

Forest Practices Advisory Board
May 26, 2010

Attendees as members: Joan Nichols, Tom Trowbridge, Chris Martin, Steve Broderick, Joe Theroux,
Mike Bartlett, Ian Branson

Attendees: DEP Staff: Jennifer Hockla, Judd White
Guests: Eric Hammerling, John Larkin (arrived at 10:05 am)
Recorder: Sheila Hoefle

1. Minutes of 1/13/10 meeting reviewed. Motion to accept minutes by Steve Broderick, seconded Joan Nichols, unanimous vote.
2. Update on the progress made toward completion of the State Forest Resource Assessment. The deadline for DEP Forestry submission of the Assessment to the USDA Forest Service is June 18 and there is some growing concern that the Assessment may not be completed by that date. The Division has offered assistance to Helene by finding and compiling information that will be used and also minimal writing, if needed. Helene asked Chris to allow more staff time to be dedicated to assisting her in writing the assessment. There may be a last minute push where Division staff dedicates 100% of their time to the assessment.
3. Notification of Timber Harvest Form: To date the form seems to be working well, with little complaint. There is a question regarding somehow integrating the cover letter into the form to keep the two permanently attached. Several foresters who work directly with or on town Wetland Commissions thought the forms were beneficial to keeping all of the information compact and easily read/reviewed. TIMPRO may offer a fall training on the form and will post the form and cover page with additional instructions on their webpage. TIMPRO has contributed financially to the printing of a pertinent flyer. Thanks were given to Joe Theroux, Steve Broderick and Joan Nichols (& others) for their work and comments. The information was also distributed via the forester list-serve as well as to CT SAF members.
4. Municipal Inland Wetland Commissioner Training. There was an article printed in the Meriden Record Journal regarding the lack of training by Inland Wetland Officials. (attached)
5. Discussion of opportunities to improve on the certification regulations. Tom Trowbridge & Joan Nichols met and formulated some ideas. They recommend removing the 3% annual increase in light of last year's doubling. They also recommend reducing the number of required CEU's after one renewal period (8 years of licensure) biennially for Foresters from 6 to 4, Supervising Forest Product Harvester from 4 to 3 and Forest Product Harvester from 3 to 2. They discussed categorizing CEU's but determined that it would be too time consuming for DEP staff & certified individuals to manage. They also suggested the DEP Forestry coordinate a mandatory training every other year to ensure that certified individuals are being trained on something that DEP feels is important. Mike Bartlett suggested that DEP Forestry consider awarding CEU's to certified individuals who have completed Master Logger Certification. At this time Forest Practitioner CEU's are based on professional education not performance, which is how Master Logger is awarded. Joan Nichols will inquire with the Board of TIMPRO to get some ideas on how CEU's could be awarded for Master Logger Certification. Discussion also centered on the need for a certified check for payment for the exam and application fees for Certification. Jen Hockla noted that the time line currently in place may not allow enough time for a check to clear the bank and notification to get back to the division should a personal check bounce prior to taking the certification exam. As a result, an individual may end up certified with an incomplete application requiring further action by FPA. Further investigation is necessary. Joan & Tom

suggested possibly allowing personal check payment for renewal only, not initial licensure. Joan noted that Forest Practitioner Certification and Sewer Licensing are the only programs that require a certified check or money order. DEP is investigating the possibility of accepting payment by credit card or bank card. Joan to draft changes for regulations and submit to Judd White and Doug Emmerthal for review.

