

NAFSR Board Meeting Notes

Phoenix, AZ

February 4 - 5, 2020

Tuesday, February 4th

Attendees

Jim Caswell (Chair), Larry Payne (Vice Chair), Jim Golden (Past Chair), Rich Stem (R-1), Tom Thompson (R-2), Greg Griffith (R-3), Jack Troyer (R-4), Mike Rogers (R-5 south), Steve Eubanks (R-5 North), Ranotta McNair (R-6), Malcolm Gramley (R-8), Don Howlett (R-9), Pete Griffin (R-10), Rich Guldin (Research), Bill Timko (National), Becki Heath (National), Jane Kollmeyer (National), Dale Robertson (Chief Emeritus), Gail Kimbell (Chief Emeritus), Al West (Fire Committee Chair), Phil Aune (Awards Chair), Bill Disbrow (Webmaster), and Johnny Hodges (Secretary).

Others in attendance – Ed Shepard, President, and Beau McClure, VP of Operations, from the Public Lands Foundation; Vicki Christiansen, Chief of the USFS (Wednesday afternoon); and NAFSR members Lynn Sprague, Bob Joslin and Ted Stubblefield.

Treasurer Report - Johnny Hodges

Johnny Hodges passed out the NAFSR Financial Summary and the Membership Summary for 2015-2019.

Our ending balance on December 31, 2019 was \$33,305. During 2019, our revenue was \$22,156 and expenses were \$21,842 for a net increase of \$314.

At the end of 2019 we had moved \$9,000 into our mutual fund investment account. The change in market value for this account in 2019 was +\$1,356. In January 2020 we moved an additional \$1,000 into the account for a total of \$10,000 invested. We will maintain the investment at this level for now.

Membership Report - Johnny Hodges

Our membership at the end of 2019 is 683 which is almost identical to the end of 2018. We gained 34 new members in 2019, and lost 37 who resigned, didn't renew their annual dues, or were deceased.

We have 180 "Golden" members who are over 80 years old. They comprise 26% of our total membership. They don't pay dues, but some do make donations.

Of the 683 current members, we have 115 Lifetime Members which make up 17% of our membership.

Website – Bill Disbrow, Webmaster

Bill provided a handout with statistics related to our website. Activity on our website continues to increase at a substantial level.

The total number of visitors to the website in 2019 was 42,492, an increase of 9,525 (29%) over 2018.

Our total page views in 2019 were 74,372, an increase of 10,341 (16%) over 2018.

Total hits in 2019 was 363,683, an increase of 94,327 (35%) over 2018.

You can view the full report at <https://www.nafsr.org/docs/2019/2019WebReport.php>

Bill Timko – Congress/USDA Update

Doug Crandall had planned to attend our meeting, but he canceled a couple of weeks ago. Some of these comments are from discussions between Bill and Doug.

- Congress is so divisive; they don't expect to accomplish much this year.
- The cap on the RTRT trust fund is currently \$30 million. Trust fund dollars come from tariffs. This cap could be increased to provide more funding for reforestation.
- Climate change/carbon/reforestation bill from Congressman Westerman is being worked on. "Trillion trees" is the new buzzword. He is avoiding forest management issues. Considering tax incentives to build with wood (carbon sequester).
- A hearing is scheduled on FS Infrastructure.
- Cottonwood Legislation – 9th and 10th circuits have different opinions.
- Congressional Review Act means that any new regulations must be out before summer.
- Shared Stewardship – Large projects currently working with 12 states. The states provide some resources.
- Planning to finalize the Alaska Roadless Rule.
- Currently 2 vacant RF positions.

Archive Project – Darrel Kenops

Darrel reported that the 2000 – 2014 records are now archived at the National Museum of Forest Service History in Missoula. He has worked with Dave Stack at the museum on this project. There are 14,000 pages of documents.

Next steps –

1. Assemble NAFSR volunteer team to assemble Accession Codes for 2015 – 2020.
2. Determine who can access documents.
3. Decide what archives can be used for orientation.
4. Use archived material for presentations to various groups.

