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NORTH AMERICAN FOREST COMMISSION

TWENTY-EIGHTH SESSION

Campeche, Mexico, 11 - 14 January 2016

BUREAU OF ALTERNATES REPORT

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Bureau of Alternates (BOA) - the operating arm of the North American Forest Commission (NAFC) - met several times, via conference call and in-person, since the last meeting of the Commission in Madison, Wisconsin, USA (June 2014). In the past year, the BOA has completed several tasks, as set forth by the Commissioners. These include following up on recommendations adopted by Commissioners at the 27th session regarding specific Working Groups tasks, funding of several Working Group requests to initiate or complete activities, and initiating the Ad Hoc Urban Forest Working Group as an issue of interest to the three countries and the Food and Agriculture Organization.

II. ACTIVITIES

2. Over the past year, the BOA has met via conference call twice (15 January 2015 and 14 October 2015) as well as in-person in May 2015 in Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, in Mexico.

2.1. BOA Membership

Since March 2015, the BOA welcomed Francisco Quiroz Acosta as the new Alternate from Mexico. He serves as chair of the BOA until next NAFC session. Francisco Quiroz also chaired the BOA meeting held in May 2015, and hosted by Mexico's National Forestry Commission.

2.2. BOA Action Plan

As a result of decisions and recommendations adopted by Commissioners at the last NAFC session, an Action Plan containing 17 activities was established by the BOA. A detailed advance report of this Action Plan is presented in annex 1.

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10 activities were completed and the remaining 7 have important progress in their implementation.

2.3. Working Groups

All working groups were encouraged to identify 1-2 key lessons learned to share among other working groups (WG) and NAFC members, and to keep updated their progress reports. The BOA requested WG Chairs for periodical reports on progress about each of the Commission's recommendations, and annual reports from each Working Group were presented at the past BOA meeting (May 2015).

Except the Atmospheric Change and Forests and Resiliency Working Groups, and the recently created WG on Urban Forests, all working groups held their annual meetings as planned.

2.3.1. Atmospheric Change and Forests

The BOA noted the appointment of Mr Juan Carlos Leyva Reyes, as Mexican member of this Working Group. The BOA requested the working group to updated its strategic plan and submit it for consideration of FAO.

2.3.2. Fire Management

The BOA supported the participation of specialists from the Latin American and the Caribbean Forestry Commission (LACFC) in its last two meetings. Specialists from Costa Rica and Brazil attended working groups meetings held in 2014 (Canada) and 2015 (USA), respectively. Further support to participation of LACFC specialists at its 2016 annual meeting in Mexico is also planned.

2.3.3. Forest Genetic Resources

The BOA supervised/monitored actions aimed at adopting a conservation scheme of a unique Maple forest in Jalisco, Mexico. An area of 150 hectares will be gazetted as protected natural area; working in close collaboration with Jalisco State Government, the National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR) will provide financial support for conservation activities through the National Forestry Programme (PRONAFOR). The BOA also has followed up on the support from CONAFOR to develop protocols for defining seed zones based on provisional zonification in Mexico, considering current and future climates. The first stage of the research is completed; the data analysis will take place during 2016.

2.3.4. Forest Insect and Diseases and Invasive Plants

The BOA noted the appointment of a specialist from the National Commission for Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity (CONABIO) as additional Mexican member. The BOA also encouraged the working group to identify specialists of invasive species in the three countries, in order to increase its capacity on invasive plants issues. In this regard, the BOA also requested the WG Chair to explore collaboration with the Asia Pacific Forest Invasive Species Network (APFISN).

2.3.5. Inventory and Monitoring

The BOA noted the appointment of a specialist from the National Institute of Geography and Informatics (INEGI) as additional Mexican member for this working group. The BOA requested the working group to develop a regional analysis of the Forest Resource Assessment 2015 results for consideration of the Commissioners at the 28th NAFC session.

2.3.6. Silviculture

The BOA encouraged participation of representatives of Canada's provinces; as a result of this recommendation, the annual meeting of this working group included field visits to two sites in Canada and one in the USA, allowing participation of local specialists. The BOA also followed up the design, printing and publication of the Silvicultural Guides.

2.3.7. Resiliency (Ad Hoc Working Group)

The BOA noted the appointment of Mr Juan Carlos Leyva Reyes from the National Forestry Commission, and Dr José Francisco Zamudio Sánchez, professor and researcher at Chapingo Autonomous University, as new Mexican members of this working group.

