

SFSRA Board Meeting Notes
Oct 22, 2025 @ 3:00 pm eastern
On Zoom

Attendees – Tim Mersmann, Vanessa Hampton, David Meriwether, Dick Rightmyer, Sonny Cudabac, Marisue Hilliard, Thomas Anderson, Laura Vann, Steve Weaver, Gretta Boley, and Wes Nettleton (11)

Meeting was called to order at 3:02 pm by Tim Mersmann.

Board Priorities

1. Fun benefits for members!!
2. Vacancy filling
3. Local group relations

Agenda

Preliminaries:

1. **Jokes?** What have you enjoyed most in life since our last meeting? **Notes:** David has a new grandchild. Tim's home is coming along, housewarming next spring. Sonny has a great grandson. Sonny thanked Tim for coming to the Engineers meeting. Dick provided a Dad joke.

Old Business:

2. **Approval of July 16, 2025, Meeting Minutes (Tim)**
Moved to adopt as written, seconded, and approved unanimously.
3. **Decision: Honorary Life Membership (Marisue, Tom, Tim)**
Board vote to amend the Constitution with Honorary Life Membership protocols after review of member input and any discussion. Requires super-majority approval (6 Board members). Membership feedback on protocol proposal was limited but positive.
Notes: Tim attached to the meeting invite feedback received from five members, all positive. Tim shared document of the proposed protocol on the screen for Board review. We will include approved life-time members' names as standard on the inside cover of the newsletter, beginning with the November issue, adding others as approved. Dick: How does the process work if a member wants to recommend someone? Response: They would need to find a Board member to serve as a sponsor. This process will provide some screening of proposals coming to the Board for consideration. Tim reiterated that adoption of honorary lifetime members should be rare and not overused. Marisue asked for clarification of voting Board Members, Tim identified them.

Decision: All seven board members present voted to approve the amendment. This constituted a super-majority as required. Tim will add to the Constitution and include notice of approval in the November newsletter.

4. **Discussion: Vacancy Recruitment (Tim)**
 - a. **Vice President for 2026**—still recruiting. Tim and Gretta haven't found anyone willing yet. Path from Vice President to President to Past President can be intimidating, it is a long commitment (6 years). The Board may want to consider making each step in these terms one year instead of two, to make it easier to recruit to this position. The downside is that recruiting would need to be done every year, twice as often. Changing terms would require constitutional amendment. The Board may want to consider further.

- b. **Director, vice Marisue Hilliard**—Kelly Russell has agreed to be nominated to the vacant Director position.

Decision: Board agreed unanimously to present Kelly Russell's nomination to membership.

- c. Event Planner—Still recruiting.
d. Secretary – Still looking for candidate. This is Vanessa's last meeting as Secretary.

The Board discussed options and potential contacts for recruiting vacancies. Marisue shared that NAFSR had just released a new National Directory of Retirees, which may be a resource for potential candidates. Tim asked if anyone had specific individuals to consider and contact. Several names were discussed.

Action: Tim and Gretta will continue to recruit leadership and use the NAFSR Member Directory as a resource.

5. **Fall Membership Drive and Membership Committee Report**

Tim moved this topic up in the agenda because David Meriwether needed to leave early. David Meriwether shared these numbers on current membership:

- 5 members have died since our last meeting in July - Norman Alley, Tim Knight, Phil Kromer, Robert Lee, Ben Stansel;
- We've added 10 new members since July, and 26 new members so far in 2025;
- Total membership is 302 Individual Members and 27 Organizational Members (R8 Forests and Regional Office, other Regional retirees groups);
- Of the 302 individual members, 257 are paid for 2025, 4 are Lifetime Members, and 41 have not paid dues. David has contacted most by email or phone. Four without emails need calls; Laura and David will coordinate to ensure they are contacted.

At the July meeting, the Board agreed to pursue a Fall Membership Drive. Tim was to coordinate with Laura, David, Sonny, and Dick to set this up. No progress has been made to date. David suggested we follow process used for last drive in the Fall of 2023.

Action: Tim will coordinate with Laura, David, Sonny, and Dick to set the Fall Membership Drive.

6. **Discussion: Updates on Recent Events**

- a. **National Reunion in Missoula** (Gretta, Tom, Marisue, Tim)
Gretta, Tom, Marisue, and Tim attended the National Reunion in Missoula. They shared their experience there. Gretta – awesome, 500+ were there, saw her first boss. The honoring of Randy with all the Chiefs (7) was great. The group visited the National Museum under construction; it is coming together nicely. Weather was beautiful. Marisue: Had panel discussion about forestry program Tuskegee, very informative. Meeting was very well done. Next one will be in Madison, Wisconsin, and will be hosted by R9 retirees. Tim: Enjoyed as well, especially opportunity to sit with new folks and learn their stories. Feelings of esprit de corps and connection were very strong. Recommend to all to attend future national reunions.
- b. **Fall Picnic at Lake Winfield Scott** (Dick)
Thirty-five attendees, enjoyed the food...hats off to Tim for providing smoked pork and chicken. 14 retirees from Chatt-O. Good opportunity to meet RO folks. Chatt-O folks enjoyed and would like to do again. Tim/Gretta – round robin of introductions and

personal stories was good—sweet and heart-felt. Hopefully we can get folks from Cherokee, Sumter next time.

c. **R8 Engineers Reunion at Guntersville SP in Alabama (Sonny)**

Tim was pleased to be able to attend and present to the group on activities of SFSRA, NAFSR, and the National Museum. Sonny – Beautiful facility about fourteen engineers attended, good fellowship and mix of people with different retirement longevity. Tim did a good presentation, recruited a few people. Jack Callahan organized, the group talked about the potential to have a southern-wide in-person reunion.

d. **Other local gatherings; outreach to local groups?** Tim found a local Forest Service retirees group in Athens, primarily research people; he plans to attend their monthly breakfast. Steve shared that Joe Bonette continues to hold monthly gatherings of Nantahala retirees.

