



## Alabama Resource Advisory Committee Minutes

Virtual Microsoft Teams Format

Date: 1/11/2023

Time: 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

*Forest Service Reps:*

Tammy Freeman Brown (DFO), Dawn Suiter (RAC Coordinator), and Cherie Hamilton (Forest Supervisor).

**RAC Members**

Matt Benefield  
Zack Brannon  
Dr. Rashida Farid  
Keith Gauldin  
Michael Henshaw  
Cedric Hudson

Dr. Tina Jones  
Dr. Brian Keener  
Nisa Miranda  
Steven Newton  
Keith Tassin

General Public: none in attendance

The meeting started at 9:00 a.m.

Brian Keener, RAC Committee chairperson, called the meeting to order. He welcomed everyone and briefly discussed Title II funding allocations and the need to set a meeting date during the current fiscal year to review project proposals and recommend how funds will be spent.

He turned the meeting over to Dawn Suiter, RAC Coordinator, for roll call and introductions. Dawn introduced herself and welcomed the RAC Committee members to the forum, then took roll call. A quorum was reached to proceed with the meeting (11/15 members).

Dawn thanked committee members for their participation and turned the meeting over to Tammy Freeman Brown, DFO. Tammy explained agenda topics, thanked everyone for their involvement, and introduced the Forest Supervisor, Cherie Hamilton.

Cherie Hamilton welcomed everyone and thanked members for taking the time to do such important work. She wished everyone a happy new year and stressed the importance of the work the RAC committee does for future generations.

She turned the meeting over to Tammy Freeman Brown, who discussed the Alabama RAC Guidebook and the changes to Title II. She explained the purpose of the RAC - to improve collaborative relationships, RAC recommendations on funding project proposals and the importance of collaboration between the RAC committee and the communities they serve. Tammy then discussed in further detail the Alabama RAC Guidebook and new updates that will be mailed to RAC members to insert in the book. The guidebook holds information on: (briefing papers, reports for Title I, II, and III, fiscal year 2022 reduction changes for Title II (Escambia and Talladega counties), law, charter, membership balance plan, contact listing, Federal Register notices, and news releases).

Tammy explained RAC should initiate projects using Title II funds before September 30, 2025, and fund obligations before 2026. She also spoke about current RAC membership terms expiration in 2025, and instructed committee members to review updated briefing paper, charter, membership balance plan, and ethics form.

Tammy then turned the meeting over to Dawn Suiter, who explained materials the RAC committee needed to submit for the National Forests in Alabama website and touched on items submitted to hold the current meeting, including the news release posted to the website, and Federal Register Notice for the public to attend the RAC meeting.

Dawn turned the meeting over to Tammy Brown who explained Title II funding levels by county. Tammy discussed Title II funding by county for 2019 through 2021. Chart and breakdown of funding list were emailed to RAC members. Fiscal year 2014 funding may also be available; but she will need to confirm with Budget and Finance.

She also stressed the importance of talking with county commissioners. Fiscal year 2022 funding was reduced because counties had the opportunity to change allocations between Title I, II, and III under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Counties Clay, Lawrence, and Winston moved allocations from Title II. Escambia and Talladega Counties elected to allocate fiscal year 2022 funding to Title II.

There were some questions on why Alabama had a reduction in Secure Rural School funding. The Continuing Resolution is the reason for the 80% reduction, which prevents Alabama from spend all the funding.

Forest	14XX	19XX	20XX	21XX	Total
Alabama	\$64,263	\$51,080	\$50,856	\$58,002	\$224,201

**Funding amounts (Forest Service Budget includes the 80% reduction)**

**Secure Rural School Report (Title II) for FY 2019**

[fseprd718563.pdf \(usda.gov\)](#) - 2019

- Clay County - \$ 11,918.98
  - Lawrence County- \$ 25,197.92
  - Winston County- \$ 26,735.86
- Total for FY 2019 - \$63,852.76**

Forest Service Budget Report Funding Title II (FY 2019)

\$51,080

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**Secure Rural School Report (Title II) for (FY 2020)**

2020-Title-I-II-and-III-Report-ASR-18-01.pdf (usda.gov)

