

2013 FFLA Board Meeting

Withlacoochee Forestry Center

Brooksville, FL

The annual FFLA Board Meeting was held at the Florida Forest Service's Withlacoochee Forestry Center in Brooksville on January 19. Present were Chairman Keith Argow, Historian Bob Spear, Treasurer/N ID-MT Director Gary Weber, Asst. Secretary/NJ co-Director Ray Grimes, NJ member Ed Seifert, and Florida Forest Service Region 3 Deputy Chief of Field Operations John Kerns.

The meeting started at 9 a.m. with a power point presentation by Mr. Kerns on Florida fire towers. In 1983, state records showed 204 towers, today they are down to 101 towers that are classified in 4 categories: Primary, Secondary, Reserve and Surplus. Some towers are still utilized as needed on class 3 days and higher. The towers that are classified as surplus will eventually be put up for auction and then removed from that location by the winning bidder. There was discussion about options for keeping towers that are classified as Surplus, by possibly moving them to the Reserve list. The primary purpose of this part of the meeting was to investigate the possibility of a Florida Firewatchers volunteer staffing program. The past Snowbird staffing program, in which people who came south for the winter helped staff towers in exchange for a place to put their RV or camper for a few months, was never a big success, partly because those people tended to go back north before Florida's busiest fire months of May and June. This new proposal would focus more on local residents interested in volunteering to staff towers during the periods of highest need. This is currently done on a very limited basis, managed by individual local FFS offices. Steps to move forward with this program would include determining which towers local managers might want to have staffed, looking into training, and finding the volunteers that are interested in staffing a fire tower.

At 11 a.m. the conference call for the business meeting began with directors/officers calling in: OR-Howard Verschoor, WA(E)-Rod Fosback, CA(N)-Vickie Lamoureux, CA(Sierra Nev.)-Kathy Allison, CO-Kent Argow, WY-Buddy Washington, NM-Mark Gutzman, W.Dep-Dave Bula, AR-Smoke Pfeiffer, ME-Bill Cobb, NH-Chris Haartz, E.Dep-Mark Haughwout, Ron Stafford.

Chairman Argow listed the agenda for the board meeting: election, approval of the western meeting minutes, Chairman's Report, Treasurer's Report, Membership Report, old business, new business, and any other reports.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The first order of business was the election of officers. Chairman Argow asked for anyone who had not voted that wished to cast a verbal one at this time. Ed Seifert, acting as the Teller, read the results that had been received from election chair Rob Hoeye. With no seats contested, the results were Western Deputy - Howard Verschoor, Historian - Bob Spear, Secretary - Ray Grimes, and Southern Deputy (by write-in votes) - Ron Stafford. Gary Weber made the motion Bob Spear seconded to accept the results and all were in favor.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The chair asked for any corrections to the western meeting minutes. Buddy Washington advised that the insurance for the Big Horn Chapter in WY is \$500 per year not \$200 and it covers any activities for that chapter's members in the lower 48 states. Rod Fosback advised that the location should be shown as Boyds, not Kettle Falls. With no other corrections, Mark Gutzman made the motion to accept the minutes as corrected, Howard Verschoor seconded; all were in favor.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Argow started with news of the new design for the FFLA web site. He then thanked Bill Cobb for his work and asked Bill for any comments. Bill advised he plans on updating other pages on the site and is going to try to update the site weekly, so will be looking for material from directors and members. Bill then took any questions. Kathy Allison asked about formats Bill would take, Bill advised he would take any format and would adjust it fit the site. Vickie Lamoureux asked about the guest book page on the web site, Bill advised that the provider of old guest book site went out of business, so he is looking to find another guest book site and get that one up in running. Mark Gutzman asked Bill about drop box, in which you can put bigger files if they cannot be put into an email, Bill was going to check in to that.

The chair advised that the FFLA has two agreements in the works: an MOU with the US Forest Service Heritage section, and the second with HistoriCorps that includes a project in Utah that Kent Argow may be working on. Keith went over a few things going on with the San Diego-Riverside local chapter after Brad Eells moved from the area; Curt Waite has stepped up to take the lead. The group opened Boucher Hill Lookout in September.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The Treasurer's Report had been distributed by email; Gary went over updates on it.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

The Membership Report had also been distributed by email; in summary we had a loss of 6 members during the year with 85 new members, but lost 91 members from not renewing or that passed away. Gary opened to any questions; there were none.