Fire Committee Update – Al West

Al mentioned Fire Committee members present in the room including Mike Rogers, Steve Eubanks, Lynn Sprague and Jim Golden

Al would like new (younger) members to join the committee. Becki Heath has agreed to join the committee and was approved by the NAFSR Board.

The spring fire committee meeting with the WO is scheduled for Sacramento in early April. Jim Hubbard indicated that he plans to attend.

Committee members continue to serve as members of fire review teams.

Boy Scouts of America want to add a Wildland Fire merit badge. NAFSR will send a letter of support.

A number of resources were sent to Australia this year (until 1983 it was illegal to share resources with other countries).

As the NAFSR Liaison to the Cohesive Strategy, Mike Rogers gave a brief update on the National Cohesive Strategy. He described several issues that are coming out of the Resource Management Fires the Forest Service is utilizing.

Many downstream communities below mega fires are now going bankrupt as a result of continuing post fire impacts. Mike described the post fire impacts of the Paradise Fire and the unintended and unforeseen impacts on the city of Chico, CA.

Eighty-six people perished in the Paradise Fire; most of them were evacuees. A decision was made early in the fire that the whole community needed to evacuate all at once, which jammed up the roads leading out of Paradise.

Many of the homes that burned to the ground in Paradise caught fire two to three hours after the main windblown fire front went through Paradise. People that stayed behind saved their homes and in many cases the vacant homes of their neighbors.

Mike mentioned a new challenge that has arisen, procuring the USFS Honor Guard for the Memorial Services of deceased Forest Service Retirees. Under the current protocols, if the family of our very honored and distinguished retired Chief Max Peterson were to request the presence of a USFS honor Guard, Max would not qualify.

Mike will send out the current protocols as iterated by the R-5 Director of Fire and Aviation, Bob Baird. Bob Baird also asked if there was the possibility of NAFSR forming their own Honor Guard to honor retirees. Would training be available? Bob Joslin asked if there was any film footage of the Honor Guard at work. We need to do a search and get it to the NAFSR Membership.

Awards Committee – Phil Aune

Phil said the committee is still searching for nominees for the John R. McGuire Award. Tom Thompson nominated the Pikes Peak Ranger District, Pike and San Isabel N.F. in honor of the last 100 years of Memorial Grove support. An annual ceremony at Memorial Grove honors Rocky Mountain Region employees that have passed away in the past year.

Phil proposed a change in rules that would allow the committee to work with outside entities to encourage nominations. The Board voted to approve the change.

Phil also proposed a new award, currently titled “Exceptional Public Service Award” that would be focused on partners. Send comments to Phil and the committee will develop a proposal.

Public Lands Foundation – Ed Shepard

- Jim Caswell is our representative on the PLF Board.
- BLM relocation – the new office in Grand Junction opened on January 2.
- The Director, Assistant Director and others are on an acting basis. Eventually about 30 people will work there.
- Forestry positions will be moved to Portland and Boise.
- Other employees are scattered across the West.
- There is much unrest within the BLM Reorganization effort. Current management sees the Public Lands Foundation as a threat to their efforts to decentralize the current organization. This has had an impact on PLF to draw in new retirees. Current employees do not want to be seen as having any connections with PLF.
- 80 - 85% of the employees in D.C. refused to move.
- Morale is low.
- There seems to be no plan on how the reorganization will work.
- PLF is offering two \$5000 scholarships for natural resource majors who are currently college juniors or seniors.
- PLF will hold their annual meeting Sept. 15 – 18 in Rock Springs, WY.

2019 Accomplishments – Jim Caswell

Jim ran through a summary of our accomplishments in 2019. All our letters are posted on our website under “Advocacy”. Letters more than a year old are filed under “Advocacy Archives” and are sorted by year.

We wrote letters on the following topics -

- Government shutdown
- Job Corps closure decision and reversal of the decision. This included a letter to all 535 members of Congress.
- BLM Move

- Secretary Bernhardt nomination
- Highway Bill
- Executive Order on working forests
- Workforce Capacity Study

We joined the American Wildlife Conservation Partners (AWCP) in co-signing 15 letters on a variety of issues such as wildlife reform, fire borrowing, LWCF, FLPMA and appropriations. We also attended their annual meeting.

