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# NORTH AMERICAN FOREST COMMISSION

**THIRTY-SECOND SESSION**

**Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada**

**25 - 27 September 2023**

**REPORT OF THE BUREAU OF ALTERNATES**

*Queries on the content of this document may be addressed to:*

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**PERIOD: September 2021 – August 2023****1. BUREAU OF ALTERNATES COMPOSITION**

<b>Chairperson</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Pierre-Jonathan Teasdale	Canada	NRCan-CFS
<b>Members</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Val Mezainis	USA	USDA Forest Service
Carlos Manuel Perez Medina	Mexico	CONAFOR
Malgorzata Buszko-Briggs	Italy	FAO

**2. LIST OF ACTIVITIES COMPLETED DURING THE PAST 2 YEARS**

<b>Meetings</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>
BOA Meeting - Conference Call	<i>Virtual</i>	<i>28 March 2022</i>
BOA Meeting - Conference Call	<i>Virtual</i>	<i>13 September 2022</i>
BOA Meeting - Conference Call	<i>Virtual</i>	<i>1 June 2023</i>

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. This report of the Bureau of Alternates (BOA) covers the period from October 2021 to August 2023. The BOA was chaired by the Director of Trade and International Affairs at the Canadian Forest Service (Jeff Biggs until July 2022; Pierre-Jonathan Teasdale current).

2. The BOA met three times via conference call since the last NAFC meeting held virtually by Mexico, 13 – 15 September 2021, and worked together to advance the priorities of NAFC as set forth by the 31st Session. Similar to the previous reporting period, the last two years presented challenges for the Commission and its working groups due to the COVID-19 pandemic, though with some return to normal modes of collaboration.

3. Specific areas of emphasis include:

a. Discussions and mutual support with the various working groups in the face of the challenges caused by the tail end of the COVID-19 pandemic which greatly impacted the ability to hold meetings and collaborate. In 2023, most groups were able to, or had begun to plan to, meet face-to-face.

b. Discussion and decisions surrounding the agenda and format for the 32nd

Session of the NAFC taking place in Fredericton, New Brunswick, 25 - 27 September 2023.

- c. Getting the Insects and Diseases and Invasive Plants Working Group on track. The group had not met since the COVID-19 pandemic. It was agreed that the Chair would rotate to Mexico and that a Working Group meeting would be held prior to the NAFC 32 Session.
- d. Follow up on the mainstreaming of gender equality in each of the working groups to secure that each could identify potential gender barriers and design specific activities to tackle them and secure equal participation.

## **II. WORKING GROUP GUIDANCE**

- 4. The BOA continued to play a key role in supporting the NAFC working groups, providing guidance and direction. Specific support and guidance were provided as follows:
  - e. Guidance to the Inventory, Monitoring and Assessment Working Group in communicating recommendations and concerns regarding the 2025 Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) and the global core set of forest-related indicators (GCS).
  - f. Support by Canada to cover interpretation costs for all virtual NAFC working group meetings until the rotation of the Chair position.
  - g. Support in the rotation of the Chair of the Insects, Pests and Diseases Working Group from the USA to Mexico.
  - h. Agreement to pause the use of Google Drive to upload working group reports as the transition to the new system required more planning and orientation. Working groups were instructed to continue to download the reporting template and submit reports by email.

## **III. LIAISON**

- 5. The BOA has continued to support Rick Scott as a liaison to the working groups. Mr Scott continued to communicate with each group and attend working group meetings to provide information and feedback until his retirement in June 2023.

## **IV. FUNDING REQUESTS**

- 6. The BOA has continued to review funding requests of the working groups and provide funding for selected requests. During this period, the BOA considered the following requests:
  - i. The Forest Genetic Resources Working Group requested USD 8 000 over two years to cover expenses for two in-person meetings over the next two years. The USA agreed to fund this work. Canada agreed to an additional request in mid-2023

for an amount of USD 4 000 over one year.

j. The Inventory, Monitoring and Assessment Working Group requested USD 6 000 for continued work on primary forests in Mexico. Canada agreed to fund this request.

k. The Forest Communicators' Network sought support for USD 15 000 for a workshop in Mexico. The USA agreed to fund this request.

7. During the 30th Session (5.10 Potential thematic areas for future working group activities), Commissioners requested that the BOA consider potential approaches to illegal logging and present a recommendation. The BOA concluded that the significance of the impacts of illegal logging, whether viewed from trade, scientific or regulatory perspectives was well demonstrated by multiagency participation and engagement in the webinar series. Illegal logging continues to increase in volume and can be expected to grow in significance globally in the coming years. Given the emphasis on combatting deforestation and illegal logging globally, the capacity to track the origins of wood products and their legality, in coordination amongst North American trading partners, will become increasingly important. With this context in mind, an Ad hoc Working Group on Illegal Logging was formed.

## **V. CLOSING REMARKS**

8. Since the 31st Session of NAFC, the BOA has worked to address the recommendations raised at the meeting within the confines of restrictions and changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent, slow return to normal. The BOA has continued to provide guidance and feedback to the working groups and to the Commissioners. The BOA looks forward to discussing and exchanging ideas about emerging issues and challenges at future Sessions.