

**MINUTES
ALABAMA FORESTRY COMMISSION
November 10, 2008**

PRESIDING - Jerry Smith, Chairman

SECRETARY - Linda Casey, State Forester

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT – Jerry Smith, Chairman, Melisa Love, Vice Chairman, Don Heath, Ken Real, Randall Gilmore, Johnny McReynolds

ALABAMA FORESTRY COMMISSION PERSONNEL PRESENT - Linda Casey, Bill Baisden, Regina Miller, Walter Cartwright, Dan Jackson, Carolyn Fox.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER - Chairman Jerry Smith called this special meeting of the Alabama Forestry Commission to order at 10:00 a.m. on November 10, 2008 in the Forestry Commission's Executive Conference Room located at 513 Madison Avenue, Montgomery, Alabama 36104.

ROLL CALL - Commissioners Jerry Smith, Melisa Love, Don Heath, Ken Real, Randall Gilmore and Johnny McReynolds were present. Commissioner Jett Freeman was absent. MOTION NO. 915: Don Heath made a motion to excuse Jett Freeman who was ill and could not attend the meeting. Randall Gilmore seconded the motion and the motion carried.

MINUTES OF THE JULY 10, 2008 MEETING - MOTION NO. 916: Ken Real made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 10, 2008 meeting. Don Heath seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

Regina Miller announced that today's meeting was properly advertised.

SAFETY – Bill Baisden presented a general briefing on exiting the building during inclement weather. In case of fire, the group should exit the building down the closest stairway and proceed to the back parking lot.

STATE FORESTER'S REPORT – Linda Casey reported on Commission business: Shared that all but two Work Unit Manager positions have been filled.

Presented the 2008 Scorecard which is used to evaluate the agency's accomplishments during the fiscal year of October 1, 2007 through September 30, 2008. A copy of the 2009 Scorecard will be sent to each Commissioner. Feedback was requested.

Stated that this past May, the AFC began mid-term appraisal tracking which provides employees with work performance and feedback prior to their annual evaluation.

Reported that an internal team developed and began using a Firewise Risk Assessment plan in August, 2008. The team visits high fire-risk areas and works with homeowners to assess actions needed to help prevent catastrophic fires.

Presented two DVD's were given to Commissioners: A Cogongrass presentation addresses the identification and eradication of Cogongrass. The second presentation, on Carbon Sequestration, is designed to educate landowners on this new program.

BUDGET – Linda reported that the 2009 budget might be prorated. She stated that she will request a flat budget plus \$2 million from the General Fund to make up for the expected reduction in Federal funding. She encouraged Commissioners to help secure the passing of this much needed funding in the general Fund.

COGONGRASS TASK FORCE – Bill Baisden stated that the AFC is taking the lead in addressing Cogongrass issues in the state. He stated that Cogongrass is the biggest threat to our natural resources and there needs to be a regional perspective which can be presented to Washington. A Cogongrass Task Force comprised of 23 agencies have signed a Memorandum of Understanding which calls for a strategic plan with a director for the organization. Tim Gothard has agreed to be the funding supervisor.

STATE ASSESSMENT OF NEED - Linda reminded the Commissioners that May 22, 2010 is the deadline for the AFC to submit the State Assessment of Natural Resources document for approval. Linda emphasized that without the Assessment being approved there would be no need to request future Federal funding for natural resources. On December 21st, a team of natural resource professionals from across Alabama will meet to access natural resource issues in the state. Walter Cartwright and Neil Letson from the AFC will be participants on this team.

SECTION 319 GRANT

Walter Cartwright reported the Department of Environmental Management has approved a 319 grant pertaining to clean water and helping BMP monitoring and resolution. The AFC will receive a \$65,000 grant in 2009 with a 25% match. We will receive this funding also in 2010.

NEW BUSINESS:

CHOCOLOCCO LAND SALE TO CALHOUN COUNTY WATER AUTHORITY -

Walter Cartwright informed Commissioners that the Calhoun County Water Authority has requested to purchase 6.8 acres of Forestry Commission property in the Choccolocco State Forest. This land has been appraised at \$7,647 per acre totaling \$52,000. This acreage is on the edge of the AFC property and does not prevent our ingress or egress from our property. MOTION NO. 917: Don Heath made a motion to sell the property and Randall Gilmore seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

PINE DECLINE – Bill Baisden stated a Forest Health Cooperative is being organized that will be run out of Auburn University with a primary focus on pine decline. The AFC will be a voting member. The Memorandum of Understanding is to AU and to the Cooperative with the AFC contributing 40%. Every dollar of our agency's contribution will go to the Cooperative.

Bill Baisden stated the three land sales discussed at the last Commissioners' meeting have been approved and will be going up for public notification soon.

FIRE UPDATE - Fire Protection Division Director Dan Jackson stated that the number of fires and acres burned was within normal ranges but that fire sizes have increased. The 40 minute or less response time is sometimes difficult to achieve in larger counties due to higher traffic areas, especially in more urbanized areas. This factor might contribute to the increasing size of fires. Bill Baisden stated that the response time will probably continue to increase if our personnel numbers and equipment supplies continue at the same number as they currently are. Linda, Bill and Dan agreed, as did the Commissioners, that safety must be the priority, rather than response time.

A newly acquired "agent" for the AFC is Blaze, our new bloodhound, will be used for arson investigation as well as for educational purposes.

The Communications Section is working to centralize our dispatch system in Montgomery and to accomplish narrow-banding as soon as possible.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE FOR 2009 OFFICERS - Jerry Smith appointed Kenneth Real and Jett Freeman to serve as the Nominating Committee for new officers and to report at the next meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS – Linda Casey informed the Commissioners that a \$140,000 grant between the AFC and Alabama A&M to create sixteen Agroforestry demonstration sites expired September 30, 2008. The work had not been completed and therefore A&M returned \$115,000 to the AFC.

Don Heath requested a grant update for the January 2009 meeting. Linda stated a review of the new procedures and processes to track new grants will also be discussed in the January meeting.

URBAN FORESTRY PROGRAM - Bill Baisden noted that the AFC has contracted with AUM's Government Studies Department to develop a survey to customers the agency has served in the past 1.5 years. The AFC will receive quarterly reports from the survey.

CARBON SEQUESTRATION - Bill emphasized that Carbon Sequestration is a major concern for Alabama's landowners. The AFC website contains a Question & Answer section where current information is posted for landowners. Randy Gilmore emphasized that there are a lot of unknowns about this subject and that landowners need to move slowly in their decision making.

DATE AND LOCATION OF NEXT MEETING – MOTION NO. 918: – Jerry Smith made a motion to meet Thursday, January 15, 2009 at 10:00 a.m. in the AFC Executive Conference Room. Don Heath seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

MEETING ADJOURNED – MOTION NO. 919: Ken Real made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:30 a.m. Don Heath seconded the motion and the motion carried.