We prepared the Workforce Capacity Study and provided a copy to Secretary Perdue as well as sharing it with a wide variety of interested parties.

We completed a Retiree Brochure informing new retirees of National and Regional organizations which they might be interested in joining. The Chief agreed to include the brochure in retiree packets.

We attended several Farm Bill listening sessions around the country.

The Fire Committee met in the spring with the WO.

Referral from PLF on mineral withdrawals on Boundary Waters.

We worked on Environmental Analysis Decision-Making (EADM) and new NEPA regulations.

We provided comments on ESA and new CEQ regulations.

We joined the Forest Climate Working Group.

Regulation Reform – EADM Update – Rich Stem

A team in D.C. is working on regulations and expects to finish in June/July.

The Forest Service has worked closely with CEQ.

EADM is focused on 3 priorities – (handout)

1. Regulation and Policy
2. Business Practices
3. People and Culture and Training

CEQ Reform – Ranotta McNair

- Public comment period ends March 10
- We will provide 5 – 6 points
- There are 3 broad areas where we are in agreement
- Rule vs. policy
- To get more efficient – requirements of EA vs. EIS (example)
- Cumulative effects is proposed to be taken out of NEPA (we oppose)

- Significance
- Good neighbors

Forest Climate Working Group – Rich Guldin

- Website - **forestclimateworkinggroup.org**
- Large scale reforestation can offset the impacts of emissions of 650 million vehicles (1.35 billion vehicles in the world, 278 million in the U.S.)
- There are currently 50 members in the working group.
- Currently forming a communications group
 - Strategic retreat of the communications group scheduled March 3 – 4.
 - The goal is to develop compelling stories to persuade Congress to make policy changes.
 - The group is looking for a communications specialist, possibly a former PAO. Some possible candidates - Elaine Murphy, Larry Seekins, Ed Waldehel, Sally Collins, or Al Matecko.
 - Will contact this group and check interest. If interested they will write short bio and send to Rich G. by 2/16.

The Working Group has developed four goals -

1. Maintain and expand forest cover
2. Advance markets for forest products and skilled labor
3. Improve forest practices
4. Enhance climate data and applied science

Reforestation – Jim Golden and Bill Timko

Bill handed out a Reforestation Fact Sheet from the FS.

- The FS estimates there is a 1.3 mm acre backlog with 700,000 acres needing planting and 600,000 acres requiring facilitated or natural regeneration. Many people think the backlog is much larger.
- Wildfire has caused 80% of the reforestation needs.
- In 2019 the FS addressed less than 5% of the wildfire-caused planting needs.
- The FS plants approximately 60,000 acres per year or about 18 million trees on NFS lands.
- FS nurseries produce about 35 million trees per year.
- Funding for reforestation can come from appropriated dollars, KV or the Reforestation Trust Fund (RTF). There is considerable competition within the FS for these funds.
- The RTF was established at \$30 million/year 40 years ago and the authorization has never been increased.
- FS reforestation needs

1. Focus on fire-related needs (not harvest acres)
2. 54% require planting
3. 41% is certification of natural regeneration
4. 4% is site preparation for natural regeneration
5. Less than 1% is for seeding

Next Steps –

- Start with current documents.
- Support current legislation
- Encourage FS to look at their priorities.
- Partnerships
- Go for RTF increase

Infrastructure – Larry Payne

The current backlog is \$5.2 billion. This includes roads, bridges, trails and dams.

Three areas where we can help – DOI deferred maintenance bill; highway bill reauthorization which expires this year; or the grand deal - \$2 trillion.

Success this year looks unlikely.

