

SUBJECT: FORESTRY COMMISSION STAFF PARTICIPATING IN MEETING HOSTED BY UNION CAMP CORPORATION

SUMMARY:

The Forestry Commission staff would not be prohibited from attending a regional meeting hosted by Union Camp since the provision of conference facilities benefits the agency, not any individual.

QUESTION:

The State Forester questions whether members of the Forestry Commission staff may attend a regional meeting hosted by Union Camp. The meeting agenda provides for discussions of fire, forest management, and overall state forestry programs.

DISCUSSION:

This opinion is rendered in response to a letter dated February 24, 1992 requesting an opinion from the State Ethics Commission. The Commission's jurisdiction is limited to the applicability of the Ethics, Government Accountability, and Campaign Reform Act of 1991 (Act No. 248 of 1991; Section 8-13-100 et. seq., as amended, 1976 Code of Laws). This opinion does not supersede any other statutory or regulatory restrictions or procedures which may apply to this situation.

Corporate support of public agency activities has been reviewed in Advisory Opinions SEC AO92-002, SEC AO92-041, and SEC AO92-052. In those opinions, the Commission advised that private business could support agency activities through provision of equipment and services without charges. The Commission does not believe that private industry is prohibited from providing financial or equipment support to assist public agencies in carrying out their mandated responsibilities. The State Ethics Commission also does not believe that the provision of conference facilities for the benefit of public agencies is prohibited. Reference to the above opinions should be utilized when appropriate regarding these activities.

The State Ethics Commission advises that the Secretary of State's Office be contacted since this matter involves a relationship with a lobbyist principal.