

New Hampshire
Forest Advisory Board Meeting
September 27, 2019

Present: Brad Simpkins, Charlie Niebling, Jack Bronnenberg, John Caveny, Jim Oehler, David Publicover, Carol Foss, Jane Difley, Roger Boyer, Mark Zankel

Absent: Dennis McKenney, Mark Ducey, Karen Bennett, Tom Thomson

Minutes: Tom Thomson provided edits to page 3 paragraph 2, duplicative sentence, page 4 & 5: change Audubon to AMC, remained neutral, change energy to electric

Motion to approve as amended by Mark Zankel, second by Jane Difley. Motion passes

Director's report

Budget Update

Governor and legislature came to agreement on the budget, the new budget passed on Wednesday, September 25th. Our budget as approved by the legislature originally is unchanged. This budget includes additional ranger position which will bring us up to ten. In addition, two forest management positions were approved, funded through USFS Good Neighbor Authority. These people will work for us but will primarily work on WMNF to help them meet their timber harvest goals. We have been using good neighbor authority to have NHB conduct surveys on WMNF and had a shared position doing forest management/habitat work. Receipts from timber sales will go into dedicated account to pay for positions and any excess would be used for other projects on WMNF like habitat management, restoration work, prescribed burning.

FAB Membership

At the last meeting expanded membership suggestions include Northern Forest Center, the Department of Business and Economic Affairs, Climate Change – perhaps someone from UNH or Dartmouth. Charlie Niebling suggested John Gunn.

Jane Difley suggested a town representative: town administrator or selectboard member. Also consider a representative from the association of conservation commissions.

Charlie Niebling asked if folks had considered the term limits. John Caveny suggested that Brad make sure that the board is effective and serving the agencies needs as a basis for board replacement decisions. David Publicover stated that since the legislation does not include board membership or terms Brad should feel free to make sure the board is functioning in a way that is helpful. Can have a formal model or informal model where people serve at the pleasure of the Director. The current model has served us well. Niebling asked how members feel about Dave's suggestion that board members serve at the pleasure of the director.

Members agreed that this has been a good model and members should also feel free to step away from the board if they so desire. Board representation and terms will continue to be simple and informal.

Members will serve at the discretion of the director; Brad will fill the UNH Cooperative Extension and SPNHF vacancies due to retirement. New members representing expertise in climate change or carbon, economic development, town government (selectboard or conservation commission), and the Northern Forest Center will be considered.

John Caveny and Jack Bronnenberg will provide Brad with suggestions for someone with a forest industry or production focus prior to the next meeting.

Other suggestions include a community member representative that is less knowledgeable about forestry. A conservation commission member from a town that actively manages their town forestlands, and someone from a town forest committee (Ron Klemarczyk, Haven Neal, John O'Brian of Manchester Water Works, Charlie Moreno). Mark Zankel suggested the pool of possible board members include women.

Legislation of Interest

Brad distributes a list of LSR's filed that may be of interest to the board.

- 2091 – removal of trees from state property – similar to one filed last year. The sponsor is working on revised language. We have not yet seen the language. Last year one bill would have required us to remove all dead trees along boundaries and trails of state land. Another would have required permission of neighboring land before we could conduct harvest on state property.
- 2111 – repealing timber tax – have also seen this before. Mark asked if we could get analysis of timber tax received by town. Brad mentioned GSD/SAF project to look at timber tax. Was in the May Journal of Forestry. DRA should have that information. Susan will look into this. Jack Bronnenberg asked if the state has ever considered a basis method (income tax) as is done for federal tax for managed forests. Brad isn't aware if this has been considered in the past.
- 2563- establishing a commission to study forest industry in NH. (Since the FAB meeting this has been changed to a commission to review and propose initiatives to implement the recommendations of the 2020 forest resources plan.)
- 2618- repealing the law on preservation and use of renewable generation to provide fuel diversity. The bill sponsor, Rep Harrington, hasn't been supportive of wood fired electrical plants so we will be watching this bill closely
- 2676 – establishing a department of energy and environment. This would include energy related functions not regulatory (PUC) and well as others and include into a new Department that would include OSI. **(this LSR has been dropped)**

Susan will email the F&L list to FAB members

Charlie Niebling mentioned that we should know more about proposed bills by the next meeting and may be able to have more substantive discussion.

Other

Mass Timber seminar – Brad distributed seminar information. The seminar will be held in Concord and credits are being offered. Grand opening of first mass timber building in NH is being planned (Pease). Brad will let members know when it has been scheduled.

Shared stewardship program – this is a partnership program between states and the USDA Forest Service. The goal is to find ways the state and FS can work together to promote issues of joint concern. Shared stewardship projects are generally formalized through high-level agreements (many signed by governor). Examples include: West – fire mitigation, East – recreation and forest markets. Every state is approaching this differently. Brad will work with the board to identify possible agreements.