Next Steps –

- Advocacy
- Ask Doug Crandall for advice
- Stay connected with our partners

Wednesday, February 5, 2020

Program of Work for 2020-2021

NAFSR “Program of Work” priorities for CY 2020-2021 with leads for each issue:

1. OPERATIONS
 - A. National Reunion 2021--- Jim Caswell, Johnny Hodges, Phil Aune, Mike Rogers
 - B. Records Management----Darrel Kenops, Johnny Hodges, Bill Disbrow
 - C. Accomplishment Report--- Jim Caswell, Larry Payne, Johnny Hodges
 - D. Evaluate USFS Employee Facebook Page--- Becki Heath, Ranotta McNair

2. STRATEGIC
 - A. Keeping Public Lands Public--- Jack Troyer
 - B. Refocus Efforts to Outreach NAFSR Change Platform to A Broader Audience

- Forestry Policy/Process (EADM)--- Rich Stem
 - Project Capacity--- Jim Caswell, Larry Payne, Tom Thompson, Rich Stem, Jack Troyer, Jane Kollmeyer, Ranotta McNair
 - Active Management EO/2021 Budget Initiative--- Hank Kashdan, Dale Robertson
- C. CEQ NEPA--- Ranotta McNair, Becki Heath, Don Howlett, Joe Carbone, Rich Stem (proposed rule comments)
- D. Reforestation/Forest Climate Working Group, “The Silent Crisis”- Jim Golden, Rich Guldin, Bill Timko
- E. Emerging Issues--- Jim Caswell, Larry Payne, All
- F. Infrastructure--- Jim Caswell, Larry Payne, Tim DeCoster

2021 FS Reunion – Nancy Gibson

Contracts are secured and staffing and planning well underway. They are planning for 800+ attendees. Venue will be accommodated at Harrah’s in South Lake Tahoe. Nancy asks that we use our contacts with retirees to get the word out.

Dates of the reunion - September 13-17, 2021

Bin Items

Need someone to attend AWCP in Omaha, March 11 representing NAFSR. Pete Griffin volunteered.

NAFSR is invited to a 2-hour meeting about Job Corps February 24 in the WO. Bill Timko will attend.

Jim Golden warned that we need to be careful about endorsing people for particular positions. We need to protect our reputation.

Regional Reports

Gail Kimbell – very encouraged with what NAFSR is working on.

Ranotta McNair (R-6)- The region has changed a couple of forest supervisors. Continuing struggle with lack of personnel.

Becki Heath

Interviewed with R-6 RF (Glenn Cassamasa) – he is looking for solutions to working with counties and groups.

ACES Program – transitioning with Hank Kashdan to take over as liaison for the program. There are currently 150 enrollees.

Rich Stem (R-1)

RF Leanne Martin is doing a comprehensive look at the Region and their capacity issue. Part of the reason was our workforce capacity report to stimulate that look. Staffing is out of balance - one forest with 8 fuels people and another with none as an example. Many situations have resulted in the continued decline in budget and difficulty in filling positions. This is not just Region 1.

Litigation continues to be a problem.

Too much planning and not enough action concerning some agreements that are in the works.

Bill Timko

The local D.C. retiree group meets every other month with lots of speakers.

Working with Doug Crandall and reforestation folks.

Need more engagement from the group.

Greg Griffith (R-3)

RF Cal Joyner is on medical leave.

Mexican spotted owl has stopped timber management on 5 forests. Enjoined by the Forest Guardians with continuing litigation.

National Christmas tree from the Carson N.F. was caught in an injunction because of the litigation.

Pete Griffin (R-10)

Continuing work on the Alaska Roadless Rule.

Potential offer of 46 million board feet per year.

Phil Aune

Good neighbor authority is really expanding in North Idaho.

SAF annual meetings along with industry are drawing 300 people with strong interest in collaborative projects/partnerships.

Mike Rogers (R-5 south)

The state of retirees in R-5 is good. Numerous people working on the 2021 reunion.

Steve Eubanks (R-5 north)

The Region has a Master Stewardship Agreement with NFF which provides lots of flexibility. The first work will be on the Tahoe N.F.

RF and State Forester said we need to treat 500,000 ac./year which is about 5 times what they can currently do.

State of California has billions of \$ in carbon credits

Biomass produced hydrogen is much more valuable than electricity produced from biomass. Green hydrogen from biomass is the only way to go.

Don Howlett (R-9)

Doing more with less money. There are lots of partnerships to get things done.

