

Benton County Forestland Classification Committee (BCFCC)
Meeting Minutes – DRAFT
October 4, 2011
9:00 A.M. to 2:00 PM
Oregon Department of Forestry, Philomath, Oregon

Note: Audio recording of this meeting was made. It was the thirty-fourth (34th) meeting of the BCFCC.

Committee Members Present: Jim Wernz, Sara Leiman, Pat Malone, Ted Erdmann (ODF), Chief Tom Phelps (OSFM)

Absent: Rick Fletcher (OSU Extension)

Staff: Blake McKinley, Allison Blair, Larry Black, Mike Totey

Guests: Douglas Baily, Corvallis Fire Department

1. Opening/Introductions

Jim Wernz called the meeting to order at 9:00. Committee members and ODF staff were introduced.

2. Comments from the public:

No members of the public were present.

3. Review of minutes from August 30, 2011 meeting

The committee reviewed the minutes from the August 30, 2011 meeting. One name change was made (Rick Fletcher was replaced with Monroe Fire Chief, Rick Smith) No other corrections or changes were made.

Motion: Pat Malone made a motion to accept the minutes from 08/30/2011 as presented. The motion was seconded by Sara Leiman. Motion is passed unanimously.

4. ODF Update:

Ted Erdmann began the ODF update reporting that the Polk County committee has not recently met and there was no new information to present. The Lincoln County committee has concluded its work on the first effort of classification. The written order has been filed with the county and the appeal process expires on Friday, October 7, 2011. At this time, no appeals have been filed with the county.

Ted also updated the BCFCC with progress in the Yamhill County area of the district. There is currently a joint meeting between the Forest Grove district and West Oregon District protection staff and the Yamhill County commissioners on Monday, October 24, 2011. This will include a presentation by the district to the commissioners on classification work that has been completed in Benton, Lincoln, and Polk Counties. Hopefully, the commissioners will move quickly toward appointing a classification committee for Yamhill County. Mike Totey added that he anticipated West Oregon taking more of a support role in this upcoming committee, assisting Forest Grove in its first efforts with a county classification committee. Mike hoped that the great amount of experience gained by West Oregon would help make the process in Yamhill County fairly smooth, helping that new committee tackle their work with clear and realistic expectations.

Pat Malone asked if there was a plan to use the fires that occurred in Yamhill County over the summer as a catalyst to speed the process forward of appointing a committee and getting to work on classification. Jim Wernz added that it would be interesting to see if this new committee benefits from all the other committees' experience and can avoid the pitfalls experienced. Mike concurred with this comment and added that he did feel there was an excellent opportunity to use the events of the past summer in Yamhill County to make the need for classification work more crucial to the local commissioners.

Mike Totey opened a discussion surrounding an idea brought up by Jim Wernz regarding the use of the term "Forestland" in the classification process and whether or not there was benefit in approaching the legislature in an effort to revisit this terminology and possibly re-define the concept of "forestland." Jim had acknowledged that the definition had caused much concern and debate among many landowners that raised questions and complaints about the classification decisions made. Mike added that in early discussions on the classification process with the statewide committee, efforts were made to possibly use a term more like "wildland" in the classification process, but this was opposed by OFIC and some individual landowners. Mike mentioned that the committee always has the option of approaching legislators with this idea. He added that since the terminology is used in both ORS 477 and 526, it would require changes to both statutes to amend the definition, a fairly complicated and perhaps daunting task.

Committee members discussed this concept, adding that as landowners, there probably is room to better define forestland to line up with the perception that it means larger areas of merchantable timber instead of including all West Oregon land capable of growing trees, which is extremely broad. Sara Leiman mentioned that as a small landowner, she did not feel strongly enough about the issues surrounding the definition of forestland to proceed toward a real review with the legislature at this time. Mike added that it was important to remember that the existing definition has been the foundational component of the classification work done by the committee as a central part of the matrix. Changing the definition would most likely have far reaching ramifications in regard to future classification reviews. Chief Phelps mentioned that the definition in the statutes were left purposefully vague so that the process relies on classification committees to interpret the definition together as it sees fit and use its process in part of the education efforts that go along with the classification work.

In conclusion, Mike Totey asked whether there was any interest from the BCFCC members to join together with other classification committees from around the state for a day of sharing experiences and training. The consensus of the committee was there was some interest in meeting together in some fashion with other state committees in a collaborative exchange of experiences and ideas. Mike will forward this idea to ODF upper management.

5. Draft Classification areas in SE Benton County

Ted Erdmann reviewed the areas of SE Benton County that were part of the field review on August 30, 2011. These areas outside the current protection district boundary are being reviewed to complete the classification work required by statute to review all land within the county. These draft classification decisions will be used in the future as a starting point for discussions on whether or not protection district boundary lines need to be changed. As long as these draft proposals remain drafts, no other action is required and there is no economic impact. If the committee decides at a later date to make these classification recommendations official, it would be required to hold a new hearing.

Motion: Tom Phelps made a motion to accept the draft classification decisions for the Monroe area around SE Benton County made by the committee as indicated on the electronic GIS map layer as presented. The motion was seconded by Pat Malone. No additional discussion made. VOTE: Aye: 4, Nay: 0, Abstentions: 1 (Sara Leiman, landowner in this portion of the county.) Motion is carried with a majority.

The committee then reviewed land outside the protection district but within Benton County in the Greenberry area, South Corvallis, and North Corvallis to the northern edge of Corvallis RFPD. This review was done in collaboration with Douglas Baily of Corvallis Fire. The committee reviewed aerial orthographic maps of the areas in question and classified them according to the specifications in the classification matrix.

Motion: Tom Phelps made a motion to accept the draft classification decisions for the areas around Greenberry Gap, South Corvallis, and North Corvallis to the northern edge of Corvallis RFPD made by the committee as indicated on the electronic GIS map record as presented. The motion was seconded by Pat Malone. No additional discussion made. VOTE: Aye: 5, Nay: 0, Abstentions: 0. Motion is passed unanimously.

6. Next Meeting Date

Ted Erdmann will send out an electronic Doodle Poll to determine the next BCFCC meeting, with the date hopefully sometime in the next 2-3 weeks. Jim Wernz adjourned the meeting at 2:00 PM.