

Missouri Forest Resources Advisory Council (MoFRAC) March 16, 2009 Meeting Minutes

Call to Order

Chairman Dave Murphy welcomed everyone to the meeting at 10:10 a.m.

Introductions

All present introduced themselves at Chairman Murphy's request in order to improve communications during the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

Draft minutes of the December 11, 2008 meeting were presented for approval. Motion to approve draft minutes was made, seconded and passed.

Update from State Forester

Lisa Allen, MDC State Forester, provided information on current issues impacting the Forestry Division and its partners. Forestry Division has gained some outside funding, but is still going to see some staff reductions although the exact number is not known at this time. Department-wide, about 130 staff positions (FTE) will be lost. This represents a 8.9% reduction in the department's FTE, and would equal 21 FTE in forestry if every division gives up an equal number. Whatever the final reductions in forestry division staff, it will have some impact on MDC forestry efforts.

Susan Troxel-Dewitt is continuing to research forestry certification potential for MDC lands and is doing some good work researching SFI and CSF programs. Both seem to be workable for Missouri. Approval of participation in such a program would need to come from the Commission, as well as some funding to pay for fieldwork. An initial trial of perhaps 100,000 to 150,000 acres is being considered to see how things would work. Missouri Forest Products Association would be asked to participate in the working group as Missouri wood processors are expressing concern regarding availability of certified wood for them to mill. April 15 will be first meeting for this group.

Doug Wallace asked that the Tree Farm System be included in all considerations of developing certified forests in Missouri. This can provide 250,000 acres of sustainable, certified forests quickly for harvest and product production.

Ms. Allen stated that Forestry Division has submitted several grant applications/projects to USDA Forest Service. One project is looking at urban trees as an infrastructure element. This Missouri-Kansas urban forest project would develop a holistic management plan for these urban forests in the Kansas City metro area. It requests funding of \$230,000 in Missouri and \$200,000 in Kansas. Another project asks for \$190,000 to help landowners develop conservation easements on their property and afford implementation of such projects on private lands. For example, a 5 million dollar donation of land can cost \$50,000 in up-front legal and administrative costs and this program could provide all, or a portion, of such costs. The Conservation Federation is working on a statute that would strengthen landowner protections in conservation easements in Missouri since our

current law is relatively weak. MDC also submitted a request for \$150,000 for emerald ash borer work in southeast Missouri.

One \$235,000 project that received “first alternate” status would provide funds to cost-share with loggers in their costs of implementing best management practices (BMPs). As proposed, a logger would receive up to \$25/acre for proactively installing BMPs. A revised version of this project was also submitted under the NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant process in case it doesn’t receive Forest Service funding.

Mark Twain National Forest (MTNF) is studying the possibility of obtaining a sustainable forest certification at the forest level. Also, the US Forest Service has \$250 million available to the states for stimulus package investments. Missouri sent forward eight proposals and five of these made the first cut at the Northeast Region level. MTNF has received about \$3.5 million already for infrastructure improvement.

MDC has submitted a \$6 million grant proposal under the Fuels for Schools Program to work with six schools in developing wood-fired heating and cooling systems to reduce their annual energy costs. This project received the number one project designation in the northeast region. Another project submitted, for \$625,000, would partner MDC with MTNF to use Americorp funding to train 3-5-person crews to become conservation contractors to perform un-marked TSI for landowners, trails work, prescription burns and so forth. Initially the work would be done on MDC and MTNF lands. Then, once sufficient experience is gained, Missouri will have trained personnel for other projects on other lands. This project was ranked number four in the northeast region. Part of the work proposed to be done under this grant includes invasive species monitoring and control for eradication of ash near EAB epicenter, and gypsy moth trapping with forest health an integral part of this project. A project to fund inventory of MDC lands did not make the cut, but another proposal, \$215,000, to partner with MTNF to eradicate feral hogs on MDC and MTNF properties ranked well.

