

MINUTES
ALABAMA FORESTRY COMMISSION
January 19, 2012

PRESIDING – Ken Real, Chairman

SECRETARY – Linda Casey, State Forester

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT – Ken Real, Johnny McReynolds, Don Heath, Irvin Eatman, Salem Saloom and Tommy Thompson.

ALABAMA FORESTRY COMMISSION PERSONNEL PRESENT – Linda Casey, Patrick Glass, Tom Conway, Tonia Stephens and Regina Miller.

GUESTS – Rick Oats, Sam Duvall, Jimmy Looney, Dan Hopkins, Patrick Nolen, W. A. Neal, Mike Green, Kenny Barber, David Rogers, Steve Dennis, Mike Wadsworth, Jason Lane, Daryll Dooley, and Charlie Dixon.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER – Chairman Ken Real called the meeting of the Alabama Forestry Commission to order at 10:00 a.m. on January 19, 2012 in the Commission's state office auditorium, 513 Madison Avenue, Montgomery, Alabama 36104.

ROLL CALL – Regina Miller called roll. All Commissioners except Jerry Smith were present. Miller announced that a quorum was present.

Commissioner Don Heath made a motion to excuse Commissioner Jerry Smith's absence due to his father's death and to send condolences to Smith. Commissioner Tommy Thompson seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

Miller stated that the meeting had been properly advertised.

MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 30, 2011 MEETING – Commissioner Don Heath made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 30, 2011 meeting as presented. Commissioner Johnny McReynolds seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

Chairman Real recognized and thanked State Forester Linda Casey for her five years of service to the Commission and presented her with a 5-year service pin.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT – Representing the nominating committee, Commissioner Don Heath made a motion to elect Johnny McReynolds as chairman and Tommy Thompson as vice-chairman. Commissioner Thompson seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

Beginning at 10:07 a.m., Chairman McReynolds presided over the remainder of the meeting. He addressed the audience by saying that volunteer fire departments are essential to the Alabama Forestry Commission.

State Forester Casey thanked volunteer fire departments for their assistance to the Commission. She stated that volunteer fire departments were instrumental in the Commission receiving an increase in the 2012 General Fund Budget. She assured volunteer department representatives that they can count on the support of the Commission and that she does not want to see a reduction in their funding.

USDA FOREST SERVICE, OIG AUDIT UPDATE – State Forester Casey stated that USDA Forest Service auditors are onsite verifying Commission records on ARRA grant funding. A final report on their findings is due February 10, 2012.

VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT FUNDING – State Forester Casey explained that volunteer fire department funding is a line-item in the Commission budget and that no funds are or can be kept by the Commission for administrative costs. She addressed rumors that language in the FY 2012 budget specifies that checks to departments are to be distributed on a quarterly basis by reading language from the General Fund appropriations legislation: Of the above appropriation to the Alabama Forestry Commission, \$1,283,853 shall be used for rural and community fire protection. All monies received by the Forestry Commission for Volunteer Fire Departments or Rural Fire Protection, from whatever source, must be used for those purposes and an accounting of same shall be filed with both houses of the Legislature before the third Legislative day of the regular session.

Legal Counsel Tom Conway stated that the State Finance Director has specified that checks are to be distributed in the third quarter of the fiscal year. He added that the checks are subject to proration by the Governor.

2013 STATE GENERAL FUND BUDGET – State Forester Casey said that the Commission will implement a budget campaign for FY2013 in the coming weeks with every employee making contacts to seek support for the budget. She said that support from agency partners such as volunteer fire departments has been and will be critical to improving the agency's budget.

State Forester Casey stated that the Commission is requesting an increase of 2.14 million dollars in the 2013 General Fund Budget. The state finance director is expecting a reduction in state agency budgets by 25 percent.

RANGER CAREER LADDER – Personnel Manager, Tonia Stephens, explained that a committee had been established to assess the opportunity for promotion, training, and increased salaries for forest rangers. The committee was composed of forest rangers from the six regions, with Randy Kinman and herself providing guidance. The Leadership Team has approved a new classification structure proposed by this committee. Stephens asked Commissioners to approve this proposed new structure and eliminate the existing classifications as follows.

Current Classification Structure	Pay Grade	Salary Range
Forestry Worker	44	\$18,202-\$26,465
Forest Ranger/Technician	5561	\$23,993-\$40,253
Forestry Specialist	65	\$29,225-\$44,417
Forestry Project Specialist	74	\$39,290-\$59,518

Proposed Classification Structure	Pay Grade	Salary Range
Forestry Worker	44	\$18,202-\$26,465
Forest Ranger Technician I	55	\$23,993-\$34,735
Forest Ranger Technician II	65	\$29,225-\$44,417
Forest Ranger Technician III	70	\$33,086-\$50,119
Forest Ranger Technician IV	74	\$39,290-\$59,518

Stephens explained that agency personnel will not automatically be transferred into the proposed classification structure. An employee must apply, compete on the register and be appointed into the new classes as deemed appropriate. It is anticipated that the only exception will be Forestry Specialists who will probably be laterally transferred into the Forest Ranger Technician II classification since their responsibilities are comparable.

A training committee will be formed to develop a set of responsibilities for each level in the proposed classification structure. The committee will be lead by Southwest Regional Forester Gary Cole and Training Officer Randy Kinman as well as the training officers from each region.

Commissioner Ken Real made a motion to approve the proposed restructuring of classifications for forest rangers as presented. Don Heath seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

The approved restructuring will be sent the State Finance Director for approval. Once approved, the request will be submitted to the State Personnel Board for their approval.

DATE AND LOCATION OF NEXT MEETING – Commissioners scheduled the next meeting on Thursday, April 12, 2012 at the Commission’s state office, 513 Madison Avenue, Montgomery, Alabama. The meeting is scheduled to begin at 10:00 a.m.

Commissioner Ken Real made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:30 a.m. Commissioner Don Heath seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.