

MINUTES: Tanana Valley State Forest Citizens' Advisory Committee Meeting

April 15, 2021, 6:00 – 9:00PM, held via WebEx

Present, all by WebEx or phone:

CAC Members

Tom Malone, Chair (Forest Science)
Brian LaPlaunt (Mining)
Brad Cox (Value-Added Processing)
Reed Morisky (Tourism)
Tom Nerbonne (Upper Tanana)
Dan Rees (Private Forest User)
Mike Spindler (Fish & Wildlife)
Chris Stark (Environmental)
Kristin Timm (Recreation)
Jon Underwood (Lower Tanana)
Jason Knowles (Forest Industry)

(Native Community vacant)

State Employees:

Nick Carter, DOF
Kevin Meany, DOF
Matt Stevens, DOF
Jeremy Douse, DOF
Tom Paragi, ADFG
Alison Arians, DOF (minutes)
Cindy Heil, DEC

Public & Presenters:

Chad Schumacher
Geoff Orth, Stray Dogs Consulting
Dave Lutz, Dartmouth College
Nick Czarnecki, FNSB
Tony Lee, Biomass and agriculture program for AK Gateway School District

Reviewed and approved minutes from April 15, 2020 meeting.

Chris Stark made the motion to approve, Kristin Timm second. Unanimous approval.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CAC members reappointed: Jason Knowles, Mike Spindler, Chris Stark. Thank you for serving again!

New CAC member appointed: Brian LaPlaunt. Been in Fairbanks for over 20 years, primarily working in O&G and mining, state government and consulting. Project type work for mining companies, O&G companies.

Fabian Keirn decided not to seek another term. We are looking for someone to fill that seat. Contact Alison if you know of someone.

OLD BUSINESS (Lutz only)

Update on project: 'Investigating Changes in Forests Across Alaska and Canada,' with CAC involvement – Dr. David Lutz, Dartmouth College, Department of Environmental Studies. Refresher on NASA project. ABOVE project—Arctic vulnerability: how forests will change in the future. Wants to simulate future conditions. CAC is to help with how you'd like to see the forest managed. Meeting in May was rescheduled because of pandemic. All fieldwork canceled for NASA, but we hope to open up travel in the Fall, when students are vaccinated and back to campus. Will have to see when travel and meeting in person will be possible. General plan is to stay in touch with Alison and think about possible meeting—for a small workshop. Most federal science agencies are understanding that the pandemic is making issues for us. 20 stakeholders, mostly from CAC, representing different interests, showing how the TVSF is modeled, looking at how the stands will behave. Cool part of the project that NASA really liked was that it would be working with the CAC, looking at different scenarios—intensive harvest vs. habitat management; thinking about different options and outcomes. I know you all have a busy summer field season—probably May but not too much later. Probably it would be after that. NASA is still interested in having an in-person Fairbanks meeting—but for now, I'll just talk to people, and see who would be interested in this workshop. I have money for travel to attend the workshop, which would be 4-6 hours, do some social science work. If that seems interesting to you, let Alison know.

No questions.

NEW BUSINESS

Election of committee Chair and Vice Chair.

Chris Stark nominates Tom Malone as chair and Dan Rees as vice chair. Unanimous approval. Thank you, Tom and Dan!

Aurora Energy's firewood kiln, pellet mill and related timber sales – Chad Schumacher/Rob Brown, Aurora Energy. In June 2020, Superior Pellet Mills and Aurora Energy built a firewood kiln. Reduces burning wet firewood that contributes to air pollution in Fairbanks. Community advisory group recommended that a kiln be built using existing heat from Usibelli. Bring biomass co-firing energy generation—energy and heat for all operations. Superior Pellet Mills has been around since 2010, was acquired by Aurora Energy, along with all the employees to keep expertise and procurement experience, etc. 2020 was a record production for wood pellets and compressed logs. Grew 20% and 50% respectively, market-driven. Double production values but still forecasting that we will run out of wood by the end of February. Exciting to see the growth. Looking at how to increase production schedules in future. Take the steam over to the kiln, drying wood at 200 degrees. Take about a day in the middle of winter to start to dry, then cycling the system from that point. About 96 hours to below 20% moisture content. Customers very happy with the wood. Some design changes needed—heat exchanger so it wouldn't have to vent as frequently, lose heat. Taking the risk away from customers. No bugs. In the summer, should only take 48 hours. Each load is 48 cords. We are mostly doing birch. May experiment with spruce? Probably not with aspen and poplar as their market reputation not good enough. Weighs 5,000 lbs per cord including the basket, loses about 1,300 pounds of water out of each basket. The kiln is the bottleneck in the winter; in the summer we will try and stockpile.