Meeting with Coos County delegation regarding timber tax revenue from unincorporated places in Coos County - Originally this was to be a discussion of how the division uses our portion of the funds. Now has expanded into larger discussion of timber harvesting in the Northern Forest. Jamie Sayen and John Gunn

are also expected to speak. The meeting is November 8th at Forests and Lands headquarters in Lancaster.

Jane Difley mentioned study SPNHF did 10-15 years ago regarding this similar issue, adding that it might be time to look at the issue or clear cutting again.

Mark Zankel added that at future meetings would be good to have people come and share information regarding the state of the forest resource in NH.

Roger Boyer asked if there has been discussion about intensifying the number of FIA plots. Brad stated that we don't have the funds to increase FIA plot numbers. Charlie Niebling mentioned a study done a few years back to specifically study pine in Coos County.

Roger Boyer suggested that an updated timber harvesting study might be a good shared stewardship project. It also might be something the Coos County commissioners would consider using timber tax revenue for.

Niebling asked that additional information be shared with FAB when available.

SB 183 – Next steps

Charlie Niebling reported that an LSR has been filed for a proposed bill that would attempt to pass what was attempted last session. It's difficult to imagine that this new bill would have greater success with the same legislature. John Caveny agreed with Charlie's assessment. Producers are at a place of needing to make decisions while policy makers continue their discussions.

Charlie Niebling added that there is a need for honest and robust discussions about the use of low-grade wood. What is its highest and best use, what future would we like to see that would be the best benefit to the economy, land, and ecosystem; how can we influence that future.

Brad noted that since being state forester this is the third biomass crisis. He agreed with the need to have open and honest discussion regarding future of biomass/low grade wood.

Jack Bronnenberg stated the need to look at opportunities for using existing plants in new capacity (look at Maine) and partnering with international entities. Also, legislative support is necessary if looking at devoting state funds for market research and development. What is the role of this board and the state in this effort?

Director Simpkins reported that the Northeast State Foresters Alliance (NEFA) submitted a Landscape Scale Restoration grant to do this but it wasn't funded. Other states are proactively look at generating new markets. Maine has invested a lot of funds (federal) to develop low grade markets. Working regionally may be more advantageous but would still need to identify state-based actions.

Charlie Niebling stated that to limit or restrict (to the issue of biomass plants) creative thinking at this point is a dis-service to those trying to envision a different future. Mark Zankel added that it may also limit the people who would come to the table.

Director Simpkins will schedule a meeting with Taylor Caswell, Commissioner of Business and Economic Affairs, to discuss this issue. That may help to get the governor's office involved.

Dave Publicover added that these discussions shouldn't be absent discussions about climate change.

John Caveny stated that he has personally moved to a neutral position regarding biomass and he believes it will take a lot of energy and resources to continue this battle. Issues regarding energy are very complicated and adding carbon to this discussion adds further complexity. He added that he is not

convinced that to do good forest management we must remove the low grade wood from the property. Biomass is a tool but not necessary on every job to do good forestry.

Roger Boyer stated that they have wrestled with this on WMNF as well. They are currently not allowed to do whole tree harvesting on acres where soil is of lower quality. He would welcome discussions of the appropriateness of whole tree harvesting and its future.

Charlie Niebling suggested that engaging commissioners Stewart and Caswell together in this conversation may help to bring in the governor.

Jack Bronnenberg asked if anybody asked the governor what he would support. Brad replied that when putting together budget the agency had several discussions with members of the governor's staff and mentioned the need for resources to explore development of new markets. Also, in SFAP we are directed to include resource (staffing and funding) and policy needs.

Jane Difley said that the discussion shouldn't simply be about low grade markets. Charlie Niebling agreed, stating it should be about optimizing the environmental and economic importance to the state.

SFAP update

Susan Francher gave a brief report on the assessment work to date and public input sessions & survey results for State Forest Action Plan development. Susan will send public comments out to the board when the survey is closed.

Roundtable

John Caveny – WBUR (Boston-based NPR station) aired a segment on low grade wood markets

Jane Difley – Reported that her last day with the Forest Society is September 30th. Jack Savage has been named the new President of SPNHF.

Dave Publicover – AMC staffing changes: Walter Graff will be retiring next February. New Research Director is Sarah Nelson who comes from UMaine.

Jim Oehler– retirements include the moose biologist retired & game program specialist. Will Staats, north region wildlife biologist is also retiring and Glenn Normandeau not being reappointed next spring. Fish and Game is also hiring engineer and land surveyor

Mark Zankel – Jan McClure has retired, TNC has hired Patrick Hackley as her replacement.

Jack Bronnenberg – guys are cutting wood everyday. There is a good roundwood low grade wood market in Maine.