

SE Quarterly Call

May 27, 2020

Notes



Guild Introductions

- **Dakota Wagner** Southeast Region Coordinator
- **Nick Biemiller** Southeast Region Director
- **Amanda Mahaffey** Deputy Director

State Representatives and MPC Member Updates

- **Dakota:** Please start by introducing yourself- name, title, affiliation, state where you live/work. As part of these calls, we ask state representatives of the Guild and members of the Guild's MPC to share information on hot-topic issues in your state.
- **Clint Patterson – KY.** Berea, KY. Forester. Working with Nick on Shortleaf Pine Initiative RxB project. Still wet, but now we can't do a lot at a college with no students due to coronavirus. I believe Berea was the first college to decide to cancel classes. Been reacting to that. Log trucks still hauling logs, timber industry doesn't seem to be as worried as I would assume they would be. Still working in the woods here at the college, still will hire 2 staff members to do logging. Using horses to do our logging. Trying to be optimistic that economy will come back. Coming into this, White Oak Initiative by University of KY, funded by private funds from bourbon industry. We try to ensure white oak sustainability under pressure to produce barrels from white oak. Most of our ash having died from EAB, we're trying to salvage what's left of it. Discovering some lingering ash. UK involved in a genetic study of those. They hired a new prof in silviculture and forest ops there. Jacob Miller. Uses buzzwords around adaptive silviculture, novel approaches, forest adaptation with environmental change. I think he would be in line with the Forest Stewards Guild. Feel like I'm in a pretty good state as KY goes with moving Guild way of thinking.
- **Stuart Hale – TNC in Abingdon, VA.** Work in VA, KY, TN on forestry properties here. Goings on here similar to what Clint described. Most everybody's still working in the woods. Some folks have pulled back a little bit, but we're able to get wood out there every day, except for the rain. A lot of the mountains are trying to slide downhill. In VA, fortunate that things are still moving and working. Steve might also have some good updates.
 - **Steve Lindeman – (also in Virginia)** not a lot to add. I've worked mostly in land protection last 10-12 years. We are working with Greg Meade in an interesting project under NRCS, easements under Healthy Forest Reserve Program. Hybrid with our Working Woodlands program. Doing that in KY, TN, VA. Got application open, looking for some fairly large properties. We just pulled the trigger on hiring another forester. Starting mid-June. Strange time to come on board, how we'll onboard him. Tal Jacobs.

Duke grad. I think we can probably get him to be a member. Interesting we'll have 4 foresters working out of our Abingdon office. Quite a few foresters in the Commonwealth working for TNC.

- **Darrell Pendris – SC.** COVID-19 thing is really strange. Interesting to do into quarantine, back into an office. With masks. Odd to train a new person under this environment. Good to still be bringing technicians aboard. I work at Milliken Forestry Company, Director of Forest Certification here. Generally, markets seem to be somewhat stable here. Fairly stable demand in biomass, packaging, specialty paper, OSB, some hardwood panels. Little bit of firmness in hardwood export market. Good as well. But prices are all over the map as people try to figure out where the sweet spot is. People still working in the woods in SC. No major collapse of the supply chain. Increase in conservation easements, particularly by family investors. Weather, seeing a bump in harvests happening on the all-weather tracts. Good, but everyone's trying to get those tracts harvested.
- **Barb Breshock – WV** retired from WV DOF, now working on contract with them for Women Owning Woodlands program. Coordinating that with another Guild member Amy Cimarolli. WV Land Trust, does consulting work. Here in WV, varied around state for industry. Closing of Luke Pulp Mill in MD, our eastern panhandle's had it tough. Some mills shut down for a few weeks because of the virus, and industry foresters were laid off in that part of the state. In Southeastern part of state, they are still moving pulp wood. Quotas were put on early to try to get inventory down for summer for some of the hardwood markets. Most at or above target. Interstate Hardwoods over in Pocahontas County had 5 employees diagnosed with COVID-19. Not much fire season. One big blow to forestry community here is our state forester passed away. Had a bad accident at the house, hit his head. Hoping we can get as good a leader as he was to replace him. Also with COVID-19, logger certification and training typically takes place in person. They won't open classes up until late June. Expiring licenses will be allowed to stay in place until they can get the classes. Limit number of folks that can attend due to the virus.
- **Dave Halley – NC.** Consulting forester out of Holly Springs, NC. COVID-19 impacted our state quite a bit, but can't say it's impacted forestry. I get up, go to the woods every morning. Do practice social distancing with clients. Loggers think they're immune. NC State forestry school closed down. Summer camp virtual. Dave Schnake involved. A couple initiatives in state, one is Enviva who has opened a mill in the Sandhills area, initiative to promote longleaf pine restoration. They're working with the local RxB Council. Jesse Wimberley. Enviva providing him with a grant to provide foresters to meet with landowners to restore or enhance existing longleaf pine, eliminate hardwood understory. Ben Larson is working with us. Nice industry-landowner-forester initiative, which I really like. We started the Longleaf Pine Honor Roll. Partnership with state, feds, recognizing landowners who have restored longleaf pine. E.g. burning once in young stands, twice in older stands. Nice way to promote longleaf pine restoration. Camp Cherokee is a Model Forest. Received Outstanding Tree Farmer of Year.
- **Jeff Denman – Arkansas,** consulting forester. Did get a lot of rain up in Ozarks. Mississippi River flooded 20 of last 24 months. Put a damper on a lot of our thinnings in river valleys.