Probably will produce 5,000 cords this next calendar year. Really appreciates all that Brad and Tom do at Logging & Milling Associates.

2021 season: Pellet mill won't change for production volumes. We'd love to have all-season spruce—mixed species stands will be great for that. Have about 250 loads of spruce sitting at the pellet mill now—will use about 180 of that for the pellets. Compressed log market has grown over the last 2 years.

Wants all-season access for birch harvest. Have been getting wood from Brad Cox, Logging & Milling Associates. DOF providing plenty of sales for us.

Invitation to everyone at the CAC meeting to join us for an in-person tour at the kiln facility on Wednesday, April 21st at 12:00. We are hosting the Society of American Foresters at that time and would gladly welcome any interested parties to join our tour and discussion.

Questions:

Tom: Just one contractor for all of your wood? Will they be enough?

Chad: I'm open to other contractors. I go to Logging and Milling first, but if there are other operators, I'm buying wood to be delivered to our facility.

Wood-burning stoves and pollution in Fairbanks – Cindy Heil, DEC; Nick Czarnecki, FNSB

Background

Portions of the Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) do not meet federal air quality standards for small particulate matter called PM2.5.

- PM2.5 comes from incomplete combustion of fuel; coal, wood, diesel
- The primary cause of the air quality problems in FNSB is wood smoke.
 - Still unsure if it is too many wood-fired devices in the area or a combination of old devices and poor burning practices.
- Resources and measures to control wood smoke are focused on:
 - Clean burning devices
 - Dry Wood
 - Proper installation
 - Proper Operation
 - Curtailment/Burn Bans on poor air quality days/when air is stagnant and wood smoke builds up near the ground.
 - WSCOP, date certain removal of uncertified appliances & older devices, real estate requirements

DEC's requirements for new wood and pellet stoves

- New devices must be EPA certified, AND
- New devices must have an EPA certified average emission rate that is 2.0 g/hr or lower, AND
- New devices must meet the DEC requirements:
 - Device's certification test must not exceed a 1-hour filter pull of 6.0 g/hr
 - DEC has approved the underlying test method results
- New devices must be professionally installed
- No new construction may have a wood-fired device as the only source of heat
- New devices must be registered with the DEC

Stakeholders' group—responsibility fell to DEC to come up with requirements that would give the community as much flexibility as possible.

EPA's Wood & Pellet Stove Certification Program

2015 Residential Wood Heating New Source Performance Standards (NSPS)

- Implemented new system to review results of certification testing
- ISO-accredited third-party certifiers review the reports and certify results.
- Application package submitted to EPA for review.
- EPA review process unknown.
- ISO implements audit and quality assurance program
- Company audit programs are Confidential Business Information (CBI)
- Details of plans are CBI
- Results of inspections not publicly available

Certification: how EPA reviews the information is unknown. NE states are trying to encourage the use of wood to reduce their reliance on fossil fuels. Both have in common: same goal, which is to burn wood cleanly.

Results of DEC review of EPA certification program

- Reviewed over 230 reports and compared them to the federal requirements as well as DEC requirements.
- No report met the federal requirements. Over 50% of the reports missing significant portions of the required reporting elements.
- Large % have contradictory information regarding what they tell the public.

Very scary results. How can we trust the federal certification process? Testing is supposed to match the marketing materials. It doesn't!

230 reports include pellets and wood stoves. AK is in a fairly good position—we have a responsibility due to federal money coming in for change-outs, that we make sure we're not making the air quality worse. Have found problems across all sectors. There are clean stoves out there, but we can't tell the clean stoves from the dirty stoves anymore. The whole system we used to choose the stoves isn't based on anything. A disservice to the public and the community. EPA.

