



NAFSR BOD ZOOM MEETING May 7, 2024 Final Meeting Notes

Attendees

Board Members - Steve Ellis (Chair), Jamie Connell (Vice Chair), Johnny Hodges (Secretary), Rich Stem (R-1), Greg Griffith (R-3), Lynn Sprague (R-4), Teresa Benson (R-5), Becki Heath (R-6), Don Howlett (R-9), Earl Stewart (R-10), Rich Guldin (Research), Ralph Crawford (Research), Gene Blakenbaker (National), Ranotta McNair (National), Nora Rasure (National), Susan Skalski (National), Bill Avey (National), Jeanne Wade Evans (National), Tim DeCoster (National), Ed Shepard (PLF Liaison), Kevin Martin (AWCP liaison)

Unable to Attend - Sharon Friedman (R-2), Steve Eubanks (R-5), Marisue Hilliard (R-8), Doug Crandall (Congressional Liaison), Bill Timko (National), Mike Dudley (Fire Committee)

Committee Chairs – Rich Guldin (Climate), Nora Rasure (Recreation), Bill Avey (Restoration), Tim DeCoster (Awards)

Staff – Bill Disbrow (Webmaster)

Washington Office – Jaelith Hall Rivera and Mark Lichtenstein

Welcome – Steve Ellis

- The first chair of NAFSR, Doug Leisz, passed away on April 28. We will explore ways to honor him.
- Steve Eubanks is stepping down as a representative for R-5 north. We will discuss options for the position.
- Our Program of Work for 2024-25 is now on our website.

- In the news – I have done interviews with E&E News and NPR. I declined an interview with High Country News on a story about Ammon Bundy.
- Jaelith and Mark will join us today from the WO for a discussion about the FY24 budget.

Administrative Report – Johnny Hodges

- Our current membership is 803, our highest number ever.
- There are currently 35 members that have not paid their dues, so our membership will likely drop when the unpaid members are purged later this month.
- We will discuss our membership drive later in the meeting.
- Our current bank balance is about \$36,000 and our investment fund is about \$15,000 for a total of \$51,000.

Awards Committee – Tim DeCoster

- Tim has reviewed records from the previous chair, Phil Aune.
- The committee is responsible for the Doug Leisz Leadership Award (jointly with NMFSH) and the John R. McGuire Award.
- The McGuire award is an enigma. It is only given sporadically, we have trouble getting nominations, and the process is complicated. We need to streamline the process. We could make a more regular process with an annual call letter.
- We should consider additional types of awards – maybe to people/orgs that are not FS employees.
- This would make us more relatable and accessible to more people.
- We could offer less formal awards to recognize small activities, partners, groups, and employees.
- Our current bylaws designate this committee as the “Nominations and Awards Committee”.
- I am proposing to change the name to “Recognition Committee”.
- There was support from Nora and Bill A. It may help with the recruitment of new members to NAFSR and make us more visible FS employees.
- We will need to look at Bylaws and make revisions.
- Tim made a motion to change the name of the Awards Committee to the Recognition Committee. Tim would also be empowered to recommend changes to our bylaws and bring them to the Board at our next meeting.
- There was a second of the motion by Jeanne and the vote unanimously in favor.

AWCP Meeting Report - Kevin Martin

- Kevin serves as the liaison to American Wildlife Conservation Partners (AWCP).
- The notes from the Spring Board meeting were shared with all NAFSR members.
- One goal of the AWCP is to create a stronger voice for conservation.
- There are 51 organizations included in AWCP.
- Each organization decides if they want to sign each letter prepared by AWCP on a variety of issues.
- The Spring meeting is held at the same time as the North American. Numerous agency leaders almost always attend.

- The FS leadership did not engage with AWCP.
- Wildlife for the 21st Century, vol. 7, will be finalized at the summer meeting in Missoula in August.
- There are 10 recommendations in the new document. There are details on the AWCP website.
- NAFSR has not been posting AWCP letters that we have signed to our website. We will work on that.

Membership/Revenue – Nora Rasure and Johnny Hodges

The Membership Team produced the following report which was shared with the Board ahead of today's meeting. Nora reviewed the report with the Board.

Membership Drive

The one-month membership drive at the beginning of the year resulted in 91 new members. As previously reported, several new actions were taken during the drive to recruit additional members.

The membership team recommends conducting another drive in 2025 during the same time period. The effort would begin in the fall of 2024 with initial planning followed by additional training for Board members prior to the drive beginning.

