

SE Quarterly Call

February 26, 2020

Notes



Introductions

- **Nick Biemiller:** Southeast Region Director with the Forest Stewards Guild. More of an update on our projects will be at the end.
- **Dakota Wagner:** Southeast Region Coordinator with the Forest Stewards Guild, hired to the team in late October 2019. Works on project coordination and event management on our SE projects.
- Nick: A note on state representatives: state reps are members of the Guild that offer to play a role to represent their states and stay up to date on forestry hot topics
- **Justin Hart:** Alabama Representative. Professor and director of environmental science at university of Alabama, also recently elected to the Guild's Member Policy Council (MPC)
 - Big topic around the state for the last month is the water. Been extremely wet, haven't broken records yet but still have the opportunity to [break records]. It's been halting forestry operations. That's been an issue with prescribed fire as well.
 - Have been at least some burn days, but not as much as usual.
 - Still a shortage of truck drivers on the state level
 - Invasive plants, pests, etc always an issue
 - Nothing really unique to Alabama as the southeast is likely also experiencing all of these things
- Nick: highlighting MPC, student chapter updates?
- Justin: Not an expert of the MPC, only been on two calls. We meet on conference calls once a month. Some of the items that are covered are communications, membership, etc. some of the other things we cover are new issues that bubble to the surface. Right now working on policy as it relates to plantations. Also working on carbon.
 - Members of MPC choose several of the initiatives they want to participate in and they would meet and discuss those topics outside of the normal monthly meetings
 - Student engagement: quite a few members excited about formalizing student chapters across the country. Putting together a packet of informational materials on how to put together a student chapter "BMP of creating student chapters"

- University of Alabama chapter started several years ago. Recognized by the university so they are able to use campus services including funds (for conferences and other things). Has about 30 members that's a mix of graduates and undergrads but the majority is undergrad. No SAF accreditations so our pool is environmental science majors and others interested in natural resources. Students are active and do some sort of recreational activity (e.g. tree planting), educational outreach
- **Clint Patterson:** Kentucky representative. Ditto some of what was just said especially the wet weather. Everything is really wet. Kentucky master logger class last week, the weather and the markets are the main concern here. Red oak prices in the tank, white oak continuing to rise due to bourbon industry...trying to figure out how we're going to get in the woods because it's raining everyday
 - At Berea: shortleaf pine restoration. KDF becoming more and more active with prescribed burning. Once we get a burn window that's nice to know they can be involved. Finishing up the tree planting from the grant with the Guild
 - Kentucky hosted SAF convention last year and Berea college was one of the side trips you could go on. One of the things that SAF is beginning to focus more on is ethics. He is the chair of the history and philosophy working group. Had a speaker at the convention and she really got the ball rolling on the idea of the forestry profession returning to its roots and becoming more holistic. We're trying to run with that and trying to get ethics put back into SAF. Something that's talked about every year. He thinks that's there's two ways to look at SAF: competitor or potential partner. I wonder if we can push them to do things that we agree with? Thinks that ethics is a way we can do that. The Guild is more holistic, more big-picture thinking. Maybe dual members can have an impact on bringing SAF more in-line with our philosophy?
- **Stephen Montgomery:** Florida representative.
 - Been very dry in north FL, pulp mills are full. Good thing for us since it's been really wet the last couple years. Start transitioning into growing season burns starting soon in north Florida.
 - State forester is retiring for the forest service. Important role, have a new state forester starting on the first of March. Will probably see changes soon.
 - Hurricane Michael: year and a half ago but the impacts are still there. The USDA has a grant that can be distributed to the industry (timber and farm) within the panhandle and impacted area
 - Back in the fall new rules were enacted for burning sugarcane fields in Florida. Mostly due to air quality. Placed more restrictions to improve air quality. As a

state that burns a lot, trying to keep an eye on that to see what trickles down in the next couple years to see if that affects our [forestry's] burning capabilities. As of now not affecting forestry.

- **Steve Grado:** Mississippi representative.
 - In the field, can mimic what others have reported. Awful lot of rain, it's raining today. There's very little activity in the woods as a result. Logging, prescribed burning has come to a halt.
 - Industry: Continue to have a problem in the northern part of the state with not having a place to bring wood. A lot of pine capacity being built in the southern part of the state. Pellet operation that are building largest pellet facility in the world in S MS. They have a faculty member on their board, so that's something to keep an eye on.
 - University: lost 40% of work force, mostly due to retiring. He's the oldest person in the department now and has been there for 25 years. Continue to have positions open in the department. Dean is retiring this summer, so not sure what will happen there. They're also hiring division VP. Have 180 undergrads, grads are down a bit. But the undergrads go to grad school or straight to a good job. Want to hire staff that will enable students to get good jobs.
 - Been involved with forest certification, primarily with FSC. Find that there's an increasing number of jobs available, so that's a good thing. One thing he's noticed on certification though is that MS has been a little bit of a hold-out where they haven't been moving forward with FSC certs, but it's started moving forward and increasing steadily. Big change on certification here.
- **Dave Halley:** North Carolina representative. Consulting forester with True North (that he owns). Been a Guild member for 18 years. Served a couple terms on MPC.
 - Started a Forest-her program. Probably one of the most successful outreach programs they've ever had. Targeting workshops at 3-4 locations across the state with great turnout. Series of workshops, will probably have 16 different workshops.
 - Longleaf Alliance October 20-23 annual meeting
 - NCFS has been trying to create some additional funding for landowners in NC. Burning, restoration etc.
 - Camp Cherokee is a model forest in NC and was nominated to be the outstanding tree farm of the year. Looking to host annual meeting in October at the camp and highlights oak-hickory restoration.
- **Darrell Pendris:** South Carolina representative