Dry wood requirements

- Dry wood only is required to be burned—requirement has been in place for years.
 - Dry wood is defined as wood moisture content of 20% or less
 - If using dry wood, little to no visible emissions from the stack
- Currently all commercial wood sellers are required to be registered with DEC
 - Commercial wood sellers must supply to wood buyers a form that has either the measured wood moisture of the wood being sold or an indication that the wood is wet.
 - DEC does have registered dry wood sellers. This is where DEC has confirmed that the wood is dry--either dried like in the kiln, or inspected fire burn
- October 1, 2021 all commercial wood sellers may only sell dry wood.
 - Exception—8-foot rounds may be sold if proof supplied that the wood will not be burned in the season it is delivered.

FNSB Wood Stove Change Out Program has been continuously operating since 2010
Starting in 2017, a shift away from using public funding to install wood stoves

- Program managed to maximize emission reductions
- Emission reduction dependent on

- Device
- Professional Installation
- Expertise and willingness of homeowner to burn clean dry fuel and operate correctly
- DEC's certification review shows new devices may not be as clean as originally thought

On track for attainment by 2024.

No questions.

Progress on presentation on existing and potential record trees – Reed Morisky/Tom Malone. Working on this presentation now for next meeting—measurements and approximate locations, to keep them safe from cutting. A little more work than I had anticipated. From Nenana south to Andersen, there is a very nice large band of mature white spruce. There were some trees there that I think were 3 or 4 feet across at chest height. Wants to get back there to measure them. Would like to look into any contract provisions, in case someone comes across a record tree—not looking at interfering in logging operations, but it would be nice to maybe allow it to remain. Any information about this—contact guide@wildernessfishing.com 907 322-8004 (c)

Tom: Every state has someone who keeps track of the largest trees. Don Bertolette is the current tracker. Tom will get in touch with him—the large tree coordinator.

Kevin Meany has submitted 2 big trees to Don and has never gotten a response. Had 2 in the interior—aspens and black spruce. Wasn't sure if he was still monitoring the site anymore? I'm also interested.

Tom: Will get in touch with Don.

Chris: Several people have submitted and nothing happened. What I would like to know—what is the biggest tree? Girth? Height?

Tom: Sum of circumference, height and dripline of branches.

Chris: So not everyone can measure it? Would be fun to get this question out to the public.

Tom: Has measured a lot of them, have recorded a few. Sometimes getting to the tree is the hard part.

From the chat:

Tim Dabney: I submitted this national champion back in the 1990s in Texas: Littlehip Hawthorn in Montgomery County.

Kristen: Do large tree hunters ever gather seeds or cones to share or test in provenance trials?

Nick Carter: From the cone collecting I did with the State of Idaho of seedlings and reforestation efforts, the large mature trees did not have good seed development. Germination rates were poor. Found that the younger trees produced better seed for reforestation.

Letter of support for Bonanza Creek connector trail RTP grant -- Alison Arians/Jon Underwood. Alison asked the CAC if they would be willing to sign a letter of support for an DPOR Recreational Trails Program grant application by Interior Alaska Trails and Parks Foundation's (IATPF) in partnership with DOF to build 4 miles of trails linking the Rosie Creek trails to the Zasada Road and Bonanza Creek Road networks in the Tanana Valley State Forest. The project will create an all-season multiple-use trail corridor (for motorized and non-motorized recreation), linking the existing 35 miles of Rosie Creek forestry roads (to be upgraded and maintained in June with RTP funds) with more than 18 more miles of forestry roads in the Zasada Road and Bonanza Creek Road complexes. In addition to creating the new trails, the project includes funding to maintain several miles of inactive forestry roads on either side of the trails. This project, a partnership between IATPR and the DNR Division of Forestry, will be entirely on State Forest lands.

Kristen: Are the blue trails winter trails?

Alison: Yes—working on some signs added for neighborhood to indicate no ATVs in summer.

Tom Paragi: Will signs notice that people are entering State Forest?

Alison: Yes! Lots of good information about the working forest and how recreation can co-exist.