Windstorm, a lot of blowdown, damage. Buyers not interested. Forestry virtual training in lieu of on-site trainings. AR Game & Fish Commission has own fleet of foresters, but they're always short-staffed. Recently got bid invitations for inventory on 13,000 ac. Marking contract for 150 ac. If your state agencies are lacking in mgmt., can ask Arkansas about this program which they've had going for nearly 20 years. Lumber futures are up, rebounded about halfway from their peaks and valleys. Futures markets looking fairly good. As long as they're positive, I want to keep putting up timber sales.

- **Justin Hart – AL.** Professor and Director of Environmental Science at U of Alabama. Background in forest ecology and silviculture. I've been focused on making sure my research group doesn't come to a screeching halt over the summer. Trying to serve students on campus with field camps, field courses virtually. Poor substitute for being out in the woods, but what these folks have had to do. Right before we hit the stay-at-home orders, we had AL Forestry Ass'n Young Forest Leaders group come through Tuscaloosa. Year-long program where they select about 20 foresters throughout the state for leadership positions. Had them meet with U A FSG student chapter. Hopefully good exposure. Forest industry relatively untouched. Way behind on burning. Wet early on, then perfect spring combined with stay-at-home. Public lands especially behind on burning. Some will burn this fall more than normal. Targets won't be the same.
- **Stephen Montgomery – Gainesville, FL.** Not much logging. Wildfires. South FL 8200 ac near Naples. Rain over last couple days. Most destructive ones in panhandle. Musett Bayou, 5-Mile Swamp. Rain statewide last couple of days. Rain great for us to turn around on those fires. Echo AL, state lands haven't been getting as much burning done. FL, public agencies, folks working from home, staying flexible. Not even two people in a truck. Doing what we can, but hopefully can come out of COVID stuff and turn the corner. Growing season burns hopefully soon.
- **Steve Grado - MS** unable to join
- Ken Smith – TN unable to join at this time
- **Bruce White – MPC** – not made as much progress with goals to date due to impacts MPC members have had with the virus. A couple things affecting Southern region. Early stages of bouncing around a potential policy statement around forest plantations. Probably not going to come together this year, massive undertaking if we decide to do it. South and PNW are primary plantation-growing lands. If we go on that process, I might be calling some of y'all for insights and opinions. Other thing we hope will go on is 25th Anniversary Guild Gathering in Asheville. Surely hoping that will be able to take place. Hopefully central enough location that most of y'all would be able to attend. Keep that on your calendar. Bottomlands Initiative. Other Carolinas updates. I overlap with Dave and Darrel in my geography, but I do know as you start going north, SC line, markets get worse the further you go. Exception wood pellet market is fairly stable. Pulp and paper markets and lumber markets a bit worse. I've actually gotten a fair amount of burning done this spring, not being an agency. We don't it a lot on large scale, but I've been right on schedule with my burning, so that has been nice. NC SPB prevention program, federally funded but state administered. This year for first time, started promoting other practices besides PCT. Folks have gotten caught up on PCT. This year, also funding some TSI treatments, as well as RxB.

That's good news, hard to get cost-share funding for it. Negative side, I've got several clients with EQIP applications submitted and not heard a peep from anywhere in NRCS. Fire problems in Hurricane Michael areas?

- Steven: Not really. Send more resources when fires occur. Waiting for federal money to be released to landowners so they can recoup cost from damaged timber over there. I've gotten grants from state nursery to help with reforestation efforts up there. Can't expect to see it happen all this season, but hope to keep forested areas forested for the future.
- Darrel: Plantations statement driver?
- Bruce: Been knocked around for years. Issue seems to come up sort of as corollary to other position statements the MPC deals with. Seems like it comes up, and we don't have a position to fall back on. Depending on what part of the country you're in, very positive and very negative views. It would help make other position statements that much stronger. Again, it's a monumental task, and may end up punting on it again. Seeing it through, so many issues involved. MPC right now, might be good time to address it, seems to be so much collaboration as a Guild to come to a consensus on where we stand. Not adversarial atmosphere. In the South, will probably be a hotbed discussion. Other MPC update – wanted to ramp up and readvertise our Model Forest Program. Dave, I'm glad you mentioned you got OTFY; that's excellent. I'll be reaching out to current foresters with Model Forests and getting their opinion on the program and what they like and don't like about it, calling some ideas for potential candidates. Darrel, that Brosnan tract came to mind as a possibility.
- Darrel: It's a pretty stunning example of the Stoddard-Neil approach in real life.
- Bruce: Don Handley, long-time Guild member passed away just a few months ago. I tried to reach out to his son, Gary, and wasn't successful. He was a pioneer of bringing uneven aged management.
- **Ken Smith – TN.** Forestry & Env Sci prof at Sewanee TN, University of the South. Guild member 17-18 years. Board of Directors. Work closely with Nate Wilson. School owns 13,000 ac. Mgmt every year. Last couple years, working with Clint and Nick on shortleaf restoration work. Just finished Phase 1 this year. Planted 12,000 seedlings in series of 1-3 ac openings. Monitor growth, comparing spots where using fire and not using fire. Also some wildlife folks monitoring bats and rodents in intact forest as well. Will be continuing that on with the Guild and with Berea doing mainly outreach events and RxB on our property and other areas. TN, not much new since last call. Dried up a little bit compared to the winter, but just a little bit. Last week pretty rainy. Slowed down a lot of activity across the state. Nobody's on campus. Like a lot of schools, trying to decide whether to bring students back in the fall or not. Online teaching, I don't want to do it again. Echo what Bruce said about Don Handley. I really enjoyed getting to know him. He was a great forester. Pretty tough loss for the organization.