Internal review of the Private Lands Program continues but is not going to be completed until the results of the staff reduction process are known.

Mr. Murphy pointed out that MDC’s three main sources of funding are all declining so these grants are very important to keeping Missouri’s forestry division providing the support Missourians desire and have received in the past.

Update from US Forest Service

No report was presented as the Mark Twain National Forest representatives were unable to attend this meeting.

Forestry provisions of the new (2008) Farm Bill

Doug Wallace provided a four-page handout regarding forest provisions of the 2008 Farm Bill. Nothing is final as yet. NRCS will be posting elements of the bill on their web site for public comment. EQIP program comments are due March 17 and Healthy Forest Reserve comments are due March 20. National priorities are now part of the farm bill. Forest protection is one of them. Long-term state-wide assessments and strategies are

required of state forestry agencies to participate in the Healthy Forests Program. While Missouri is not eligible as yet, it could apply for inclusion in the fall, 2009 time period. Conservation Stewardship Program now allows forest land to be included in its funding of projects. EQIP includes forest management as an eligible production system. A forest management plan or a stewardship plan can both be used as eligible plans under this program that has received \$1.2 billion in funding at the national level during FY2008.

Scott Brundage asked how we might improve the awareness of landowners of the need to have a forest management plan. Doug said a news release is being planned. \$6 million of EQIP plans contain some forestry component. Peter Becker suggested having district conservationists advertise the importance and availability of getting a forest management plan as this has proven very effective with the initial EQIP forest management plan development.

Under the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program non-industrial private forest land is eligible to receive funding. The Wetland Reserve Program has been authorized but land must have been owned by the current owner for seven or more years for WRP applications. Biomass Crop Assistance Program will pay for 75% of establishment costs of eligible energy crops and annual payments may also be made to support collection, harvest, storage and transportation. Applicants under the BCAP must have a Forest Stewardship Plan or Equivalent to be considered for participation. Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) can be used to leverage federal investment in environmental enhancement and protection. State deadline for applications is April 15 for CIG. Mr. Wallace encouraged all MoFRAC members to submit forestry CIG applications.

Ms. Allen encouraged all members to submit comments on the EQIP and Healthy Forest Reserve rules so that federal rules actually reflect the intentions of the statute. She will share a copy of the MDC comments on the farm bill language with MoFRAC members so we can see what has been said and hopefully can be consistent in our Missouri comments.

Gene Brunk shared his concern that in the future, if we continue to see a decrease in rural federal representatives, and as a result we may see a loss of the Farm Bill as we have known it. Such a development may result in a loss of federal support for forest management.

Ms. Allen shared that the future may hold an opportunity for sale of carbon credits from MDC lands, but this is still a matter under consideration given lack of final decisions at the federal level as well as changes taking place in MDC staffing and program organization.

Chairman Murphy reiterated the importance of all MoFRAC members contacting their local district conservationists as to the need for their encouraging landowners to obtain forest management plans.

Set schedule for Remaining 2009 Meetings

Chairman Murphy stated that the location for upcoming MoFRAC meetings will be moved around during the year. He then asked the Council for their input as to time and dates for the remaining 2009 MoFRAC meetings. Three additional meeting dates were agreed upon, June 15, August 17, and December 7. All meetings are scheduled to run from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Biomass BMP Resolution Consideration

Peter Becker, Eastern Ozarks Forestry Council, provided a resolution for consideration by MoFRAC to clarify support for the use of biomass harvesting best management practices by entities receiving any type of economic assistance from the State of Missouri for forest management practices. Gene Brunk moved to vote on the resolution and Scott Brundage seconded. Peter Becker pointed out that a great amount of effort went into developing biomass harvesting BMPs. After significant discussion and some amendment, the resolution as stated herein was approved by the Council.