Kristen: Noted the Borough's trails planning effort underway: Just an additional heads up for everyone, if you were not already aware, that the borough is in the process of updating the trail plan. They have a cool map where you can add comments with geolocations: <https://www.fnsbtrailsplan.com/>

Mike Spindler makes a motion to submit letter of support. Kristin Timm seconds.

Unanimous vote in favor. (Jon abstained from voting because of a conflict of interest.)

Tom will sign the letter and send to Alison.

REMAINING OLD BUSINESS

Rosie Creek Recreation & Forestry Partnership – Alison Arians/Jon Underwood. Showed map kiosk panel, names of forest roads, bio info on TrailForks link: showed on screen. Schedule for road maintenance and brushing is as early this summer as Jon and his crew can get there.

Jon plans to start June 1.

Mike Spindler: Is the trail already loaded on Trail Forks?

Alison: Yes. Showed on screen.

<https://www.trailforks.com/region/tanana-valley-state-forest-rosie-creek-1617851220/>

AREA UPDATES

Fairbanks/Delta Area Update – Matt Stevens, Fairbanks/Delta Area Forester, DOF.

Changes to DOF organization resulted in all of Fairbanks Area personnel to be located on the FAF compound. No more Fairbanks-Delta Area business is conducted in the main DNR building, except for occasional walk-ins. Delta office structure and location remains the same. Currently staffed at 1 Area Forester, 2 Resource Foresters and 1 Equipment Operator

2020 Fire Season

- Characterized Statewide as a wet and cool summer, Fairbanks-Delta Area fit that bill
- FBX 22 fires that burned 54 acres, Delta 10 fire that burned 41 acres
 - o Fairbanks Area - Any Creek 44 acres
 - o Delta Area - Shaw Creek 28 acres
- Fuels work in Fairbanks-Delta Area
 - o Old Murphy Dome Fuel Break Maintenance Project
 - o Delta River West Fuel Break

Resource update

- Fall 2020 Auction
 - o 9 sales offered
 - o 7 sales sold
 - o 2 sales received no bids
- Over-The-Counter Sales 4/2020-present
 - o 3 sold; Berg Birch, Canyon East Mixed #2, Boundary Spruce. All three have been offered OTC for ~10 years, offered for sale originally in 2011.
 - o 1 more to be sold on Friday
- Negotiated Sales 4/2020-present
 - o 8 sold
- Closed out sales

- Closed out 16 sales
- FRPA Reporting
 - 2020 Calendar Year
 - 18 FRPA Timber Sale Inspections
 - 8 reforestation inspections, 166 acres surveyed
 - Updated FYSTS to Northern Region Format
 - 4 FLUPs completed
 - 8 bushels of cones collected and transferred to the Plant Material Center in Palmer
 - Maintained 127.4 miles of road by SOA, 333.2 by timber sale purchaser
 - Constructed 2.0 miles of road by SOA, 3.8 by timber sale purchaser
 - 347 firewood permits sold, 1282 cords
 - 2021 Quarter 1
 - 7 BMP compliance scoresheet completed
 - Maintained 21 miles of road, mainly firewood access
 - 4.2 miles of road constructed by timber sale purchaser
 - 61 permits sold, 280 cords
- Maisch Logging Road constructed winter 2020-2021. The road takes off from MP 312 on the Parks Highway and runs 5.2 miles generally South. Initial 1.9 miles constructed to access Berg Birch timber sale. 3.3 miles constructed to access Pocket Spruce timber sale. This new road provides alternate access to the SSW end of TVSF Unit 5A. The primary access route to this part of Unit 5A was 10.8 miles on Nenana Ridge Road and then 10.7 miles on Upper Grouse Road.
- 2022 Seedling order
 - Contract has been executed
 - 40,000 seedlings have been ordered for the 2022 planting season.
 - Seed from the Palmer Plant Material Center will be sent to the contractor soon.
- Preparing for a busy summer field season
 - Tasks include
 - Reforestation surveys
 - Timber sale recon and layout in preparation for Fall 2021 Timber Sale Auction
 - Road maintenance
 - Stockpile material for future work using material separator
 - Coordinate with State Parks Engineers to address Fortune Creek Bridge on Cache Creek Road.
 - Fall cone collection
 - Coordinate delivery of cones to Palmer Plant Material Center

Coordinate rotating in new stock and disposing of old stock.

