

Texas Forest Service Employee Advisory Council
Minutes From
January 13, 2011
College Station, Texas
Website: TFS Employee Advisory Council

Members Attending:

West Zone:

Courtney Blevins: Urban / Oak Wilt
Regional Fire: Mark Wobus
Andy Larson: At Large
Jason Keiningham: At Large (Chair elect)

East Zone:

Dian Melton: North Region
Chris Rhoades: North Region
John Rush: Central Region
Twanisha Bennett: Central Region
Rusty Smith: South Region
Jake Donellan: At Large (Chair)
Ray Uballe: East Zone / At-Large

College Station:

Crystal Davis: FRD / College Station
Casey Bryan: FIAD / Director's Office
Sherri Noack: FIAD / Director's Office

Members Absent with Notification:

Dawn Vollmer: East Zone / South Region
Shawn Whitley: FRP / College Station

Members Absent without Notification: None

Ex-Officio Members Present: Stacy Overby, Professional Development Coord.
Tom Boggus, Director, Texas Forest Service

New members minus Shawn Whitley arrived at 9:30 and were provided an EAC Introduction presentation by Stacy Overby.

Jake Donellan, EAC Chair, called the EAC meeting to order at 10:21am.

1. Re-introduction of all EAC members.

2. **Updates to Working Issues:**

The Council reviewed the following working issues:

TFS Honor Guard: This recommendation has been out there for about a year and a half. The originator of the request, Shane Brown, departed the agency so a request for a volunteer was made. The Executive Team has approved the initial concept but much more information, to include cost, must be determined. Mark Wobus graciously stepped forward and said that he would orchestrate the effort. **Resolution:** The EAC is seeking members to serve on a TFS Honor Guard Steering Committee. The EAC is requesting FRP/FRD leadership seek out and provide names of those individuals interested in serving on this most important committee. Once the committee is formed, the EAC will brief the TFS Honor Guard Committee on prior research conducted by Chair Jake Donellan. When the committee is prepared to present a formal proposal to the Executive Team, the EAC will provide representation to introduce the proposal.

- a. **Cell Phone Stipend:** Request was made for the agency to offer a stipend for cell phones so that employees don't have to carry two phones. **Resolution:** Texas A&M University System is in the process of reviewing a new System level Stipend policy. The agency must wait for their decision before our agency can develop a plan.
- b. **Cell Phones:** An issue was raised about how to correct the poor connectivity that the TFS cell phones have in many areas. In one office, it was reported that all of the TFS phones were turned off and placed in a drawer not being used until recently when a signal booster was purchased from ATT and there signal in the office is good. The employees still have virtually no service once they depart the office. **Status:** Will the agency consider another vendor like Verizon? Will the agency consider sending a survey out to the field asking who else is having this problem and not using their TFS paid phones? We have requested that the person that submitted the request draft up the questions they would like placed in the survey.
- c. **K&L TFS Logo Shirts:** Request was made to use uniform account money to purchase the TFS logo shirt from K&L. It was also requested to see if the \$10 per shirt for mailing costs could be waived if the shirts were delivered to the College Station office and employees could pick up their shirts from there when either themselves or someone from their office came through for a meeting. **Resolution:** K&L does not have the capability to provide an accounting system that would enable employees to

deduct cost of shirt, similar to what we had with Lion Apparel. You can coordinate with K&L that you will pick up the shirts in College Station to save shipping cost.

- d. **K&L TFS Logo Shirts w/ Dept or Div:** Request was made to authorize employees to order the K&L TFS Logo Shirt with their Department or Division embroidered below the TFS logo. **Status:** Request for approval will be submitted to the Executive Team.
- e. **Tobacco Free Environment:** Two requests were submitted to establish a tobacco free environment in all TFS facilities, events, and equipment. Examples were provided of employees sitting in meetings, offices, teaching classes, and operating vehicles while using smokeless tobacco. Employees that use smokeless tobacco leave spit cups/bottles sitting around for other employees and customers to look at. Employees displaying an unprofessional appearance in front of customers by using smokeless tobacco freely while speaking to them. It was also requested that at least two tobacco free signs per building are fabricated for the offices to post at the workplace. **Status:** A request for the exact wording of this recommendation be submitted to Robby DeWitt who will carry forward to the Executive Team.
- f. **Employee Directory:** A request was made to create an employee directory that has every full-time employee in the agency listed within the directory. Each person would have their name, contact information, location, division, department, primary duties, and an individual photo. It was requested that the employee directory be placed on a site that customers would not have access to.
Resolution: An employee directory will be a by-product of a data base being designed by the agency and our IR department. Completion is at least a year out.

3. New Issues: Jake Donellan review new issues.

- a. **Resolution to EAC issues:** a request was made for the EAC to do a better job in publicizing the answers or status of issues that have been raised by the employees to the EAC. **Resolution:** Clarity to the EAC minutes will be added by inserting "resolution" and "status" to all working and new issues. (see above) EAC members will review minutes prior to being published to ensure they state and explain all that was discussed during EAC meeting. EAC will modify current data base where all previous and current issues are posted to show a status or answer to the issues. Issues with answers will be dropped from the minutes and added to the

data base. Issues with statuses will remain on the EAC agenda and minutes until a final answer is provided.

- b. **Relook EAC employee representation based on new TWPP hires:** Based on the 60 new hires as a part of TWPP, it is believed that this segment of the agency, primarily Central & West Texas, is not adequately represented within the EAC membership. **Status:** The agency will analyze current employee location data, including new TWPP positions to verify if the need exist. Data will be shared with EAC members for their verification.
 - c. **Retirement Notifications:** once an employee decides to retire with a confirmed date of retirement, it has been requested that Office Associates or the individual be authorized to send an email out to "TFS All" announcing the name of employee and date of retirement. Purpose of announcement is so that all TFS employees know when a person is retiring so that they can either conclude ongoing business with that person or send a note of congratulations. Retirement celebration events would only be sent to those the retiree wants in attendance. **Status:** request to Executive Team for decision will be submitted.
4. **Other:** Jake Donellan opened the floor to any other issues.
- a. Election for chair elect was conducted. Three EAC members were nominated. 14 EAC members were present and 14 votes were submitted. Vote count was 9 votes for 1st nominee, 3 votes for 2nd nominee and 2 votes for 3rd nominee. Jason Keiningham was selected as this year's Chair-elect.
 - b. Tom Boggus spoke to the EAC members about his full support of the EAC process and appreciation for them volunteering for EAC and their hard work in getting agency issues heard.
5. **Next Meeting Date:** April 14, 2011, 10:00am, College Station
6. **Future Meeting Dates:** August 18, 2011, 10:00am, College Station

Jake Donellan adjourned the Council meeting at approximately 12:30pm.