

## **ARKANSAS COTTON GROWER'S ORGANIZATION, INC.**

Minutes of the  
October 8, 2001 Teleconference Meeting

Arkansas State Plant Board  
Little Rock, AR

The teleconference meeting began at 10:00 a.m. Don Alexander was present. Joe Burns, Mark Bryles, Perry Stratton, Trent Felton, Charles Tilmon, Ritter Arnold, Jack Carey, and Hal Hyneman were on line.

Others present were Cal McCastlain, attorney for ABWEP; Doug Ladner, Mike Catanach, Danny Kiser, Patty Carr, and JoAnn Arnn, ABWEP; Carol Griffey, Jonesboro Sun; Gene Martin, AR Farm Bureau; Don Johnson, UA CES; and Bruce Harrod, AAAA.

Chairman Burns said the meeting was called because of a call he received from Mark Bryles, in which Bryles stated that interest had been stimulated in his area of the state, primarily from a meeting that Ritter Arnold had with the ginner from that area.

Arnold was asked to report on the ginner's meeting. Arnold said he was invited to Leachville by Mike and Steve Wilson. They had been talking with a number of ginner in Mississippi County. Considering all of the ramifications of the current situation, they are very interested in bringing Mississippi County into the Program. The following issues were discussed at that meeting.

- There is concern about the possibility of a quarantine, and what that might mean for everyone, not just farmers but ginner as well.
- There was a lot of discussion on the cost of a quarantine, and how those costs would have to be passed on to the cotton producers. The ginner who were present all felt like it is in the best interest of Mississippi County to get a referendum passed.
- There was discussion on landowner involvement in the assessment, and whether or not that could be mandated. The referendum in Mississippi County will have to be structured the way it was structured in the rest of the state.
- The ginner discussed what rate could be passed in Mississippi County, and they talked about a very narrow range. They discussed \$12.50 an acre, which would mirror what is being done in Missouri. They also discussed \$10.00 an acre. Mike Wilson called for a straw poll at the end of the discussion to see who in the room would support, and who would work for, passing a \$10.00 per acre referendum. There was unanimous support of a \$10.00 per acre assessment. About 1/3 of the group present said they could support a \$12.50 per acre assessment. There was more focus on the annual assessment than on the number of years.
- They talked about annual maintenance assessment and it was the feeling of the group that they could support a \$3.00 per acre maintenance fee. Again they did not talk as much about the number of years. It was expected that there would be a minimum of seven years, but the group realized that they may have to go longer than that to make this financially feasible.

The meeting ended with the group feeling, particularly at the \$10.00 an acre level, that they would work very hard to get this passed in Mississippi County.

Mark Bryles reported that there have not been any meetings since the ginner meeting. He feels the producer group will support the \$10.00. They would like to support it at \$10.00 for seven years. He thinks the group will support \$3.00 per acre maintenance.

Arnold asked that those responsible for the budget respond to the figures that have been discussed.

Doug Ladner stated that the budget is the one that is taken from the plan that was developed and approved by the Technical Advisory Committee, and presented to and approved by the Board. There was discussion and explanations as to why the numbers have changed somewhat.

Chairman Burns asked Ladner if he feels that it is do-able to offer this program to that non-eradicated area at \$10.00 over an eight or nine year period and make it work out financially. Ladner said that it is possible if they receive the additional funds necessary to do the whole program. Under any of the three scenarios, the program can be run.

Chairman Burns said Mississippi County will qualify for about \$3,000,000.00 of assistance, which is about 30% of the program. He said it is to the advantage of the entire state program for the complete state to be eradicated.

Trent Felton asked for an explanation of state funding in regard to scenario 2. Don Alexander said that in 1999 the legislature was asked for \$10,000,000.00. At that time they committed to a \$10,000,000.00 package for the Boll Weevil Program, but when the legislature passed and when funding was approved \$4.989 million was received from the Arkansas Economic Development fund. In the year 2001 the second \$5,000,000.00 was committed to through a package of \$2.5 million from the governor and \$2.5 million from the legislature. At that time it was indicated that there would not be funds available in the future.

\$2.6 million of the \$9.989 million is the Northeast Delta's share. This amount was determined by acreage and cost per acre.

There was discussion of ways to get the cost down to \$10.00 an acre over a period of seven years. Bryles said the referendum would not pass if the \$3.00 maintenance fee were added in years six and seven.

Ritter Arnold made a motion that the program be offered to the Northeast Delta at \$10.00 per acre for seven years, with a \$3.00 maintenance to follow beginning in the eighth year. Mark Bryles seconded. Discussion was called for.

Don Johnson pointed out that money can be saved by beginning trapping and spraying in the spring rather than in the fall. Costs would be reduced by spraying on trap catches as is done in years two or three, rather than spraying everything as is done in year one.

Hyneman commented that if the referendum is not passed then the active eradication zones will have to raise the money for buffer zones.

Bryles said if the Board accepts the proposal he stated earlier, the Northeast Delta would like to hold the referendum in November.

Chairman Burns asked for a roll call vote. The vote was unanimous, in favor of the motion.

Patty Carr pointed out that the motion did not include any dates. Mark Bryles asked if a recommendation could be made to the Plant Board that they give a little leeway as far as the date that we have the referendum.

Cal McCastlain said it could be worded so that it can be conducted any time within the next four months prior to February 28, 2002.

Perry Stratton asked how soon everything could be in place to hold a referendum. Don Alexander said a referendum could be in the mail within five days. He suggested the Plant Board mail out the ballots on November 12 and 13, to be returned by November 30, and counted on December 3, 4, and 5.

McCastlain suggested that those dates be added as an additional motion, so that Alexander could have a formal recommendation to present to the Plant Board. Jack Carey so moved, and Trent Felton seconded. There was no further discussion. The motion carried.

Mark Bryles expressed his appreciation for what the Board has done in regard to the referendum.

Hyneman suggested that the ginner committee meet with Bryles and Arnold, and then report to the Board as to what assistance they need from the Board to help pass the referendum.

It was suggested that someone from APHIS or the Extension Service explain to the ginner exactly how a quarantine works so when they talk to the growers about what they face if the referendum fails, they will be accurate and not misrepresent what might happen.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:20.

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JOE BURNS, Chairman