In the long-term, we need to evaluate whether we are just concentrating membership increases into the one-month period that may have occurred over the year anyway.

In 2025, we will also have the national retiree reunion which creates another recruitment opportunity.

Membership Retention

The effort by board members to call unpaid members during the February Board meeting was successful at increasing the number of paid members.

The membership team recommends trying this approach again at the 2025 Board meeting. In addition to retaining members, it created a positive opportunity for conversations with our members and added some energy to the board during the meeting.

After the Board meeting, letters were sent to the remaining 78 unpaid members resulting in 37 payments by members. There are 41 remaining unpaid members. The team has no additional outreach efforts planned for these members beyond the normal periodic member updates and website reminders to pay dues.

Donations

Donations are a significant source of funding for NAFSR. In addition to the low-key effort to solicit donations through the website, several other more active approaches were completed in 2024.

- Hard copy solicitation letters with an unstamped return envelope were sent to 181 Golden members resulting in 28 donations totaling \$2,145.
- Hard copy solicitation letters with an unstamped return envelope were sent to 160 Lifetime members resulting in 13 donations totaling \$1,735.

This effort cost about \$1 per letter sent for a total of \$341 with a return of \$3,880.

The membership team recommends pursuing donations as a more fruitful way of securing additional revenue source. Options include:

- Sending solicitation letters to the other members.
- Increased marketing of donation opportunities - like donations in memory of someone, additional emphasis on importance of donations in periodic updates and on website, and more recognition of those donating.

FS Budget – Jaelith Hall Rivera and Mark Lichtenstein – WO

- The FY24 Budget was six months late with some reductions. There are restrictions on the use of some funds.
- The Fire budget portion included temporary pay increases for firefighters.
- There was no funding included for pay increases for non-fire people. These had to be covered within the existing budget.
- We have added 4,000 new employees to the non-fire workforce. This was the Chief's goal. There was never a goal to return to previous staffing.
- 50% of our current employees have less than 5 years of FS experience.
- From FY23 to FY24 all fire funding was brought back into the normal appropriations process. It is no longer a supplement. A 3% loss of funds outside of fire will also apply to FY25 unless the budget structure is changed by Congress.

Q and A's –

- Are Fire vacancies going to be high? The current trend is we're ahead of last year. We were worried about being 40% below needs without increased pay.
- Are budget issues affecting agreements with partners? Why did you hire anyone? The Chief's goal was to hire 4,000 new employees to replace lost capacity. He did not want to go higher.
- What happened to all the money? IRA (Inflation Reduction Act) funds came all at one time. We would have preferred to ramp up, stabilize, ramp down. We had to ramp up obligations with partners. We are not taking funds away from agreements unless there is mutual agreement with the partner. Almost all the infrastructure money has now gone out ahead of the anticipated 5-year program and the 10-year strategy.
- The current "hiring freeze" is a stand-down moment. We have already exceeded the Chief's goal of 4,000 for this year. We received less funding than we anticipated. Any additional hiring of people outside the agency will be focused. There will be new direction coming soon. Our hiring surge has been successful.
- Partners would offset part of the unhired employees. What % internally and externally? 80% of IRA funds (not appropriated) has gone out to partners to build partner capacity. The other 20% was for internal or agency.
- Will the FS have a hiring event at the SAF convention? I don't know.
- Is the commitment for the Student Congress still coming? I will check on it.
- The budget requires hard decisions.

R-5 Board Vacancy – Steve Ellis

- Steve Eubanks has represented the northern portion of R-5 for ten years. Today is his last day on the Board.
- There are a couple of options to consider about his position -
 - Option 1 – recruit and fill as is.
 - Option 2 – Do not fill the position and reduce the Board member for R-5 to one person. This position would be filled by Teresa Benson. We could run a pilot and see how it goes.
- Teresa thinks this seems reasonable, but she would like to hear from the Board.
- Rich Stem – What do Mike Rogers and Steve Eubanks think? Steve supports going to one. Mike didn't care one way or another. Rich S. and Ranotta suggest going to one.
- Rich Guldin – There is a lot of fire activity in Southern California. Maybe with the Fire Committee, there is not need for another representative in R-5.
- Lynn and Susan suggested going with one rep.
- When Jeanne was Deputy RF, she mostly dealt with Mike Rogers. Two reps in the region could cause some confusion. One rep makes relationships with the region stronger.
- Becki moved for one regional representative for R-5 for 2 years. Steve Ellis second. The vote was unanimously in favor.