- Clay County - \$ 11,758.86
  - Lawrence County - \$24,706.41
  - Winston County - \$ 27,105.41
- Total for FY 2020 - \$63,570.68**

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Forest Service Budget Report Title II FY 2020

\$50,856

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**Secure Rural School Report (Title II) for FY 2021**

Final-2021-18-1-Report.pdf (usda.gov) -2021

- Clay County - \$13,338.25
  - Lawrence County – \$27,821.85
  - Winston County – \$31,343.01
- Total for FY 2021 – \$72,503.11**

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Forest Service Budget Report (Title II) for FY 2021

\$58,002

Dawn Suiter discussed updates to the committee on contact information and photo disclosure for National Forests in Alabama website to ensure transparency for the public.

She then turned it over to Brian Keener, who reemphasized Title II funding allocations for 2014, 2019, 2020, and 2021. He explained the need to solicit new proposals and schedule another meeting this year before the RAC committee term ends in 2025. A timetable for project proposal solicitation, review, and funding allocation was covered, along with Escambia and Talladega County funding for the fiscal year 2022.

Nisa Miranda presented a motion for project proposal solicitation through an announcement on February 6, a reminder news release on May 8, a deadline for proposal submission on August 31, and reconvening on September 21, 2023, which was agreed on by the committee. An announcement on the project cap was discussed. Providing an electronic version for project proposal submission was discussed by Tammy Brown. The RAC Committee's obligation for counties that submitted previous proposals was discussed and decided on revisitation later.

The RAC Committee took a 15-minute break and reconvened at 10:25 a.m.

Tammy Brown opened the meeting back up and briefly covered previously approved projects on the Bankhead National Forest.

The meeting was turned over to Dawn Suiter to provide a presentation on ethics to members in attendance. Each member viewed the training and committed to filling out, signing, and sending via email, an Appointment Acceptance and Ethics Acknowledgement form to Tammy or Dawn.

Upon completion of the ethics training, the meeting was turned over to Tammy Brown to discuss public input from Jim Noles from Birmingham, Alabama, with Barze Taylor Noles Lowther LLC, who wanted a current roster of names from Alabama's RAC. It was acknowledged that the roster was provided to him.

Tammy then turned the meeting over to Brian Keener, who summarized for new members on the virtual call that there was funding for 2014, 2019, 2020, and 2021 totaling \$224,201 and that funding exists for 2022. He mentioned that previous proposals can be considered for funding. There was a previous year proposal from Clay County that the committee decided not to use. He stated that the committee would solicit new proposals. The announcement will go out on February 6, a reminder on May 8, a deadline for submissions on August 31, and the committee will reconvene sometime in September to assess those proposals. He mentioned putting a cap on the proposals. However, it was suggested that the committee not do that but inform the public in the solicitation that some projects may not be funded in their entirety. The committee agreed that priority would go to the counties that elected to participate.

The meeting was turned over to Dawn Suiter to discuss future meeting dates and locations. The committee agreed on hybrid accommodation for the next meeting but stressed that those who could attend in person should, as proposals would be reviewed. September 21, 2023 was confirmed as the meeting date from 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Nisa Miranda offered to provide lunch through her office. The committee agreed and Dawn mentioned that she would coordinate details with Nisa.

Cherie Hamilton made closing remarks and thanked the entire group for participation.


Tammy added the list of district offices and welcomed new members to the committee. Tammy and Dawn committed to drafting and sharing a news release (solicitation) for project proposals and sending the solicitation to members to review before February 6, 2023. Tammy added Forest Service addresses, telephone numbers, and emails to Microsoft teams chat for committee members.

Brian made closing remarks and thanked everybody for their participation.

Dawn adjourned the meeting at 11:00 a.m.

I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.

Tammy Freeman Brown  
Designated Federal Officer  
Alabama Resource Advisory Committee

  
11/09/2023

TAMMY FREEMAN  
BROWN

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Date: 2023.11.09 11:02:24  
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Brian Keener, Ph.D.  
Chairman  
Alabama Resource Advisory Committee

  
9 Nov 2023

These minutes will be formally considered by the Committee at its next meeting, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes of that meeting.