

St Helena Forestry Association

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Newsletter

May 2011

President's Comments

Hello everyone, Hope you all are doing well. We had a very successful spring field day this year on April 29th at Soterra's office in Pine Grove. We toured some of their lands and looked at different management techniques and then had lunch under their outdoor pavilion. The weather was great and we had a good crowd with some visitors from neighboring associations. Thank all of you for attending to support our cause.

Your board is trying to have field days for you that will pertain specifically to Forestry in St. Helena Parish and this was a good one. A big thanks to Johnny Pittman and Steve Stewart of Soterra for hosting this event. Johnny is one of your board members. We are now planning our annual meeting in October and should have an interesting speaker. Hope to see you all there.

Mitch Wilson.

Association Officers

At an Association Board meeting earlier this year, the following officers were elected: President – Mitch Wilson, Vice President – Royce Allen, Treasurer – Richard Easley, and Secretary – Brian Chandler. Other board members include Eloise Wales, Mina Jean Travis, Johnny Pittman and Roddy Karl. Brian and LDAF Forester Jay Meadows were appointed Ex-officio board members.

Membership

We have 73 members. Our new member is John Enfinger from Houma. To keep the Association strong and viable, members need to recruit new members. If you know of someone who is not a member, contact Brian Chandler at 225-683-3101 or bchandler@agcenter.lsu.edu for an application. He will send an application to you or the potential member.

Field Day

Twenty-two members and guests participated in the field day at Soterra. We heard about Sottera's forest management philosophy from Steve Stewart. Johnny Pittman then took us on a tour of their properties. We looked at a couple different site preparation and tree planting practices, a first thinning with herbicide application, and pine plantation management. We returned to the Soterra office for lunch provided by the Association.

We plan to continue having field days in St Helena to make them easily available to the membership. If you have some suggestions, ideas or recommendations on what you would like to view at a field day, contact one of the board members or Brian at 225-683-3101 or bchandler@agcenter.lsu.edu.

Legislative Update

Timber Theft Legislation Passes House

Timber theft legislation clarifying that co-owners and co-heirs are liable for treble damages when timber is taken without other co-owners consent passed the House without objection and now moves to the Senate. The Louisiana Supreme Court ruled in December 2010 that the current law was poorly written and set the stage for timber theft among co-owners if the law was not clarified.

Representative Dorothy Sue Hill from Dry Creek in southwest Louisiana introduced HB 184 to clearly state that timber cut, removed, destroyed, or diverted without the consent of the co-owners was a violation of law and the violator would be liable for three times the fair market value of the timber.

The law does not affect the timber buyer that obtains 80% of co-owners signatures prior to harvesting the timber.

Cuts to Forestry Office

The House Appropriations Committee passed HB1 and it now goes to the House floor for debate. The big surprise is that it further cuts the Office of Forestry's budget by \$1.1 million. These cuts will further reduce the ability of the Office of Forestry to detect and protect our forests from wildfire.

The Office of Forestry has already suffered budget reductions of 28% and firefighter staffing cuts of 34%. Each firefighter has to protect 185,000 acres of forest--more than any Southern state. With more cuts, the ratio would grow to 200,000 acres per firefighter.

With half of the state forested, Louisiana has one of its most precious resources endangered by the budget cuts.

(From Louisiana Forestry Assn Legislative Reports)