Kirtland warbler was de-listed after 50 years on the endangered species list.

Dale Robertson

Working on CEQ Rule reviews.

Jack Troyer (R-4)

Jack moved from Ogden to Helena in April and now he's not sure who he represents.

The retiree group in Ogden is really shrinking.

Mac Gramley (R-8)

Finished up the 2018 reunion in June.

There is a big increase in retiree membership.

Tom Thompson (R-2)

The new Acting RF is Jennifer Eberlien.

Rocky Mountaineers retirees group is doing well with 440 members. They are very active offering four college scholarships this year and continue to sponsor an international trip each year plus a variety of other activities.

The region has a \$50 million collaborative with multiple organizations.

Lots of good things happening in the region.

Critique

- Good agenda, stuck to it
- No reluctance to speak up
- Good discussion on all topics
- Can't see body language over the phone
- On a couple of issues, it was a little foggy on the expectations, could have used more pre-work

- Face to face time is important
- Diverse group
- How is the Board doing for you guys?
- Is the Board being included in enough decisions?

Future Calls and Meetings

Next 2020 conference calls - May 7, August 6, November 5

Next meeting – first week of February 2021

We will plan to meet before the 2021 reunion on Monday, September 13.

Chief Remarks

Chief Vicki Christiansen met with us in the afternoon for about 1 ½ hours. Following are a few of her comments.

- We are showing a trajectory of progress.
- Key leadership positions – We had a full leadership team in July, then Lenise Lago retired at end of year and moved to Missoula to take care of her mom. Cal Joyner has pancreatic cancer (stage 1) and it is operable.
- 2019 was a challenging year with a 35-day shutdown. It was an average fire season. \$780 mm was borrowed from trust funds was re-paid in April.
- 2019 Volume Sold – 3.3 billion bf. Target this year is 3.7 billion bf. We missed our target in fuels due to a wet season.
- Good progress on regulation reform/EADM. We received 120,000 comments with the biggest feedback we were trying to shortcut public input. The final will be out late spring/early summer.
- Nothing in proposed WH rules will conflict with our reform.
- Business operations is focused on modernizing forest products.
- Other reforms – leveraging and don't let administrative boundaries restrict our actions. Good Neighbor Authority is working well in 38 states; we doubled the amount of timber in GNA's from 2018 to 2019.
- Shared stewardship agreements are signed, 6 scheduled, 20 in the works. States take the lead and can be focused on any resource areas and outcomes.
- Funding – We had our 2020 full budget by December 20. We ended with about a \$50 million increase which all went into salary costs.
- Hiring – Continuing problems with outdated HR systems that don't talk to each other; human capital planning; seasonal hiring (security issues), moving from temp to perms to avoid security with temps. Attrition rate is 2200 per year, but they only give us 1800 positions. We have direct hire for up to 3080 positions for fire.
- Healthy forests are a great carbon sink.

- Cross laminated timber (CLT) can be used in buildings up to 16 stories starting in 2021. Another great carbon sink.
- Reforestation – 1.3 mm acre backlog, 700,000 need planting (handout).
- Infrastructure - \$5.2 billion backlog, \$3.6 is roads and bridges. Sustain our national parks bill is in congress. Congressman de Fazio is holding hearing tomorrow on just the FS backlog. No big infrastructure bills this year, but we want to be included in the discussions.
- Job Corps Black Friday was May 24 when the decision was they would all go to Labor; since the change in the decision, JC has rallied.
- Big improvement in our safety record, 41% decline in comp claims
- Funding is the #1 reason we can't reforest burn areas.
- Disaster relief fund will prevent fire borrowing. Fire funding went back to the 2014 average and freed up \$700 million. We got back \$50 million.
- Question – What can we do about the infrastructure issue? Answer - Bring more awareness to the size of our problem. We still have a lot of no bid sales because the road package is too big.
- Honor Guard issue
- Question - Is FS getting any pressure similar to BLM in taking apart the WO? Answer - This administration thought the WO was top heavy and we have not increased the size of the WO.

Notes taken by Johnny Hodges

Final Edits 2/26/2020