

Polk County Forestland Classification Committee Meeting

Meeting Minutes

January 22, 2009

9:00 – 5:00 pm

Oregon Department of Forestry, Dallas Office

Meeting called to order by Terry Lamers (Chair) at 9:10 a.m on January 22, 2009, Oregon Department of Forestry, Dallas Unit, 825 Oak Villa Rd., Dallas, OR

Members in attendance: Don Duhrkopf, Terry Lamers, Tom Parsons, Jeff Classen and Brad Withrow-Robinson.

Quorum present.

Guests: Doug Schmidt (Assessor), Tom Brateng (Assessor's office), Dean Anderson (Assessor's office) Eric Foucht, Oregon Department of Forestry District GIS Coordinator for the West Oregon District. Allison Blair, Oregon Department of Forestry Protection Supervisor for the Dallas office.

Agenda for meeting handed out and reviewed:

1. Introduction of Committee members and staff.
2. Review and approval of January 15 meeting minutes.
3. Review of procedures and progress in classifying forestland.
4. Public comment/questions about role of Committee.
5. Classify forestland.
6. Lunch.
7. Classify forestland.
8. Public comment period.
9. Select additional meeting dates if necessary.
10. Adjourn.

Review minutes from January 15 meeting:

Reviewed and approved with two small corrections.

Discussion with Assessor and Staff:

Jeff had contacted the Assessor's Office to update them on the Classification process and progress made on classification in recent meetings. Jeff invited them to meet with him and attend the Committee meeting to learn more details and share any concerns they may have. Three staff from the Assessor's Office (AO) attended this Committee meeting to better understand possible impacts of the process on their office and discuss ways to make future implementation and maintenance of the classification as streamlined as possible.

Approved 4/13/09

It was observed in the conversation with the Committee and the AO that the Committee is mandated to do the classification within a specified framework, but that the AO would be required to implement it. This classification work will change the way the AO will do business. If not clear to the public, they will make complaints to the AO (first), and eventually be referred to ODF and this Committee, so it is in everyone's interest to carry things out as clearly and smoothly as possible.

Committee members were concerned and felt it important that their very specific task of classification not be expanded to consider the effects of classification on mapping, maintenance or the degree things will change.

Everyone agreed that the public may respond negatively if the final results are not sensible. To the AO staff, that may include lack of precision when following property or tax lot lines, which could lead to very small sections of tax lots classified, and so triggering minimum charges assessed. The Committee has shown a preference for landscape or landmark boundaries (such as roads, streams, base of hill). It was suggested that the two may oftentimes be similar, and in that case, using existing tax lot lines may simplify the task of the AO without significantly altering the outcome of the classification.

The Committee and AO then together reviewed some of the classification work done along the forest and agricultural margin on the eastern edge of the coast range to discuss the process and implication. The challenge of consistently applying the criteria was recognized. The creation of another internal demarcation creating a describable edge between aggregated, contiguous forest land and non-forest land seemed fundamental to the tasks of forest protection and assessment. With Eric there, the Committee did some work to re-align the classification line to better follow roads and tax lots. It was recognized that the GIS data sets of the two agencies do not correspond exactly. A line put along a county road, driveway or tax lot on the ODF maps will not always translate exactly to that position on the AO maps.

It was recognized that the draft classification establishing a demarcation line may require small modifications once downloaded to the AO data base, to accurately reflect the Committee's intent. It would be too ponderous for the full committee to work with the AO to do this, and suggested a liaison be established to work with the AO on behalf of the Committee. Terry noted that the Committee can authorize that work to be done by representatives of the committee, subject to review and approval by the committee.

It was suggested by both Dean and Allison that the Committee write a description of the demarcation line as it moves along visible features such as roads or driveways, and sometimes invisible features such as tax lot boundaries to guide this process as well as provide a verbal record. Brad will begin developing that description.

All this represents a lot of work, and new work, seeing a highly automated system is being replaced by a highly manual system. The expense of this was a concern to the Assessor. There is currently nothing budgeted for such a task. It was pointed out that

this is getting underway statewide, and that the ODF is hoping that a set of similar criteria be adopted in other counties. However, in the mean time, the three counties in the West Oregon District are independently developing and implementing classifications. It was pointed out that Polk and the other counties may go through the trouble and expense of implementing classification, only to have to do it again if and when a state protocol is developed. If that was to happen it would seem unfair to those that went through the process earlier.

The AO reiterated that it will implement whatever the Committee comes up with. Implementation will be both easier, and easier to explain to public if the process is clearly described and consistently applied (sometimes quite difficult to do). The AO suggested that the Committee eventually produce a one page explanation to be distributed at the AO.

Some interim steps in this process of coordination were discussed and generally agreed to. As the Committee makes classifications, a portion of that work be sent to the AO and refined by AO and liaison. The AO can use that segment to develop estimates for labor costs to implementation, so it can be presented to the commissioners, who will have to budget for the work of implementing the classification in the assessment rolls.

At 10:50 the guests from the AO staff left and the committee took a break.

Forest Classification Work:

The Committee continued reviewing classification done in the last session before continuing north along the valley margin.

The committee broke for lunch from 12:30 to 1:20.

Following lunch, the Committee continued its draft classification, continuing north along the valley margin. Draft decisions were made in T9S, R6W, T8S R6W and T8S R5W.

The Committee had a discussion about fire behavior at Tom's request. Reviewing ORS 526.320, Tom felt that fire behavior is meant to be taken into consideration in the classification process, as it is a significant component of the threat a fire represents. The Committee's familiarity with the landscape and with common fire behavior (with regard to such things as seasonal weather conditions of wind, RH, temperature, aspect, slope and accessibility) is an essential aspect of assessing fire threat and is thus to be factored in by the Committee, even though it is not given an explicit step in the protocol.

Terry recessed the committee at 4:15.

Eric produced an updated Progress Map for 1/22/2009 to be attached to the minutes.