6. TIMPRO- Offered a Log & Lumber Workshop in March, 70 people attended. Sara Smith from UNH presented. TIMPRO is considering a fall wetlands program. A hard copy of the training will be mailed to TIMPRO members others will be notified via electronic mail or word of mouth.
7. Updates on PA490. The Farm Bureau will be publishing a new 490 Guide using an Agricultural Viability Grant. The Guide should be completed in the next couple of month. It includes the information that is presented in the PA490 Guidance for Foresters & Assessors that is available on the DEP website. It will also include the values for 2010 and how cap rates are determined. The Farm Bureau (Joan Nichols) will present at least one workshop in each county. 3500 Guides will be printed.
8. Assessor & Forester PA 490 Submission Information to DEP: Last year was the first year that the Division notified towns that they are required to report the numbers of parcels and acres for farm, forest and open space. 65% of towns reported in 2009. The Council on Environmental Quality urged DEP Division of Forestry to seek required information from assessors. The software vendor that most assessors utilize wrote a query to make reporting easier. There was approximately 700,000 acres reported under 490 land for the 65 reporting towns. Tom Worthley has sent out reminders to foresters via list-serve reminding them to report to the Division of Forestry. Rob Rocks will be facilitating a 490 training for certified foresters in June.
9. 10 Mill – DEP Forestry is encouraging 10-mill land owners to talk to their assessors if they have questions regarding 10-mill classified land. DEP Forestry will report all changes that are received to the Office of Policy Management in the fall. There are five properties that will be reevaluated in 2011 with the remaining properties done by 2022. Some of the properties will be completing their second 50 year period. John Larkin reported to the Committee that the 10 Mill bill failed in this year's session. It was passed in the house and died in the final minutes of the session in the senate. There was controversy over the proposed bill that stalled the initial vote in the house. The Town of Cornwall was opposed to the changes proposed due to their potential lost revenue from penalties. Cornwall's theoretical penalties would be \$1.5 million dollars, if all 10-mill land owners in Cornwall pulled their land out. Three or so of the properties in Cornwall already have permanent easements in place. It is believed that Cornwall is budgeting based on anticipated penalties. The penalty is figured by using 5 mills annually compounded, plus a penalty on standing timber. Representative Bryan Hurlburt may present the bill again next session. The first new tax bills with the updated values will be due in 2012. The towns will have to hire a forester to complete the re-evaluation. The foresters may have to utilize the Quarterly Stumpage Reports to accurately value the standing timber. There was a suggestion to utilize the forestry list-serve for distribution of the stumpage reports.
10. Certification Program Updated: Total certified individuals are holding steady around 550. There were the lowest number of examinees at the May 2010 exam, six. There seems to be an influx of people from the land clearing and landscaping industries attempting to get certified at the Supervising Forest Products Harvester level. Currently there is one case at the Attorney General's office, two denials in process and two potential revocations in process. There are several ongoing investigations regarding lack of certification. There was discussion regarding enforcement of the conduct regulations and the difficulty that arises in enforcing them. Recently there have been more problems with developers having land foreclosed on and attempting to liquidate the timber before losing the land. At times they are using uncertified land clearing companies to conduct the timber harvests which is in violation of the Forest Practices Act.

Problems also arise with wetlands regulations because land clearing contractors may not be aware of wetland regulations. A suggestion was made to check Craig's List (www.hartford.craigslist.org) to individuals looking to purchase standing timber.

11. Convening of a Special Task Force to address Sec 23-65j(a). Letters to and from Commissioner Marrella and Representative Hurlburt were distributed. Rep. Hurlburt requests a task force to address Sec. 23-65j(a). Membership on the task force is looking for a variety of expertise Rep. Hurlburt suggested members for the task force. Recommended individuals to fill the task force were discussed.

It was suggested that recommended members be contacted quickly to begin meeting at the end of June to report to the Commissioner by October.

12. Updates from CFPA: CFPA has been asked to distribute the Wildland & Woodlands Report. At this point they are not endorsing the report, just distributing. CFPA also has Tree Law Books to distribute. Trails Day is scheduled for June 5 & 6, CT is leading the nation with the Trails Day events.
13. Next meeting scheduled for September 15, at 9am at CFPA Library.
14. Motion to adjourn: Made by Steve Broderick, seconded by Jennifer Hockla. Unanimous vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sheila Hoefle