2.3.8. Urban Forests (Ad Hoc Working Group)

The BOA supported identification of members for initiating this WG and agreed that the USA chairs this WG for the first time; the BOA also encouraged WG members to work in its charter and strategic plan for the coming years. So far, this WG has only held conference calls and they are to organize its first face-to-face meeting.

2.4. Communication

The BOA has continued to support Rick Scott as liaison to the working groups and Mexico appointed Mr Armando Alanis to facilitate participation of Mexican members for the various Working Groups. Mr Scott continues to communicate with each group and attend their meetings as well as to provide feedback and requests back to the BOA.

The BOA Chair adopted a formal communication approach by using official letters addressed to WG chairs in order to support their chairmanships and foster a more active participation of working group members.

Taking advantage of technology, working groups adopted various approaches to improve communication beyond the use of email and phone conferences, by using either digital video conference facilities or using specialized software (e.g. Adobe Connect). This approach allows to make presentations and work collaboratively on papers or documents during conferences. Some working groups also had periodical conferences calls to follow up on planned and ongoing activities. The BOA recommends to encourage the use of technology when available to promote better communication as well as periodic conferences between annual working group meetings for improving follow up of activities.

Following a FAO proposal for creating the Regional Forest Communicators Network of North America, the BOA suggested to include this as an item in the NAFC agenda in order to analyze the implications of creating this regional network in terms of financial and human resources that might be required for its proper work. The detailed proposal is contained in Document FO/NAFC/2016/3.9.

2.5. Funding

In the last NAFC meeting, Commissioners approved funding for publication of two silvicultural guidelines by the Silviculture WG; to support activities/studies related with seed zonation and assisted migration of tree species in Mexico carried out by the Forest Genetic Resource Working Group; to support Resiliency Ad Hoc working group activities; and participation of two members of the Latin American and Caribbean Forest Commission (LACFC) at the last Fire Management Working Group meetings in 2014 and 2015.

Additionally, the BOA approved funding for four working group activities planned to be carried out in 2016 for a total amount of US\$14 700 provided by FAO in support of NAFC activities. These activities will be carried out under the supervision of Mexico's National Forestry Commission and include supporting participation of two additional LACFC members at the next meeting of Fire Management Working Group in Mexico; translation and publication of a brochure and a scientific article about forest inventories in North America by the Inventory and Monitoring Working Group; a technical mission for knowledge transfer on high-risk forest pest threatening Mexico's forest and agricultural resources; and organization of an international workshop on Opportunities and Challenges for Silvicultural Systems in North America, planned to be held in Mexico.

2.6. Awards

Dr Tom Ledig, an outstanding member of Forest Genetics WG for which he served for many years until his retirement from US Forest Service, passed away in the past year. Recognizing his valuable contribution to both BOA and NAFC, BOA members agreed to prepare a condolence letter to Dr Ledig's widow which was signed by the three Commissioners and delivered by US Forest Service on behalf of NAFC.

At the World Forestry Congress in Durban, South Africa, Commissioner Tidwell presented an award on behalf of NAFC to Mr. Eduardo Rojas-Briales, former Assistant Director-General of FAO, for his contributions to both FAO and NAFC's work.

According to its tradition to recognize the work of past NAFC members, Mexico has proposed to present awards to Mr Miguel Abaid, as former BOA member, Dr Jaime Villa, as former member of Forest Insects, Diseases and Invasive Plants Working Group; and Mr Carlos Zermeño, former member of the Inventory and Monitoring Working Group.

It is further recommended to present awards to Mr Tom Harbour, USA, member of the Fire Management Working Group, who is retiring from public service.

2.7. Others

The BOA has proven its effectiveness as a consultation body for providing support to NAFC Chair in preparing for COFO Steering Committee meetings; issues of the interest for the region were consulted as appropriate in order to build regional consensus and to allow NAFC countries to express their views and concerns aimed to enrich discussions and provide suggestions and recommendations for consideration of COFO Steering Committee members.

III. CONCLUSION

3. Since the 27th Session, the BOA has worked to develop and implement activities that address the recommendations of the Commission while continued to provide guidance and feedback to the working groups and to the Commissioners. It has also proven its effectiveness for support participation of the NAFC Chair at the COFO Steering Committee through consultation of relevant issues of NAFC countries.

ANNEX 1**Follow up to BOA Action Plan**

1. Bureau of Alternates management

1.1. Commissioner Rescala noted that Mexico, during their chairmanship, will appoint a liaison to work with Mr Rick Scott to strengthen the coordination of working groups.