- Drenched. In the fall we had a number of counties on the verge of drought, but all counties are back to normal as far as water goes. It's affecting markets and harvest, that's for sure.
- Tariffs affected demand. In zones where hardwoods are grown, it's been hard for everyone who grow and source hardwoods. There's some loss of hardwood mill capacity.
- Major paper machine shutdown in Charleston area. Dimensional sawmill, panel mill...these reductions in demand have caused landowners to really consider alternate outputs for their forestland. Starting to take very close looks at carbon and wetland mitigation banking. Even longleaf restoration.
- Tough logging capacity also true here in SC. Have seen biomass take an increasing role in the pulpwood side... another positive for demand for low-grade material.
- Also seen upticks in certification.
- **Ken Smith:** Tennessee representative, Sewanee University of the South.
 - Soaking wet like everyone else.
 - Ash borer, HWA...ambrosia beetle is there now. Worried about what it's going to do
 - White oak is selling at a premium right now. Heavily involved in the white oak initiative, worried about white oak regen across the region
 - Shortleaf: working with the Guild and Berea on the project, have planted shortleaf and are putting them on a burn rotation. Planning on hosting learn and burn and other events for landowner outreach.
 - Recently got FSC certified at the university. Working with TNC working woodlands program to start getting into carbon and trying to be a Guild model forest.
- **Stuart Hale:** Virginia representative. Central Appalachian forest manager for TNC in SW VA. Also works in TN and KY
 - Same situation with weather. Rain 😞
 - Legislation talking a lot about urban forests, particularly around coastal areas. Green infrastructure, creating urban forests, starting to push for things like that.
 - Reforestation around abandoned mine land and reclaimed mine lands. A lot coming out of the state of the role forests play in communities. Thinking about ways we can put trees back in the ground to mitigate for climate change etc.
 - Job opening in TNC for a young forester
- **Barb Breshock:** West Virginia representative. Retired from WV DOE. Currently coordinating Women Owning Woodlands (WOW) program. Big workshop last spring, going to have another one this April...a lot of excitement.

- Wet, though very little snow...10 inches deficit from normal snow fall
- White Oak Initiative, the state is also involved.
 - WV State Barrel Co, new business
- No new forestry legislation because markets have been down on hardwoods. Haven't sold much on state forests.
- Three good neighbor projects, setting up some timber projects, cruise, wildlife
- Invasive species: spotted lantern fly been found in panhandle
- Back in the fall 13-day burn ban...serious drought, low RH, etc. Luckily didn't have bad wildfires.

Other Introductions

- **Nate Wilson:** land manager at University of the South, works with Ken
- **Jordan Luff:** grad student at UVM originally from NC. Just wanted to stay involved with the Guild in the SE

Guild Updates

- Guild Gatherings
 - 2020 National Guild Gathering in Asheville, NC will be in late-August, planning to send around save-the-date information about this very soon...AUGUST 19-22 most likely dates
 - Exciting stuff because it was at the Biltmore Estate in Asheville 25 years ago that the Guild's founding members came together and decided to found the national network of conservation-minded foresters that became FSG's membership program
 - Guild membership at it's core represents a national network of forest stewards who are committed to putting the forest first when making management decisions about the forestland they manage, promoting things like ecological forestry, wildlife forestry, or restoration forestry across the landscape
 - We're planning to focus this event on how the idea of ecological forestry has evolved over the past 25 years, and how the Guild has evolved as an organization- so reflecting back and assessing where we are now as an organization and a professional practice
- Other Events
 - Other events not specifically designed for members, targeted at private landowners, but all are welcome to attend
 - Wildlife Forestry in LMV of AR- first week of May
 - Wildlife Forestry in LMV of MS- first week of May

- Ecological forestry in Appalachian mesophytic cove forests in Morgantown, WV- May 30
 - Learn-and-Burn event in WNC- DuPont State Recreational Forest- March 28/April 4
- Programmatic updates
 - Shortleaf pine restoration program- continue our efforts on the Cumberland Plateau in TN/KY to promote pine-oak ecosystems and increase capacity for prescribed fire- interest in expanding this program in coming years to other geographies (e.g. SBR)
 - Bottomland hardwood program- active projects at this point across the South
 - LMV of AR, MS, and LA
 - Coastal Carolinas in SC and NC
 - Policy project in GA to assess forestry BMPs as they relate to wetland forests and exploring state-level incentive programs for wetland forest restoration
 - Promoting demonstration sites that exemplify wildlife forestry/ecological forestry
 - Producing technical resources to help practitioners make good decisions about managing bottomlands with wildlife in mind (e.g. FMP template for Coastal Carolinas)
 - Collaborative forest restoration in the Southern Blue Ridge
 - Partnering with EcoForesters and SAHC (local land trust) to engage landowners on a community-level in responsible forest stewardship and ecosystem restoration- bringing communities together to address forestry concerns on a watershed-scale
- National updates
 - Adjacent 25 year national Guild Gathering in PNW that our PNW Coordinator is organizing
- Hiring updates
 - Applications are live now for internships at the USFWS Carolina Sandhills NWR. Due first week of March—**March 4th!**
 - IMW team is hiring a couple positions in Loveland, CO

Closing

- **Nick:** Always feel inspired after these calls. Appreciate everyone's time. Recognize that the ball has been dropped on having these, planning on having them more regularly from here on out.