

Texas Forest Service Employee Advisory Council  
Minutes From  
January 21, 2010  
College Station, Texas  
Website: [TFS Employee Advisory Council](#)

**Members Attending:**

**West Zone:**

Rob Grotty: Urban/Oak Wilt (Chair)  
Mark Wobus: Regional Fire  
Andy Larson: At-Large  
Jason Keiningham: At Large, West Zone

**East Zone:**

Chris Rhoades: North Region  
John Rush: Central Region  
Twanisha Bennett: Central Region  
Dawn Vollmer: South Region  
Preston Williams: South Region  
Jake Donellan: At-Large (Chair-elect)  
Ray Uballe: At-Large

**College Station:**

Martha Alexander: FIAD/Dir's Office  
James Polasek: FIAD/Dir's Office  
Curt Stripling FRP

**Members Absent with Notification:**

Michelle Gonzales: FRD/College Station  
Dian Melton: East Zone/North Region

**Members Absent without Notification: None**

**Ex-Officio Members Present:** Stacy Overby

**Guests Present:** None

Rob Grotty, EAC Chair, called the EAC meeting to order at 9:45am.

1. Introduction of all EAC members, focus on the 4 new members.
2. **Review of minutes from the April 28, 2009 EAC Meeting:** The minutes from the April 28, 2009 EAC meeting were reviewed by the Council. These minutes were approved on 5/26/09.

### 3. **Updates to Working Issues:**

The Council reviewed the following working issues:

- a. **TFS Honor Guard:** Two members of the Honor Guard Sub-Committee appointed by James Polasek have since rotated off of the EAC. Rob asked for two other members to volunteer to look at information researched by Jake Donellan. Members of the sub-committee will review information and prepare recommendations for the EAC to look at during the next EAC meeting. Jason Keiningham and Preston Williams volunteered to join the subcommittee to replace Shane Brown and Phil Gates who had completed their 3 year tenure.
- b. **TFS Holiday Schedule:** Two course of actions were proposed in reference to the two days currently scheduled for Good Friday and the adjoining Thursday. One course of action was to take the current Thursday and allow that to be a flex day, in which an employee, with approval from their supervisor, could take that day anytime throughout the year prior to the end of September. The other course of action was to take that Thursday and use it on Labor day to allow a day off for employees between Easter weekend and Thanksgiving.

### 4. **New Items:**

- a. **Cell Phone Stipend:** The EAC requested to get an update from the responsible person on the idea of TFS initiating a plan that provides a TFS employee a cell phone stipend in lieu of the TFS paying for a cell phone and the plan. A stipend would allow a TFS employee to use their personal cell phone for both personal and business purposes. This idea would alleviate a TFS employee from carrying a personal and business cell phone.
- b. **Employee Enhancement Opportunity(EEO):** Recommendation is for TFS to discount or reimburse employees cost of classes taken to further educate themselves in an area that would benefit TFS. Example: Employee to work toward master's degree a field that would benefit TFS. Reimbursement could be for an associates, bachelors, or masters degree. Reimbursement rates could be based on level of success with each class. Example: 75% for an A, 50% for a B, and 25% for a C.

- c. **Travel Voucher Addendum authorizing substitute meal:**  
The EAC recommended that individuals be authorized to submit an addendum to their travel voucher that would allow them to substitute a conference meal with a meal of their choice, not to exceed per diem rates for the location. It was also recommended that a set price for breakfast, lunch, and dinner not be mandated as long as the TFS employee does not exceed the daily per diem authorization. Submission still requires overnight stay.
  - d. **Incentive payment for Arduous level on WCT:** Currently, the incentive payment is only provided to those employees that have fire fighting listed on their PD. It is recommended that all Red Card employees be offered the incentive payment if they pass the WCT at the arduous level.
  - e. **3 hour weekly physical training time:** It is recommended that all TFS employees be authorized the 3 hours per week to conduct physical training.
5. **Other:** Elections were conducted to elect a Chair-elect for the year 2010. Nominations for Jake Donellan and Jason Keiningham were submitted. A secret ballot vote was conducted with all members. The council elected Jake Donellan to be this year's Chair-elect.
6. **Next Meeting Date:** April 29, 2010, 10:00am, College Station
6. **Future Meeting Dates:** August 26, 2010, 10:00am, College Station
- Rob Grotty adjourned the Council meeting at approximately 10:50am.