Progress: Armando Alanís, Director of Cooperation, was appointed to liaise with Rick Scott for this purpose, especially for the case of Mexico as they have with new members.

Status: Completed.

1.2 Commissioner Rescala recommended that the BOA develop a program to strengthen communication activities, both inside and outside of the NAFC, to increase awareness of their activities and achievements, particularly those related to the working groups.

As a first step, CONAFOR proposed to use social networks (i.e. Facebook) to create a page of the NAFC that may be accessible to the public, to disseminate activities and achievements of each of the working groups and NAFC.

This page may be disseminated to other Regional Forestry Commissions and communication initiatives such as the Regional Forest Communicators Network.

Information available at the FAO's Communication Toolbox can be used to disseminate important messages about the forest sector, as well relevant technical publications such as the report on the State of the Global Forest Resources recently published or the technical silvicultural guidelines prepared by the Silviculture Working Group.

Status: In progress.

1.3. The Commissioners recommended that future Working Group reports include 1-2 key lessons learned over the reporting period.

Progress: BOA Chair notified all WG Chairs about the dates of the next NAFC (to be held from 11 to 15 January 2016), so each WG could timely schedule their annual meetings and prepare their reports for presentation at the 28th NAFC session, requesting them to highlight 1-2 key lessons learned in the reporting period.

Status: Completed.

2. Activities of the NAFC Working Groups

2.1. Atmospheric Change and Forests

2.1.1. Commissioner Rescala confirmed that CONAFOR already appointed an officer from Mexico as a Working Group member.

Progress: CONAFOR notified to the WG Chairman designation of M.C. Juan Carlos Leyva Rodríguez, Technical Assistant-Manager of Forest and Soil Inventory, representing CONAFOR.

Status: Completed

2.1.2. The Commissioners agreed with the Working Group's idea of developing a strategic plan and coordinating with other trilateral entities.

ADG Rojas-Briales encouraged the Group to work closely with FAO staff, in particular Susan Braatz.

Progress: WG Chairman was requested to coordinate WG members the development of the strategic plan and coordinate with other WG, trilateral entities and FAO and report back to the BOA by end of February.

Recognizing that forests of North America are experiencing unprecedented changes in climate, natural and human disturbance regimes, and management, WG will continue its transition to a more comprehensive view of global changes, including climate change, land-use change and other major emergent changes that are likely to impact forests and forest management in the coming decades.

In this regard WG is proposing to update its mission statement and objectives.

WG has drafted a strategic plan for the Working Group, which has been sent to Susan Braatz of FAO, awaiting for her comments.

Status: In progress.

2.2. Fire Management

2.2.1. Commissioner Rescala announced that Mexico would support participation of two members of the Latin American and Caribbean Forestry Commission to participate for the next two Working Group meetings.

Progress: US Forest Service supported participation of a representative of the Latin American Forestry Commission (LACFC) from Costa Rica in the last session of Fire Management WG, held in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.

Mexico confirmed that the CONAFOR will provide support for participation of two members of LACFC in the next two sessions Fire Management WG.

Mexico made administrative arrangements to support attendance of three participants from Latin America in the meeting of the Fire Management WG in November 2015, but only a Brazilian specialist was able to attend the meeting.

Status: In progress. Two participants from LACFC have participated in the last two meetings of Fire Management Working Group.

CONAFOR will support participation of specialists from LACFC at the 2016 annual meeting to be held in Mexico.

2.3. Forest Genetic Resources

2.3.1. The Working Group suggested protecting a unique Maple forest in the state of Jalisco, Mexico. Mexico supported the recommendation from the working group to pursue protection for this unique forest.

Progress: CONAFOR has been working with authorities of Jalisco State Government, which owns the area where the Maple forest is located. According with Jalisco State laws, a public consultation was carried out and based on results the Government of Jalisco State presented a draft declaration of protected natural area, which is under legal review before it is gazetted.

CONAFOR and Jalisco State will provide support through their respective programs for management and conservation of the protected natural area.

Status: In progress.

2.3.2. Commissioner Rescala announced that Mexico will provide US\$4 000 for support to develop climate based seed transfer protocols.

Progress: CONAFOR signed an agreement with Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolas de Hidalgo (UMSNH), in order to provide financial resources to carry out this activity. The first stage of the research is completed; the data analysis will take place during 2016.

Status: In progress.

2.4. Forest Insects, Diseases and Invasive Plants

2.4.1. Commissioner Rescala will encourage the participation of a new member from Mexico from the National Commission of Biodiversity (CONABIO).

