri). The purpose of the pilot is to create a better way to assess the impact of the Stewardship program to date, and to strategically implement the program to more effectively address critical resource management needs in the future.

### **Critical Issues Paper – John Phelps**

John distributed a handout prepared by Jean Mangun on the update of the IFDC Position Papers. Several critical issues were discussed and ranked at the October meeting. These issues will be put on the Council website for comments and returned to Jean. A letter will be sent out to let people know when the issues are on the Website.

## **Old Business**

### ***FLEP – Kurt Bobsin***

Kurt distributed a handout on the Forest Land Enhancement Program (Talking points and a sample letter). At the national level the FLEP was a forestry program enabled in the 2002 Farm Bill and provided a mechanism for family forests and forest landowners to promote forest stewardship and good forest management on their properties. There were four components – cost-share, educational, technical assistance, and administrative. It was funded at \$100 million dollars the first year; \$20 was appropriated and distributed. During the first year there were problems at the national level with fire issues and funding. OMB took \$50 million from FLEP to help cover shortfalls; \$10 million was to be repaid back this fiscal year, but Forest Service was told they couldn't use it. In the President's 2005 budget, FLEP dollars are zeroed out. There are efforts at all levels to restore this funding.

In Illinois, the first allocation received last fiscal year was approximately \$182 thousand dollars and went into the cost-share element of FLEP. Almost all the money has been allocated to landowners. A survey was conducted to see how much more was needed to help landowners – approximately \$175 thousand

The educational component is to promote forest stewardship and land management and also help professional training (foresters, loggers, log buyers). There is about \$24 thousand to spend. Four proposals will be funded (\$14,000).

The technical assistance component was focused to get assistance to landowners in a quicker way, get more plans written. Bids have been solicited for about 4,000 acres of plan writing to the consulting forestry group in the State.

### ***Criteria and Indicators Project – Lyle Guyon***

The Technical Report was put on the Council website last Fall. The Report will be put on approximately 500 CD's for distribution. A Summary Report is being prepared which will be 50-100 pages and will be completed by June 30, 2004. Lyle asked for comments or suggestions to be included in the Summary Report.

### ***Forestry Legacy Site – Bob Sloan***

Daysville Forest Legacy Site – Native American Burial Mounds. Bob reported he has contacted the State Archeologist, a private archeologist, a local resident, historian and the Ogle County Historical Society regarding these mounds. The archeologists believe the mounds are over 10,000 years old and have been under water making it impossible to determine their true origin. He has given all of his findings to Joe Standing Bear. He believes that these mounds are not that old. He will continue researching their origin and keep in contact with Bob.

## **New Business**

Stan Curtis reported on an issue in Jackson County and possibly Effingham County. The issue is in regards to Bulletin 810 from the Illinois Department of Revenue that tells the Assessors office how to assess farmland based on soil type and productivity. What was done in Jackson County, as in the past if you had forestland, you would get the farm tax rate which was 1/6 of the evaluation. By the new standards, if the forestland is part of a farming operation and your operation is more than 50 percent row crop then the timberland stays with the old farm evaluation. If the timberland stands separately and not attached to a farming operation that is predominately a row crop operation you are being reassessed.

## Agency Reports

### *NRCS Report – Tom Ward*

**Farm Bill Programs** (for more details go to [www.il.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.il.nrcs.usda.gov))

#### Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

New Ranking Criteria have been developed and will be posted soon on the NRCS website, [www.il.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.il.nrcs.usda.gov). Forestry practices that are available for cost share through EQIP include Tree/Shrub Establishment, Forest Stand Improvement, Riparian Forest Buffer, and Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment.

#### Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

Several forestry practices are available for cost share including Tree/Shrub Establishment, Forest Stand Improvement, and Fencing for livestock exclusion. Black walnut and other mast producing hardwoods usually are important parts of a forestland wildlife habitat plan, which is required for enrollment in WHIP. Cost-share is 75% and not-to-exceed rates are generous. There are no rental payments and contracts are for 5-15 years.

#### Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

A new Concentrated Signup is likely in April but has not yet been officially announced. In December 2003, a new forestry practice was added to the Continuous Signup, CP31, Bottomland Timber Establishment on Wetlands. Purposes of the practice include improvement of water quality, wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration and wetland restoration. Differences between CP31 and CP22, Riparian Buffer, include no incentive payments (SIP and PIP) for CP31, and eligibility for CP31 of all lands in the 100-year floodplain, as long as at least 50% of soils are considered hydric. It is expected that CP31 will be used to fill in floodplain areas behind CP22 acreages and fields that are levied. There is a national cap of 500,000 acres for this practice, but IL and MO lead the nation with 75,000 acres each. NRCS and Technical Service Providers (TSPs) have technical responsibility for CP31.

#### Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

IL DNR has said that state funding will be provided for the IL River CREP in calendar year 2004, but no date has been announced.

#### Conservation Security Program (CSP)

Rules are not yet final, but apparently a limited rollout will occur this year. Only certain, as yet undetermined, priority watersheds in certain states will participate in FY2004. CSP is intended to reward producers for installing and maintaining certain conservation practices, including buffers such as windbreaks and riparian forest buffers. Existing forestlands are only eligible if they are included in a conservation plan that has been developed for an agricultural or livestock operation. Funding was intended to be generous and \$3.77 billion was authorized in the 2002 Farm Bill over a 10-year period, an average of \$377 million per year. 2004 funding, however, has been capped at \$41 million. Subsequent years may be better funded. Three tiers of participation have been established, with increasing commitment to addressing water quality and soil quality resource concerns.

#### Technical Service Providers (TSPs)

The 2002 Farm Bill includes language to increase the use of the private sector in delivering Farm Bill programs. A website, TechReg, (<http://techreg.usda.gov>) has been established to allow for registration, certification, and listing of potential TSPs to help deliver and implement Farm Bill programs. TechReg also provides producers a list of potential contractors to install practices that are cost-shared through Farm Bill programs.

## **Training**

Forestry Herbicide Workshop: Feb. 18, 2004, Bloomington, IL. Approximately 80 attended including at least 10 NRCS employees and 4 SWCD employees.

Winter Tree ID: 14 students attended training at Dixon Springs on Feb. 19 (7 NRCS, 5 SWCD and 2 IDNR); 19 students attended at Funks Grove on Feb. 26 (5 NRCS, 8 SWCD, and 6 other individuals). IDNR Intern Jeremy Dedic and NRCS Biologist Ellen Starr assisted at Dixon Springs. IDNR District Forester Matt Peterson and Itinerant Forester Dan Schmoker assisted at Funks Grove. Funding provided by Sugar Grove Nature Center Foundation, logistics provided by Dave Bishop.

Tri-State Forest Stewardship conference March 13, 2004 at Sinsinawa, WI: 500+ forest landowners attended.

## **Direct Seeding Website**

Steps are being taken to make the website self-supporting. Traffic on the website has been heavy, especially in Sept-Nov seed collection season. The US Forest Service grant has finished but the website host, Network Business Systems, Inc. in Geneseo, IL, has agreed to continue to maintain the site with funds generated by website users.

## **Two-State Forestry Expo**

Interstate RC&D in Milan, IL is chairing a planning committee for an IL-IA Forestry Conference and Trade Show, June 10-11, 2005 at the Isle of Capri Conference Center, Bettendorf, IA. A US Forest Service grant is funding the planning and administration of the Expo. Speakers and demonstrations on a variety of forestry practices and projects are being planned.

## **Upcoming Events**

Tri-State Forest Stewardship conference: March 27, 2004 at Keokuk, IA. Contact Tom Ward, 217/353-6647.

Upper Mississippi Forestry Roundtable, March 22-24, LaCrosse, WI.

NRCS Prescribed Burn training, April 6-8, Morrison, IL.

Lincoln Heritage RC&D Forestry Workshop, April 13, Paris, IL.