Tok Area Update – Nick Carter, Tok Area Forester, DOF.

2020 Fire Season

- Very slow season providing for out of area training opportunities for staff.
- Tok had 12 fires totaling 1.3 acres.
- Fuels work
 - Red Fox Fuel Break Maintenance – Roller Chopping Approx. 200 acres
 - Eagle Trail Road Brushing – Opened approx. 3 miles of road to allow engine access.
 - This year will be working on new fuel break projects around the Tok area.

Resource update

- 2020 Sales

- 9 negotiated sales– Two still active
 - ◆ 8 for commercial firewood
 - ◆ 1 for personal use sawlog
- 3 negotiated sales sold in McCarthy for firewood/sawlog/value added products
- Over-The-Counter Sales
 - 4 sales remain from the attempted auction in 2019
 - Alaska Gateway School District harvested approx. 20 acres of the Hazardous Fuels sale they purchased.
- Firewood still is the big commodity in the Tok area. Even the large sawlog sales have large percentages of the volume being sold as firewood.
- Last winter and this Summer plans
 - Cruised Hazardous Fuels sales last winter.
 - Will be working on more sale layout north of Tok for Hazardous Fuels sales.
 - Review sales plan and determine next sales to move to based on stand characteristics.
 - Look at areas of fire killed wood for future sales.
 - Begin looking into reforestation and site preparation needs for Moose Habitat sales.
 - Access road maintenance needs and repair identified locations from last fall.
 - Continuing to work with DMLW on plans for Fire Wise subdivisions in and around the Tok area.
 - Set these up ahead of time—creating defensible space. Still in the works. Has been received favorably.

Questions:

Tony: fire clearing around Eagle Subdivision? Is that part of it this year?

Nick: Yes. Stop by and I'll show you what the plan is, based on some public comments. Shaded fuel breaks rather than large scale wind-tunnel openings.

Statewide update - Jeremy Douse, DOF Northern Regional Forester

- Northern Forestry Dispatch Center (NFDC)
 - We have historically had difficulties maintaining consistency in our dispatch offices in the northern region. Additionally it has become more difficult to get dispatchers out on assignment and cross train them to improve the quality of their knowledge base.
 - In the winter of 2019/2020 we started dispatch consolidation between Fairbanks and Delta by moving one PCN.
 - In the Winter of 2020/2021 we continued with dispatch consolidation by including Tok. The Management Team convened a team of FMO's, Area Foresters, Dispatchers, Fire planners, communication specialists and admin to plan this transition.
 - The old SLC facilities have been upgraded to house the NFDC. NFDC will be responsible for all the duties of the SLC this year. In addition to the IA responsibilities that occurred at the area office. There is also additional space for an expanded dispatch when that is needed.
 - The NFDC is currently working on simulations with each of the area offices, developing SOP's and desk guides.
- Fuels program
 - DOF has been maintaining a list of fuels projects (\$14.9 Million) and pecking away at them when we could.
 - Funding has been coming from WUI, more recently Good Neighbor Authority and other zero match federal grants.

- Identified a need for staffing and consistent funding to execute these projects.
- 2020 legislature provides DOF with a \$5.0 million CIO for fuels work
- 2021 as part of the GO bond proposal, a lot more identified in fuels work. Additionally more is identified in American rescue act planning.
- This spring, DOF hired a statewide fuels coordinator to work with the areas and prioritize projects. Darrin Finley. Will be based in Palmer.
- Prevention
 - Worked with Department of Law to develop Policies and Procedures
 - While education is always the goal, the prevention officers are commissioned as peace officers so citations can be issued if need be.
 - Worked with and trained state park rangers to help with enforcement when needed.
 - Developed a more defensible way to issue burn suspensions and burn closures.
- Inventory: new inventory forester is Miho Welton. She runs FIA and GIS program. Miho has picked up some of the CAFI work that Tom started when he was working for the University. She has worked with Forest Health Specialist to fund remeasurement of CAFI plots in Southcentral AK, and working on a MacIntyre-Stennis Grant to measure the most. CAFI plots are oldest continuous forest inventory that we have, that's been remeasured. Glad to see that continued.
- SSE: We get a lot of our receipts from them. In 2020 we didn't sell much timber; lots of planning, dealing with a variety of issues. 2 large sales sold recently. Sales that will be going toward keep our industry going down there. Baby Brown, Bayview Sales.