“Resolved that it is MoFRAC’s position that any entity receiving any type of economic assistance from the State of Missouri for the growth, harvest, processing or utilization of woody biomass be obligated to: 1) use a professional forester to develop a forest management plan and a forest harvest plan as defined in SB 931, 2008, and associated administrative rules; and, 2) adhere to the Woody Biomass Harvest and Best Management Practices in their entirety, as promulgated by the Missouri Department of Conservation. It is further the position of MoFRAC that commercial entities utilizing or processing woody biomass in excess of 5,200 green tons per year, excluding sawmill residues and urban wood wastes, should create or adopt a third-party audit process with sufficient sampling intensity to ensure adherence to said Best Management Practices.”

Missouri Forest Stakeholder Summit

Gus Raeker informed the Council that five meetings will be held statewide to inform the public of work being conducted to develop a Missouri Forest resource Assessment and Strategy (FRAS). He provided handouts with the meeting schedule and a registration form. MoFRAC members are encouraged to attend the meeting most convenient to them. Input can also be submitted via the MDC Forestry Division website.

Consideration of MoFRAC letterhead

Dr. Garrett provided alternative letterhead drafts for consideration. The Council agreed that its name (Missouri Forest Resources Advisory Council) will be spelled out and the column containing the names of the member organizations will have a white background. Doug Enyart moved and Peter Becker seconded that the committee work on developing a logo that can be used beyond the letterhead application. Motion approved. www.confedmo.org will be used as the Council’s web address and will be located at the top of the page. All member organization names will be spelled out completely. Positioning of logo on the letterhead will be determined once a logo has been adopted.

Upcoming Events

Tom Westhoff provided flyers regarding a Private Landowner Forest & Wildlife Workshop sponsored by the ruffed grouse workshop in southeast Callaway County on Saturday, April 18.

Forestry Committee of the Conservation Federation of Missouri considered the concept of a Missouri Forest Landowners Association of some sort. One possibility is to create a group similar to the Georgia Camo Coalition that uses grant funding and works to identify issues of importance to its membership and to send out action alerts.

Missouri is part of the 10-state North Central Tree Farm Region. At this point all ten states must pass audits of their respective systems' tree farm certification process in order for the regional group system to pass muster and be approved as certified sustainable management lands. Hank Stelzer was requested to follow up on this issue and report back to the Council.

Doug Wallace, Natural Resources Conservation Service reported that the CP-31 bottomland hardwoods practice is having its cost-share rate, rental payment and other incentive components increased this year.

Association of Agroforestry will meet first the week of June in Columbia, Missouri.

Missouri Community Forestry Council's annual conference starts tomorrow, March 17, in Columbia, and runs through Thursday, March 19.

Harlan Palm reported on the Walnut Council meeting last week which 58 people attended including about 20 first-time attendees. He pointed out that small bottomland fields often are left idle due to farmers not being able to operate large machinery in them. These areas offer a good opportunity to raise quality walnut trees, often ones that are already established in the brush growing in these fields.

Scott Brundage mentioned that woodland owners may want to join as affiliate members of the Conservation Federation of Missouri as have the nut growers and Christmas tree growers. This is still being considered. Kurt Homeyer asked if the MoFRAC committee that was looking at a forest landowners group should reconvene to further look at this issue. Lisa Allen mentioned the Teaming With Wildlife model could also be considered. This way all the existing groups could be affiliated, under CFM, to be a voice for forestry within and outside of Missouri. Dave Murphy pointed out that CFM is not seeking to be involved in the day-to-day operations of any affiliate members, or compete with them in their respective activities. Hank pointed out that Gus Raeker could gather information during the Missouri Forest Stakeholder Summits as to what level of interest Missouri Forest Landowners feel for such a group.

On October 23 and 24, 2009 at Shannondale will be a tree farm 60th anniversary celebration. This event may be expanded to include other activities in light of the cancellation of the Tree Farm Conference this spring.

Motion to Adjourn

Meeting was adjourned 2:39 p.m.