

Members present: John Burke, Susan Haug, Paul Klocko, Greg Klos, Mike Lane, Jeff Lawrence, Carol Mills, Gary Weiland

Excused: Mark Chickering, Dale Heil, Marcell Wieloch

Wausau and Marathon County Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department staff present: Tom Lovlien - Forest Administrator

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chairman Lane.

I. Minutes

Lane asked for comments. **Motion** by Burke to approve the minutes of September 21st, 2016. Motion **carried**.

II. New Business

A. 2017 County Forest and Wildlife Work Plans

Lovlien discussed highlights from the County Forest Work Plan and the Wildlife Work Plan including timber management, road maintenance, developed recreation, administration, public outreach and professional development, invasive species management, flowage maintenance, wild rice seeding, forest opening maintenance, grassland work and the Nickel-N-Acre budget.

B. 2016 Fall Timber Bid Opening and Summary

Lovlien reported there were fourteen bids on four tracts from five different contractors. The appraised value of the sales was \$183,770.25 and they sold for \$211,829.50. The average per ton price was \$17.60 or \$40.00 a cord. The average dollar per acre was \$808.00 which is the return the County receives.

C. Wausau Daily Herald Forests Forever Supplement

Lovlien said this is the 18th annual supplement which has many good educational articles. The DNR and the County usually contribute forestry articles.

D. 2017 County Conservation Aids Project – Scholfield Boat Landing Piers

Lovlien said this \$4,357.00 in State grant is matched with \$4,357.00 of County money. The project this year is to replace the piers at the Scholfield Park boat landing.

E. Potential Land Acquisition – Town of Hewitt

Lovlien said the County was approached about purchasing a 198 acre piece of property that borders County forest land. It fits in well and has been managed correctly. The County Board has approved staff negotiating and applying for a Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Grant that would fund up to 50% of the purchase price. Lovlien will be hiring an appraiser to get a State approved appraisal. Lovlien hopes the property can be acquired by the end of the State fiscal year which is June 30th.

F. Article: DNR Names New Chief State Forester

Lovlien said the new Chief State Forester is Fred Souba Jr. Souba Jr. has worked in the forest industry for the past forty plus years and is a good pick for integrating the conservation and industry interests. He will also be implementing the strategic alignment that the DNR is currently undergoing.

G. County Deer Advisory Council Meeting on Chronic Wasting Disease – Jan. 17, 2017

Lane reported the meeting will be held in this building at 7:00 p.m. on January 17th. The meeting will only be discussing the Chronic Wasting Disease Plan. Other meetings discussing quota permits for the 2017 seasons will occur in March and April. Lane mentioned that the DNR website is open for public comments on the plan. Public input will be taken the night of the meeting or people can send written comments to him. The Council will be voting on the plan that night. Lovlien mentioned that the DNR has an online survey about chronic wasting disease on their website.

H. Cross Country Ski and Snowshoe Update

Lovlien said Nine Mile recently opened up for cross country skiing. There is not a lot of snow on the ground and it is tough to keep the leaves and rocks from mixing in with grooming. The trails will be open during the holidays when a lot of people ski and snowshoe. Burke said the Nordic ski programs are up and running and going well. He also noted there were quite a few snowshoer's at Nine Mile as well.

I. Survey on ATV Trail Mileage in Wisconsin

Lovlien said the Wisconsin County Forests Association (WCFA) has been working with the Wisconsin ATV Association in trying to come to some type of agreement on funding priorities. A survey was put together to figure out how many miles the Counties actually take care of on public and private lands. The Counties play a big role and are also resource managers. There is not a lot of money available and WCFA doesn't support developing new trails when they are not sustainable. There are some issues in the north where there are hundreds of miles of trails. Lovlien thinks there will be some new trail standards coming out of WCFA and presented to the State. If the State ATV doesn't accept those trail standards and fund what the Counties think are needed then some of the Counties may decide not to build any more trails or close some if they are not repaired.

J. Member Items

Haug distributed a new Wausau Bird Club checklist of birds. She mentioned that because of the Wausau cat policy they may not be able to keep their high flyer status in the Bird City designation. The Bird Club will have two years to get the policy changed in order to keep the high flyer status. Lovlien said staff met with the school cross country athletic directors this year. The County will be installing no parking signs on one side of Red Bud Road and schools are being asked to keep their events to one day instead of spread over two days. Fees for races and events are being changed.

Old Business

A. County Forester Recruitment Update

Lovlien said Joe Tucker has been hired and will be starting on January 16, 2017. He looks forward to working with him.

B. Ragnar Trail Relay Running Race Summary

Lovlien said this race at Nine Mile had a limit of 2250 participants. The race will be back next September and they might allow more race participants. It was a well-run event with very good cleanup. The community benefits with people staying and visiting area hotels and restaurants. Staff will be negotiating the fees for their next event.

C. Division of Forestry Headquarters Final Relocation Proposal

Lovlien said Rhinelander, Wausau and Hayward were the three locations chosen with the preferred locations being Rhinelander or Wausau. If this item is included in the next State budget then the DNR Forestry Division would be required to do a cost analysis and try to find buildings to lease or purchase. The estimates right now are that it would be between six and ten million dollars to move forty to sixty positions out of Madison. Lovlien said members of the Natural Resources Board commented that there are already almost eighty percent of forestry personnel in the north and they are asking why they need the rest of them moved. Lovlien said it's up to the Governor and State legislature to make a final decision.

D. DNR Hires New Wildlife Biologist

Lovlien said Brandon Stefanski has been the Wildlife technician for Wood, Portage and Marathon Counties for the last eight years and has been hired as the Marathon County Wildlife Biologist. Lovlien said Stefanski knows the County forests well and is a good choice.

E. Wausau 24 Bike Race Participation and Revenues

Lovlien said the Wausau 24 race occurred in late July and had 507 participants with a total of \$3,606.00 in revenues. The event was well run and plans to return next year.

F. Deer Season Harvest and Activity Levels on County Forests

Lovlien said the State-wide deer season harvest was down a little bit from last year. In the north they harvested twenty percent more bucks so it looks like the deer population is on the rise in certain areas. Twenty thousand less licenses were sold and this was the lowest deer hunter participation in the last 40 years. Lane said there has been a drop in licenses the last two years. Lawrence wondered with the 4,000 fewer deer shot if it was possible that some of those weren't registered because of the changes the DNR made to how deer are registered.

G. Big Eau Pleine Vegetation Management Harvest Update

Lovlien reported that this sale was on the east side of the park road. About a quarter of the sale was completed. The contractor will probably continue harvesting the sale late this summer or fall. Questions about the sale were answered.

IV. 2017 Meeting Dates – March 8, June 7, September 21 and December 20, 2017 at 6:00 pm. (The second Wednesday won't work for Weiland, the first Wednesday may not work for Mills. Lovlien said if one or two people cannot make it they will go with these dates, if four or five people cannot make it then they may change the dates. Weiland thought that Heil also had a meeting the same night he did which is the second Wednesday's of the month).

V. Adjourn

Motion by Klos to adjourn, motion **carried**. Meeting adjourned at 7:05 pm.

Thomas Lovlien
Secretary