Statewide update – Tim Dabney, DOF Acting State Forester

- Legislation
 - HB 98 / SB 85 – FLUPs and Negotiated timber sales – Governor's bill. Two main changes: exports for negotiated sales allowed; no appeals on FLUPs, just on BIFs. If FLUPs are not all prepared at the time of the BIF because it's a large or long-term sale, they will not be subject to appeal later. Thanks to Chad (Aurora) and Jason (Northland Wood) for their letters of support. Have had 2 hearings with House Resources. HRES is considering amendments.
 - SB 74 – GO Bonds, state infrastructure projects – Facilities, Fuel Breaks and Forest infrastructure. \$356 million, Forestry's piece was about \$21 million. Fuel breaks construction, replacement for Shrike that crashed in Aniak last summer, with a Caravan. Need to replace a fire engine. Senate doesn't seem too excited about some of these projects.
 - HB 29 – Electric utility liability.
- DOF Director and State Forester –
 - Helge Eng, Current deputy director of resource management
 - Helge has over 25 years of forestry experience, including working in other countries as a forestry consultant. In 1992 Helge started his CAL FIRE career as a timber supply analyst at the Fire and Resources Assessment Program. He has held many positions with CALFIRE including Inventory Forester, State Forest Program Manager, Assistant Deputy Director of Resource Protection and Improvement. Helge has a Bachelor of Science Degree in Forestry from the University of British Columbia, a Master's Degree in Forest Measurements, a Master's Degree in Statistics, and a PhD in Forest Operations Research from Oregon State University.

Questions:

Chris Stark: FLUPs and BIFs: what kind of opposition to this bill?

Tim: Concern about local markets, negotiating a sale for export could be bad for the local industry. Changes to statutes have 6 conditions to consider, which include 3 about the local market and economy. We will maintain and try and grow back some of what has been lost. Appeal piece—concern about shouldn't the public have the opportunity to oppose the FLUP. Forestry listens very carefully to the public and other agencies when a harvest is going to occur on the ground. If there are concerns about visuals or windthrow, we take those into consideration. Frequently have modified how those harvests are done. We'll continue to do that as we go along even without appeal opportunities.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None.

CAC MEMBER COMMENTS:

Tom Malone: appreciated Chris Maisch's 15 years of service. Hope he enjoys a long happy retirement. I hoped last year that there would be only one virtual meeting, but this was a good meeting anyway, but lots of good information. Thanks to everyone who attended. Thanks for all the things Alison does—minutes, agenda, info.

Chris Stark: Thank Tom for coming back as Chair again, and Dan Rees, and thanks to Alison for organizing.

Mike Spindler: Appreciate enthusiasm for working on Trails with DOF forestry, win-win. See a bright future. Recall a presentation from Tom Paragi about wildlife BMPs. Is there a consultation time about this with the foresters?

Tom Paragi: Proposed a way to engage with DOF staff—when updating the FYSTS, for example expanding into a new ridge system or putting in new big sales—how it's structured spatially could really benefit wildlife, to mimic wildland fire scars. There is going to be a TVSF FYSTS coming up. Jeremy mentioned that it would be for the whole TVSF. As we get closer to the Fall, I want to introduce area biologists to Nick and Matt, and look at some different options that are beneficial to wildlife habitat, and how hunters may use this habitat. Roads that are wetter—something to consider. Bring this into the discussions. Work with them to put out the FYSTS, and CAC members could see some different options to weigh in on.

Mike Spindler: When does the CAC weigh in on this? There will be dialog before the next FYSTS will come out to review. Confirm with Alison that would be in April. Should we schedule a meeting when Dr. Lutz is in town?

Tom Malone: Don't know that we can schedule that yet, but we will schedule a CAC meeting when he can come.

SCHEDULED NEXT MEETING April 14, 2022. Thursday.

ADJOURNED. 9:04.