OLD BUSINESS

Insurance was brought up. Gary suggested that we just look for basic insurance covering liability for officers and meeting venues, then down the road look at getting insurance for activities such as restoration work on lookouts. Howard asked about insurance for staffing lookouts. Keith has a call in to Outdoor Underwriters Insurance that covers National Woodland Owners liability insurance and see what they can do for the FFLA, if they could come up with a reasonable policy for the FFLA. He has not heard back from them. Buddy has spoken with his agent who got insurance for the Big Horn Chapter, if he finds anything out he will be contacting Keith directly about it. Kathy asked about the language of the insurance policy for Big Horn as when she was looking for insurance for the Buck Rock Foundation she had problems, too. Buddy will be sending that info up to Keith who will then pass it on.

NEW BUSINESS

Having the board meeting by conference call so more directors could participate, was considered a success by all, with the recognition that a physical meeting is still needed for certain aspects. It was suggested that if a chapter needed a boost with local members, the board meeting could be hosted with very little effort. An idea of having a board meeting in Louisville to incorporate Indiana, Kentucky and Ohio might be a good idea, but the offer will be put out to all directors for any willing to host next year's meeting.

The discussion of the proposed Florida Firewatchers program was summarized for those on the call.

Mark updated everyone about the Western Conference to be held in New Mexico in September. He thanked Gary and Rod for their help in giving him information for the meeting. Mark has a web site up and running for the conference and can access that off the FFLA web site. Mark also advised that he has changed from Cloudcroft to Mayhill due to the expense on the conference site.

Keith noted that the NHLR is at 971 lookouts listed. Anyone needing certificates or signs should contact Keith directly.

Keith thanked everyone for their chapter reports. He would like 100% chapter reports and tasked the deputy chairs with seeing that every chapter in their region submits a report. Bill

advised that people do read the chapter reports and ask when a chapter does not have a report. So yes, chapter reports are read and are missed when not posted.

Keith brought up the idea of Summer Chapter Socials. Howard is organizing a summer get-together on the Umatilla NF in Washington to go to lookouts and hang out and swap stories and ideas. He wanted to make sure that everyone knows that this gathering is not a meeting but just a social gathering.

There will be a combined Southern/Eastern conference this summer, tentatively in Beckley, West Virginia. More info will follow as plans develop.

Plans for 2013

- Improve communications with officers and directors
- Additional info on local chapters
- ESRI mapping project underway, the chair is Kyle Stettler
- Appoint membership retention committee
- Bob Spear is the liaison with The Forest History Society, Ron Stafford will assist
- Any other activities

Buddy asked about state reports, and that local chapters send their reports to the director so he or she would know what the local chapter is doing in their area. Buddy also asked that directors be informed of new members, so they can send a welcome letter that person. Gary advised that he has been trying to send generic welcome letters to new members by hard copy or email with a cc to that chapter director.

Kent asked about a page on the web site where people can join, also that a welcome letter to the new members should be able to be formatted from a database.

Keith appointed a new web site committee: Bill Cobb and Kent Argow.

Keith asked for any other business before going to the budget.

Mark Gutzman spoke about the electronic version of Lookout Network. He may see if it can be put on the USFS internal network so Forest Service employees could read it.

The proposed budget for 2013 was presented by Treasurer Weber:

<i>Income</i>		
Balance Forward	\$5,674.21	
Dues	\$13,000.00	
Donations	\$300.00	
Chapter Grants/Donations (Pass-Through)	\$5,000.00	
Merchandise Sales	\$1,200.00	
Interest	\$50.00	
Total	\$25,224.21	
<i>Expenses</i>		
Publication		-\$10,000.00
Chapter Distributions		-\$1,800.00
Brochures		-\$2,400.00
Restoration Grants		-\$2,000.00
Emergency Stabilization Grants		-\$300.00
Chapter Grants/Donations (Pass-Through)		-\$5,000.00
Insurance		-\$2,000.00
Merchandise Purchase		-\$800.00
Operations		-\$500.00
Forest History Society/Archive		-\$150.00
Website Upgrade		-\$200.00
Total		-\$25,150.00
Year-end Balance	\$74.21	

Treasurer Weber made the motion and Bob Spear seconded it with all in favor; the budget as proposed was accepted.

Mark spoke about the National Interagency Fire Center web site with a page for volunteers called prevention/education and other programs and that perhaps some of our things could be put on their site. Gary was going to take a look in to it.

Smoke advised that the Southern Region of the Forest Service is doing a regional fire tower history management plan, headed by Bob Pasqual, Archeologist for the National Forests in Alabama. Smoke is going to try to get all southern directors to participate in this.

The board meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.