Progress: CONAFOR invited CONABIO to identify and designate a specialist in invasive plants to join this WG; CONABIO designated Dra Ana Isabel González Martínez, Assistant Coordinator of Invasive Species, to collaborate with the WG.

Status: Completed.

2.4.2. Identify and invite specialists in invasive plants for its integration as members in the WG.

Progress: Chairman of the WG reported that potential specialists have been identified in the three countries.

Status: In progress.

2.4.3. Commissioners encouraged WG to establish cooperation with the Asia Pacific Forest Invasive Species Network (APFISN).

Progress: Chairman reported that WG is collecting information on the activities of APFISN and discussing potential linkages and collaboration activities.

WG has considered inviting FAO Forestry Officer of the Asia Pacific region to determine more clearly which would be the mechanisms to carry out collaboration. The WG invited Dr Shiroma Sathyapala, FAO Forestry Officer of Forest Protection, to participate in the last WG meeting (November 2015), who presented several regional forest health initiatives supported by FAO, including APFISN. The WG agreed to keep the Dr Sathyapala informed of future work plans and work with her to commit to the APFISN (and other regional networks) in the future. At this time, WG members feel they are not fully willing to engage directly with the APFISN. The WG is developing a strategic plan to guide its work over the next 3-5 years that will help to inform the development of future activities and cooperation with APFISN and other forums.

Status: In progress.

2.5 Forest, Inventory, Monitoring and Assessment

2.5.1. Commissioner Rescala informed that a representative from the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) will be invited to join this Working Group, as INEGI is officially responsible for generating and validating statistical and geographical information for Mexico.

Progress: CONAFOR invited INEGI in order to designate a specialist to be part of this WG. INEGI appointed Mr Francisco Javier Jiménez Nava, Director of Information on Natural Resources and Environment, to participate in this WG.

Status: Completed.

2.6. Silviculture

2.6.1. Commissioner Rescala announced that CONAFOR will provide financial resources for design and printing of the Silvicultural guides and requested FAO's guidance on the procedure for developing a NAFC publication.

Progress: CONAFOR provided financial resources as committed. Silvicultural Guides were printed in August 2015, and some copies were delivered in the last WG meeting in September 2015. Copies are being distributed through the State Managements of CONAFOR to producers, technicians and institutions related to the sector of education as well as to the authors. Electronic versions of the guides are available in CONAFOR web page: <http://www.conafor.gob.mx/web/temas-forestales/enaipros/>

Status: Completed.

2.6.2. Regarding increasing membership in the working group, Commissioner Mason suggested CFS facilitate links with a Canadian provincial representative given that silviculture is principally a provincial responsibility.

Progress: Working group meeting was held in New Brunswick from 13 to 18 September 2015. Dr Jean-Martin Lussier and Dr Joe Anawati from the Canadian Forest Services, and members of the WG, extended invitations to Canadian provincial representatives to participate in the next WG meeting, focused on "Planning forestry to improve the profitability and competitiveness of the value chain of the forestry sector".

Status: Completed.

2.7. Resilience

2.7.1. Commissioner Rescala reported the appointment of its institutional representative to this Working Group.

Progress: CONAFOR notified to WG Chair about appointment of M.C. Juan Carlos Leyva Reyes, Technical Assistant-Manager of Forest and Soils Inventory, as well as invitation to Dr José Francisco Zamudio Sánchez, professor and researcher of the Department of Forestry Sciences of the Chapingo Autonomous University.

Status: Completed.

2.7.2. The Commissioners recommended that future Working Group reports include 1-2 key lessons learned over the reporting period.

Progress: BOA Chair notified WG Chair about the dates of the next NAFC, so WG can timely schedule its annual meeting and prepares its report for presentation at the 28th NAFC session, highlighting 1-2 key lessons learned in the reporting period.

Status: Completed.

2.8. Urban Forestry

Commissioner Tidwell proposed that Commissioners instruct the BOA to put together an Ad Hoc Working Group on Urban Forests. Canada and Mexico supported this proposal. This will entail proposing Working Group members from each country to serve on the ad hoc group, having them put together a plan and having at least one meeting in the following year.

Progress: It was proposed and accepted that a USA member will act as the first WG Chair, once members from the three countries are known.

USA informed that Erika Svendsen has been identified to be part of and to chair this WG.

CONAFOR reported that Biol. Cinthya Velarde Nuño, Chief Department of Germplasm Banks, was appointed as the Mexican representative for this working group.

Canada reported that Ken Farr and Laura McKenzie have been identified to participate in this WG.

Status: Completed.