Urban Wood Group Meeting Minutes

May 13, 2020
Conference Call Meeting


Old Business

Past Six Months Activities – Joe gave a brief review of some of the activities of the VA Urban Wood program which occurred Nov 2019 through April 2020.

Revision of Urban Wood Group Charter – Eric Wiseman suggested that the UWG charter be amended to improve the consistency of the categories for seats on the Board. The goal was to have the seats represent “sectors” instead of “professions”. The Charter was amended to include: Academia, Wood Products Businesses and Tree Care and Consulting. The Board unanimously approved these changes.

New Business

Municipality Urban Wood Production Study - Joe and Charlie provided details about this study which is presently underway. Mike Galvin and Daniel Bunner from Save-a-Tree Inc have the contract which is studying the amount of annual urban wood removals in three municipalities – Richmond, Charlottesville and Vienna. Lara indicated that all three of these communities are using different forms of tracking their urban wood production. Charlie indicated that the study will lead to the development of a simple tracking model for use by other municipalities across the Commonwealth and assist with finding and developing markets for the wood.

VA-NC Residential Fuelwood consumption & sourcing survey – Joe and Charlie gave an overview of this two-state study which will query homeowners about their consumption & sourcing of fuelwood. The goal is to generate new markets for local low quality woods, knowing and tracking where the wood comes from and encouraging the use of local fuelwood markets. DOF is partnering with a research team comprised of Dr. Eric Wiseman, Dr. John Munsell & Dr. Mikaela Schmitt-Harsh to conduct the household survey. As Eric reported, there are presently COVID issues with conducting a household mail survey that could produce poor results. Eric indicated they are exploring “convenience sampling” which would involve an online survey.

Community Urban Forest-Urban Wood Management Plans – Joe and Lara discussed the cooperative effort between the VA Urban Wood program and U&CF to develop a draft urban forestry management plan template. Molly O’Liddy has been the lead for this project. This new urban forest management plan, which contains an urban wood component, follows the trend of
the new holistic approach to urban tree management which includes the planned use of all the materials the tree generates during its biological life and the upcycling of the wood once the tree is removed from the urban landscape. Presently this new type of plan is in the DOF review process.

**Woodland Care Practices Manual** – Adam gave a brief overview of the developing Green Industry Service Providers Handbook, a partnership project between Maryland Extension, Penn State Extension, VA Tech Cooperative Extension, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay and the VA Dept. of Forestry. The manual is in its final edits and will hopefully be printed by mid-summer. The Woodland Care Practices Manual is meant to be a tool for training folks in the green industry and helping them to explore the business model of servicing the resource management needs of small acreage landowners.

**Urban Wood Network** – Joe offered a brief overview of the Urban Wood Network which is emerging as a national umbrella organization for all of the urban wood organizations across the USA. UWN also sponsors webinars and trainings and will be offering an urban wood workshop at the U&CF Partners meeting in Louisville, KY in November. Board members are encouraged to check out their website at [www.urbanwoodnetwork.org](http://www.urbanwoodnetwork.org)

**VA Urban Wood Group as part of TreesVA** – Joe and Adam began a discussion about the VA Urban Wood Group becoming a subsidiary of TreesVA (Virginia Urban Forest Council). Adam stated some of the advantages in doing so: TreesVA has 501C3 non-profit status; a consistent team of elected officers; an already established relationship with the VA Urban Wood Group. We also have four Board members – Lara, Joe, Adam & Eric – that are presently members of the TreesVA Board. Other thoughts of the group:

- No idea what TreesVA would think about it
- We want to be more than a than standing committee
- Would we have to ask permission to do activities?
- How independent can the VA UWG remain?
- Concerned about a loss of identity
- Would it diminish the value of being a member of VA UWG?
- TreesVA already hosts us electronically – website and service providers directory

This was merely a preliminary discussion in an effort to strengthen the VA UWG as an organization and relinquish some of the administrative duties such as electing officers. The Board will continue this discussion in the upcoming months. Joe will chat more with Lara about this concept.

**Partner News**

**Newport News** (Aaron Laurin & James McCabe): Activities have slowed due to COVID. Pines which were felled along the water lines are going to local mills, chip materials used as mulch for playgrounds, firewood being designated for the campgrounds. Repurposed an equipment trailer into a log trailer (James will send Joe a pic) which can haul 2000 board feet of
logs. They also have impending logging contracts. They have also had a mobile band saw for a timber mat (12x12’s) used to cross a gas line.

**St. Pierre Woodworking & Sawmill (Bill St. Pierre)** – two weeks away from moving into new shop. Last week they hired two new employees. Presently it is costing $2/bd foot for urban wood lumber sawing and drying and this is negatively impacting profits – they can purchase finished, better quality boards at a lower price. The company is looking at schools for an outlet of urban wood products -“Virginia schools using Virginia wood”. The slab market seems saturated. Presently looking at purchasing a business in Lynchburg that has a machine that manufactures fuel bricks from compressed sawdust.

**Harrisonburg (Jeremy Harold)** – now part of Harrisonburg public works which has broader responsibilities. The removals of ash from the parks has decreased due to the lack of an inmate crew because of the COVID crisis. Over the past few months Harrisonburg has had nine auctions on Public Surplus.com. There has also been 9 urban wood projects in the city. One of the more recent projects was an ash countertop at the municipal golf course. The following businesses - Rocktown Urban Wood, Family Tree Wood Crafters (New Market), KnochdVA have also contributed to the success of the local program. A beautification grant application was filed for the Water Street Ally Project and North End Greenway benches. Today there was a detailed and lengthy article about urban wood in the local Harrisonburg paper > [https://www.dnronline.com/dnronline/urban-wood-grants-new-life-to-old-lumber/article_2b035d3a-5d6d-5420-a783-5d3705fa14c3.html](https://www.dnronline.com/dnronline/urban-wood-grants-new-life-to-old-lumber/article_2b035d3a-5d6d-5420-a783-5d3705fa14c3.html)

**VA Dept. of Forestry – Marketing & Utilization (Charlie Becker)** – There will be an urban wood workshop sponsored by the Urban Wood Network at the International Woodworking Fair in Atlanta in late August.

**VA Cooperative Extension (Adam Downing)** Pursuing an idea – the National Urban Extension Leaders group. Might be an organization that we should be associated with. They have an annual conference where urban wood could be a topic of interest. Here is their website >> [https://nuel.extension.org/](https://nuel.extension.org/)

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 AM

**Next meeting date is:** Tuesday, June 16, 2020 @ 9:00AM – conference call