6. **Discussion: 2026 Budget (Gretta)**

Tim and Gretta discussed developing the 2026 budget for presentation to the Board in January 2026. There is still too much outstanding for 2025 actual expenses and income to know where we will be heading into 2026. Cost of printing newsletters is coming in lower than anticipated—no one is sure why at this point.

Action: Gretta and Tim will prepare 2026 proposed budget for preview and approval of the Board at the January meeting.

7. **Discussion: SFSRA Response to administration challenges to the Forest Service (Tim, Stephanie)**—Review status of agency and any actions desired for SFSRA.

Notes: Tim - Not addressing in November issue other than that the government is shutdown. Marisue – for newsletter, continue to point folks to NAFSR. Most recent threat to agency - Sen Mike Lee UT continues to put forth proposal to move Forest Service to Dept of Interior. NAFSR Website is very helpful. There has been a significant increase in their membership likely due in part to their increased role in responding to challenges to the Forest Service and its mission. Steve-interesting that we haven't heard anything from Southern Group of State Foresters, particularly about moving Fire out of the FS. Tim-Southern governors are predominantly Republican, so it may be difficult for State Foresters to say anything against moves by the administration.

New Business:

8. **Decision: Winter Luncheon Date and Location**

Tim/Gretta suggest we go back to the 57th Fighter Group restaurant at the airport.

Decision: Date-Thursday, December 11, 11:30 at the 57th Fighter Group restaurant. Gretta will take the lead on event planning.

9. **Discussion: Ranger Roll Call Support**

Tim – The Ranger Roll Call project by the National Museum is an effort to list all names of those who have served as Rangers through the history of the Forest Service. Jeff Owenby has discussed this effort previously with the Board and had an appeal for help in a recent newsletter. A printout of current results was available at the National Reunion: there were more gaps in southern Region data than expected. At the National Reunion, Marisue and Tim agreed to help. Tim discussed how to help with Jeff at the Fall picnic.

Action: Tim will work with Eric to put the current Roll Call data on our website and ask membership for help in reviewing and editing.

10. **Discussion/Decision: Default newsletter delivery for new members (David)**--New members get free membership for the first year with newsletters delivered to them electronically only. After that, when paying dues, we've given members the choice of electronic or hard-copy delivery. What if they don't let us know their preference when paying dues for the first time? Should we continue to deliver electronically unless they opt in, or should we default to hard-copy delivery unless they opt out?
Decision: Board consensus was to make obtaining hard copy newsletters an "opt in" situation. If new members don't explicitly indicate they want hard copy newsletters, then they will continue to receive them electronically only.

11. **Discussion/Decision: Honorary Donations (Tim)**--How to recognize donations made "in honor of..." **Tabled for future meeting.**

12. **Discussion/Decision: Should we post Board meeting notes on the website? (Tim, Eric)**

Decision: Board agreed to post meeting notes but with redactions on closed session topics where individuals are discussed, such as for nominations for office or honorary life membership. President will be responsible for deciding what gets shared.

Action: Tim will coordinate with Eric to have current and recent meeting notes posted on the website.

Committee Reports

13. **Treasurer (Dick) Notes:** Emailed out for review. (see below)
14. **Membership and Databases (David/Laura)** (see above)
15. **NAFSR Rep (Marisue)** --no report beyond what was discussed earlier
16. **Museum Director (Jeff)**—no report, not present
17. **Website (Eric)**—no report, not present
18. **Historian (Wes) Notes:** Wes has had requests for hard copies of previous newsletters. Are extra hard copies available? Mary Dahl has them for recent issues, contact her with needs
19. **Newsletter Editor and Obits (Mary)** Tim shared that the November issue will have an emphasis on 20th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina.

Next Board Meeting

20. **Set next Board meeting date**—January 7, 14, or 21: Notes: This is Tim's last meeting as president. Gretta will be taking over in January.

Decision: Next meeting will be Wednesday, January 14, @ 3:00 pm eastern.

Meeting Adjourned at 4:38 pm

Treasurer's Report:

***for the board meeting 10/22 - below is a summary SFSRA Treasurers Report 3rd Quarter July 1 through end of September 30, 2025.

**Income Q3

Dues Income - \$1017.51

Donations Income - \$100.00

Vanguard account dividends - \$119.87

Total income: \$1237.38

**Expenses Q3

Newsletter printing & postage - \$1155.88

Business operations (reimbursements) - \$103.78

Total Expenses: \$1259.66

Checking account balance (Regions): \$5,381.10

Vanguard money market: \$11,419.36

Total net assets: \$16,800.46

Year to date dues income: \$2,823.23

Year to date expenses: \$4,128.29

Dick Rightmyer

10/21/2025