Member Introductions

- Steve Brock – Lower MS Joint Venture Partnership. Partnership Coordinator. Really strong link to Guild is our focused efforts to do forest mgmt. in the valley. Comprehensive. Supporting forest

restoration, wetland reserve partnership projects. Focus a lot of energy on habitat management for mature bottomland hardwood forest and easements, WRP been so successful in the valley. MS, LA, AR 700k ac reserved. My focus, JV has 16 partner organizations. I pull together delivery professionals in the valley to focus on our priorities and improve collaboration among partners.

- Brian Lockhart – NW AR. Recently retired from USFS out of Stoneville, MS. Working on lifelong dream. With Anderson-Tully, work with Forestland Group. 40 yrs of CFI data. 200 plots entered, thousand more to go. Can look at grade as trees grow. Been real interesting to enter that data and watch those trees grow.
 - Dakota: Last week, Guild hosted webinar on wildlife forestry in bottomland hardwoods. Thanks to Brian and Duck Locascio for a great webinar. Over 150 people participated.

Guild Updates in the Southeast

- All spring events were canceled/postponed due to Covid-19. We hosted two webinars as supplemental activities
 - Last week ‘wildlife forestry in bottomland hardwoods’ with Duck Locascio and Brian Roy Lockhart. Had over 150 participants.
 - Yesterday ‘ecological forestry in mountain coves’ with Jeff Stringer, University of Kentucky. Well-received, with great information. Supplement to our workshop in WV in August, which is still in the works (fingers crossed)
- Continuing to move forward with all other projects virtually
 - Shortleaf pine restoration program – continue efforts on Cumberland Plateau. Didn’t get out to burn in the spring due to wet weather, then Covid. Eagerly awaiting and planning for when we can get out and burn.
 - Bottomlands – event planning for fall and 2021 in AR, MS, LA, and SC/NC. Policy project in GA to assess forestry BMPs as they relate to wetland forests and exploring state-level incentive programs for wetlands restoration
 - Connecting responsible wood product markets to positive conservation impact in SE – SFI/SBR project

National Updates

- Still celebrating our 25th year anniversary! The Guild Gathering celebration in Asheville is still in the works, however we are making contingency plans and trying to figure out what this looks like to keep everyone healthy and safe. Staying up to date on local and state recommendations and reopenings.
 - Dakota: what thoughts are on travel in August? Would you all participate?
 - Clint: I’m ready to get things moving, do what we do.
 - Steve Brock: Working with diversity of partners I do, it’s so hard to guess what gov’t orgs are going to do. Any larger org still seems to be taking a super-conservative approach. We all want to hope by August. Hard guess. I could see some orgs having restrictive travel on employees.

- Dave: Governor making decisions very data-driven. Encouraging state to go cautiously to next phase. State of NC, big force of folks trying to get back to work. Probably doesn't help that the governor is a Democrat. Hopefully they'll do it based on good science.
 - Bruce: NC RxBC had our annual meeting, was going to be in the mountains in August as well. Main reason we changed that to virtual because that particular meeting is so agency-driven. Felt like even if safe to travel, their budgets might not allow for it. For Guild, maybe worthwhile to estimate how many folks would be agency folks vs. otherwise. From private perspective, if safe to go, I'd be going. I have a lot freer reign. Depends on how many folks would be hamstrung.
- Still keep it on your calendar for August 20-22, we'll be in touch as things change. Still have something to celebrate.
- Webinars on Guild webinar library page: <https://foreststewardsguild.org/webinar-library/>
- Hiring updates
 - Nick: My last week. Transitioning to RGS, AWS. More place-based work promoting wildlife forestry practices in Southern Apps, rolling out their new model of working forests. Using non-commercial treatments of wildlife on public lands, using silviculture to promote wildlife. Will remain engaged as a member of the Guild. Been a pleasure over past several years working with staff and members of the Guild.
 - New manager (Jennifer Chandler) will be joining us in mid-July – lucky to have her, very connected to Appalachia as she grew up in Kentucky and has lived and worked in southeastern states nearly her whole life. Background in forest research on American ginseng, well-loved professor at West Chester in PA, has done great work in all communities she's been in.