Regional Reports - Regional Representatives

R-1 – Rich Stem shared the R-1 update last week. He brought up that 40% of employees in Region 1 have less than 5 years of experience from the regional report last month. It matches what we just heard. Another major issue is the closure of 7 sawmills in the last 6 months across 4 states. Some reasons are a labor shortage and lack of timber supply and market. Regional timber outputs have gone up a little bit. Outputs vary significantly by Region if up or down or neutral. We need to pay attention and perhaps think about a reaction or statement regarding the mill closures.

Recent mill closures

1. Interfor Corporation - Philomath, OR
2. Hampton Lumber Mill – Banks, OR
3. Rosboro - Springfield, OR
4. Stimson Lumber (closing in August) - Plummer, ID
5. Roseburg – Missoula, MT
6. Pyramid Mountain – Seeley Lake, MT
7. Spearfish Forest Products (Partial shutdown) - Spearfish, SD
8. Rushmore Forest Products (shut down 2 years ago) - Hill City, SD

R-2 – Sharon Friedman was not present. Regional Forester Frank Beum is retiring at the end of the month.

R-3 – Greg Griffith was present but had no report.

R-4 – Lynn Sprague was present but had no report.

R-5 – Teresa Benson thanked everyone for the welcome. She has connected with RF. They are working on mailing lists for all forests’ retirees. She had a good transition with Mike Rogers.

R-6 – Becki Heath will meet with the new RF on 5/30.

R-8 – Marisue Hilliard was not present.

R-9 – Don Howlett - The regional retiree group is moribund and there are questions about its future.

R-10 – Earl Stewart – The new RF is Chad VanOrmer.

Research – Rich Guldin and Ralph Crawford – Rich, Tim DeCoster and Bill Timko attended the Mature Old Growth meeting in D.C. The final report will be published June 1. There is a lot of interest in the Farm Bill. I will send more information to the Board.

The Station Director from Pacific Southwest, Richard Barhydt, will move to the Rocky Mountain Station Director's position. Valerie Hipkins will detail to the Pacific Southwest Research Station in his place.

The WO RD Associate Deputy Chief will assume the Station Director's leadership roles for both PSW and PNW after the current Station Director (Paul Anderson) PNW retires.

Combining the PNW and PSW Station Directors positions under one position is a pilot action for one year.

Committee Reports (Climate, Recreation, Fire, Restoration, Awards)

Climate – Rich Guldin – I will share letter with links from the Chief.

Recreation – Nora Rasure - Legislative update – The House passed the Explore Act (Expanding Public Lands Outdoor Recreation Experiences). The Senate has a similar bill. Shooting range language was changed.

Fire – Mike Dudley was not present.

Restoration – Bill Avey– Mill closures as Rich mentioned earlier. Lumber prices are dropping due to lower demand. Thanks for your help on MOG. New bills in Congress on RX fire.

NW Forest Plan Advisory Committee – Jose Linares

- There have been four in-person meetings so far in different locations. Each meeting is 3 days long.
- There are weekly virtual meetings.
- The FS is doing targeted amendments, not new plans. The FS added some sideboards for the committee.

- We are under a constrained timeline. The FS wanted recommendations by April. They are still in draft. We will try to finalize them by June.

Public Lands Foundation – Ed Shepard

- Thanks to Bill Avey for tag team work on Wildfire Crisis Strategy.
- The PLF Annual meeting will be held on October 8-9 in Las Vegas at the Orleans Hotel concurrent with a portion of the Student Congress.
- The PLF Annual Report is available on our website at **publiclands.org**
- The BLM has added a new deputy position for State Programs.
- The Public Lands Rule has been in the news quite a bit, especially the issue of restoration or mitigation leases.
- Impressed by the NAFSR membership drive results. PLF could use some help.

Final Thoughts – Steve Ellis

- Thanks to Becki for her great job as facilitator.
- Our next BOD meeting is August 13. The planning group will be Greg, Teresa, and Jamie.
- It caught my attention that 50% of FS employees have less than 5 years' experience.
- How can we engage on the issue of sawmill closures?
- Jeanne asked - do we reduce the Board by one if we don't fill R-5 vacancy? No decision until the tryout period ends (2 years).
- Welcome Teresa Benson as our R-5 representative.
- Thanks to Jose for serving on the NW Forest Plan Advisory Committee with no pay (one of only two people not getting paid).
- Nora announced that the All Members Zoom meeting will be delayed until the Fall.

Notes by Johnny Hodges
Final – 5/12/2024