## ***IWPA – Lee Rife***

A Lumber Grading Workshop was held in Effingham the second week of March. This will be repeated in two weeks. The IWPA annual meeting will be held May 14 or 15. Working on plans for one course on the Game of Logging (silviculture and best management practices).

## ***IASWCD – Bob Sloan***

- ✓ Lee Rife was introduced as a new advisor to the committee.
- ✓ Tree I.D. workshops were held at Funk's Grove and Dixon Springs.
- ✓ The committee is discussing future I.D. Workshops and has decided to hold alternate year's workshops for tree I.D. and timber stand improvement.
- ✓ The direct seeding website is still current as the committee seeks funding sources. A \$50 annual fee is to be charged for advertising on the site.
- ✓ 2005 Woodland Expo planning is moving ahead. Sheryl Ealy has been hired as coordinator for a \$20,000 contract. A meeting is scheduled for May 18 to work on a committee list and a time line for preparations to be undertaken and completed.

- ✓ Shitake Mushroom workshop will be held at Petersburg on April 18, 2004. Sponsored by the lower Sangamon Valley RC&D.
- ✓ A speaker for the AISWCS Summer Conference will speak on Crop Tree Release and Timber Stand Improvement.
- ✓ Attended the Forestry Workshop at Sinsinawa on March 14, 2004.

***Lt. Governor's Office – Shawn Aranha***

Working on plans for an Arbor Day event at the Morton Arboretum on April 30, 2004. Shawn asked for ideas from the group.

***DCEO – Terry Weldin-Frisch***

Terry greeted everyone on behalf of the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. The Department has been busy with a lot of changes – the Governor's initiative in economic development opportunity returns. The State has been divided up into 10 economic development regions. Announcements have been made in six of the regions and the east central region will be the next one that will be announced. The Northeast will be the last. Personnel have been out participating in stakeholder meetings, getting feedback from the various stakeholders in the various regions as to what they feel are the critical economic development priorities for that region relative to advancing economic development and creating good jobs. From the information received they have gone back and developed the plans that have been published. The plans can be found on the State website- [www.il.state](http://www.il.state). You will see the map pop up, click on a region to bring up the report to see what is happening economically in terms of development in that region

***Southern Illinois University – John Phelps***

John reported that SIU is faced with budget cuts and rising tuition rates. The vacant forest recreation position has been filled – May Davenport from the University of Minnesota. A national search was conducted for the Dean of the College of Agriculture.

***IDNR – Kurt Bobsin***

Kurt introduced the Regional Staff -- Matt Siemert, regional forester in Region 1. Matt is on the Planning Committee for the Upper Mississippi Partnership. Matt is conducting a review of the FDA program which addresses forest plan writing.

Gary Stratton is regional forester in southern Illinois. He is also overseeing the Division of Fisheries, Wildlife and Natural Heritage program in Region 4.

Tom Wilson is a district forester. There is a vacancy next to his district which he is covering. He is also the acting regional forester.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the U. S. Forest Service with Fire Protection.

The Forest Health Program also falls under the forest protection specialist job title. Tom Wilson is working with this program. IDNR is working with the Morton Arboretum on the Emerald Ash Borer readiness program.

***Illinois Finance Authority – Kevin Koenigstein***

The Illinois Farm Development was merged with the Illinois Finance Authority.

***Illinois Arborist Association – Mike Brunk***

Plans are underway to monitor for the Emerald Ash Borer this summer at the U of I Landscape Recycling Center.

***Illinois Forest Stewardship Week***

Chairman Rolfe reported there were 3275 students and 160 teachers registered to attend Illinois Forest Stewardship Week at the Dixon Springs Ag Center. There are 1770 students on the waiting list.

Tom Ward raised the question regarding the vacant Extension Forester position at the U of I. Chairman Rolfe has discussed this with Wes Jarrell, NRES Department Head. He is supportive of the need for the position, but there is lack of funds.

Chairman Rolfe welcomed Representative Dave Winters to the Council. Rep. Winters offered to help with any revisions the Council wanted to make to the Forestry Development Act.

The next meeting is scheduled for May 12, 2004 in Champaign.

Meeting adjourned.