

Next Task Force Meeting:

The next Task Force meeting is on Wednesday, September 16th at Stub's Restaurant in Thedford. The meeting begins at 9:30 a.m.

Agenda Items:

9:30 Meeting called to order

Introductions (Guest—Marcy Hunter)

Approval of minutes

Financial report (Mack)

Project Coordinator update (VanWinkle)

Board decision on pursuing negotiations and easement appraisals

Review and vote on five new policies

Review and vote on change in bylaws

VFD Award Program

12:00 Lunch

Replacement of NRCS Board Member

Report on NET grant application

Report of the Executive Committee

Election of Officers

2:30 Adjourn

Light agenda posed for Board Meeting

As obvious in the agenda listed above, the items that need board attention are limited and not expected to take a whole lot of time to vote on. In situations like this should the Board have guidelines in place which identify criteria for having board meetings? It might be worth the board's time to discuss this in more detail.

NET grant for conservation easement submitted

Ted took the lead and drafted up a grant application on behalf of the Task Force. His efforts included meeting with NET staff members to discuss our grant submission for funding to support the acquisition of conservation easements within the Sandhills. Our board voted unanimously at our June meeting to pursue a \$750,000 request. The application will be reviewed in Thedford. Several members of had provided comments of the document. Thanks to all who assisted in one way or another.

The deadline for submission was September 8. Since the Board does not meet until after the grant has been submitted, the Board should vote on whether the grant should remain submitted or removed from consideration. It is important to have on record that the Board approved or disapproved of the grant application.

Dana Larson moves to Utah

While we are happy to see Dana moving closer to family, we will miss her presence here in the Sandhills and on our board. The vacancy created by her move will be addressed by the board. Good luck wishes for Dana in Ogden.

An agenda item is to discuss the requirements of that board position and how the Task Force should go about filling it.

Sheridan County Major Project Moves Forward

Planning and preparation continue as landowner interest and WEA's have progressed well. Eight landowners and ten miles of the upper Niobrara are involved. Many positive repercussions are possible and Jim will fill the board in on challenges met to date and some potential results.

Partnership with Agren, Inc. is nearing its end.

A grant submitted by Agren, Inc and cosponsored by the Task Force is complete. Jim recently submitted our final invoice. The existing agreement allowed for 50% reimbursement for salary and other costs we incur for projects related to grazing systems within the Sandhills. Over the length of the grant, the Task Force will received \$21,920. Agren, however, has not reimbursed the Task Force for the past two invoices sent them.

Wetland projects underway

Several wetland projects across the Sandhills that were held up by permitting issues until weather issues blocked construction are now approved. Three structures have been completed on Gracie Creek since our last meeting. Two structures near Taylor have remained too wet for installation. Three sites that sustained high water damage have had material ordered and will be modified and repaired this fall.

VFD Award Program

During our February 2008 STF board meeting, the Board unanimously adopted an award program that would help rural VFD's assist landowners with using fire as a tool on their private lands to control invasive red cedar. Two award requests were processed this spring totaling \$6,000. Many planned burns were not completed as a result of late storms or excessive wind. The STF board needs to decide if they choose to continue this award program and if so with what modifications.

STF Board to act on changes in bylaws

During our January Board meeting, it was discussed to change our bylaws to include a section on the establishment of an executive meeting. We could not act on that decision because our bylaws require at least a 30 day notice to all board members prior to a vote. We were to vote on it at our June meeting but somehow it slipped past us during the meeting.

STF Board to act on new policies for the organization

During our annual audit this summer, the accounting firm informed us that new or stricter regulations by the IRS require non-profits to have at least five policies on record to meet the requirements of a 501(c)3 organization. Those five policies are:

- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Whistleblower Policy
- Process of Determining Compensation
- Document Retention and Destruction Policy
- Joint Venture Policy

These five policies will need to be discussed, amended (if needed), and passed. The interesting thing about democracy is we have no choice but to approve them in order to keep our non-profit in good standing with the IRS.

Election of Board Officers

During our fall meeting, we normally elect (in our case, re-elect) our President, Vice-President, and Secretary/Treasurer. I have not seen any campaign commercials or letters in the mail so I am assuming board members are not campaigning hard for the positions. Even though, we still need to complete the process to adhere to our bylaws.

Request for STF support on other NET grants

This last couple of weeks, the STF has received three requests for some type of support (either a letter to the NET or funding) from our organization. The main reason for the requests is for the submitting organization to beef-up their application by showing they had the support of the Sandhills Task Force.

Acting as the Secretary/Treasurer, I only wrote one letter of support. That one was for a grant submitted by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission requesting funds to do projects on private lands. Their proposal is very close to what our organization does, and some of the funding from these types of grants has actually come to the STF to cost share of projects. The letter written simply stated that we support their proposal to do work on privately owned property and that the STF will continue to work with private landowners to do conservation projects.

The decision not to write support letters on the other two was based on two points. The first was the grant applications were not specific in their proposals and what they were requesting from the STF. The second point is I am not comfortable, nor believe that I alone should be making those decisions. As an organization, we run the risk of supporting a grant that may negatively affect our integrity once the grant is awarded. Without a detailed description of what will be done, we could become associated with something that is contrary to our mission.