

Members present: John Burke, Mark Chickering, Susan Haug, Dale Heil, Greg Klos, Mike Lane, Ryan Schleifer, Gary Weiland

Excused: Paul Klocko, Carol Mills, Marcell Wieloch

Wausau and Marathon County Parks, Rec, and Forestry Department staff present: Tom Lovlien-Forest Administrator
Others Present – Pat Peckham

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

I. Minutes

Motion by Burke to approve September 20, 2017 minutes. Motion **carried**.

II. New Business

A. 2018 County Forest and Wildlife Work Plans

Lovlien gave highlights on upcoming work including timber management, road maintenance, research projects, conservation aids projects, administration, GIS work and professional development, flowage maintenance, wild rice seeding, alder and invasive species management, forest opening maintenance and the Nickel-N-Acre budget.

B. 2017 Fall Timber Bid Opening and Summary

Lovlien reported there were seventeen bids on seven tracts from eight different contractors. Lovlien said one of the sales didn't sell and will be re-advertised with the spring 2018 bid opening. The appraised value of the sales was \$352,000 and they sold for \$430,571.35. The average price per ton is \$30 or \$69 a cord.

C. 2018 County Conservation Aids Project

Lovlien said the County Conservation Aids project to replace the Scholfield Park piers was postponed and the money was used to construct a fishing pier that was installed at Bluegill Bay Park. In 2018 the piers at Scholfield Park will be replaced with a roll in pier. Lovlien told Committee that these monies can be used for fish and game purposes County wide.

D. News Release – Emerald Ash Borer Confirmed in Marathon County

Lovlien said the County will be quarantined and no ash will be able to be moved into an un-quarantined County without an agreement between the logger and a consuming mill. Since there are so many counties already quarantined eventually they will be lifted throughout the State. Nine Mile has a small percentage of black ash swamps. Some strip clear cuts were set up in those swamps and hand seeded with tamarack to try to get something else growing. Lovlien said it's very important not to move firewood as this is how the borer spreads the fastest.

E. Article: DNR Names New Secretary and Executive Team

Dan Meyer from Eagle River has been appointed DNR Secretary. He was Mayor of Eagle River, has been a member of the Assembly and the Chamber of Commerce. Kurt Thiede was appointed the Deputy Secretary of the DNR and Ed Eberle was appointed assistant Deputy Secretary.

F. Cross Country Ski and Snowshoe Update

Lovlien said more snow is needed to get the trails open. There's about ¾" of a base that they have been rolling. There are bare spots which are going to need more snow. Burke said whatever is out there is marginal at this point.

G. Wausau Daily Herald Forests Forever Publication

Lovlien submitted an article that had been written by the previous County Forester, Doug Brown.

H. New Invasive Species – Jumping Worms

Lovlien said this worm ruins the soil profile and doesn't allow plants or trees to grow. These worms cannot be moved legally. The worm was found when people noticed that the understory and vegetation were being lost around boat launches when fisherman most likely dumped them.

I. 2018 Spring Bird Survey to Determine if Cerulean Warbler is Present in Nine Mile

Lovlien explained that in 2003 a Cerulean Warbler was heard or seen in an old hardwood stand at Nine Mile. There have been no reports of the bird since then. The Cerulean Warbler is threatened in the State, so timber can't be harvested until August 24th under the Species Guidance rules. Lovlien said he would like the survey done because there is such a narrow window at Nine Mile for the loggers to get their work done and the survey may determine if that window could be

extended in a sale that will be cut in 2018. Haug said that the Cerulean Warbler likes high canopies. It's a southern bird and with climate change some birds are moving further north. Sometimes birds overshoot their migration and then they go back to where they belong and where most of their population is.

J. Review and Discussion of Policy on Regulating Uses at Nine Mile

Lovlien said back in the late 1990's there were some old archery trails that were starting to be ridden by mountain bikers and becoming permanent. There were user conflicts because the hunters were starting to feel more pressure from the increased mountain biking and cross-country skiing. Some regulations for use were developed which included the May 1st to October 15th dates for bike and horseback riding at Nine Mile. A mandatory trail pass was instituted in 2003. County forest law requires that Nine Mile and all the rest of the county forests be open to dispersed recreation uses like hiking, berry picking, trapping, and hunting. No development of new bike trails and any maintenance of trails were to be approved. Bike races were limited to the Wisconsin Off-Road Series and the 24 Hours of Nine Mile and at that time no expansion of races was to be approved. Mountain biking was limited to the trails on the bike, horse, ski trail map and the trails not designated were to be closed.

The PRF Department has been getting inundated with requests for new events and this is the first year since the regulations were proposed that he has received calls about the expansion of races and commercializing of the County forest. He has heard from four different hunters this year and he felt that was mainly due to the Ragnar relay race setting up early in the week. Staff is reviewing the current regulations and may propose some new ones. Lovlien said the biking and cross-country skiing seasons are not changing. Some events at Nine Mile may be limited during certain periods of time. Events that are there currently and have historically been scheduled during the summer will have first chance to apply. E-biking and snow-biking may come up for discussion. Lovlien will send members the history, county forest law, and the regulations to discuss with their groups in preparation for the March meeting. Burke said it sounds like they are mostly concerned about the number of events and potential for additional types of use and not so much about existing uses. Lovlien felt that there cannot be any races moved to the fall between September 1 and October 15 because that is when they run into the biggest issues with hunting. Burke welcomes the discussion and thought there was confusion that the ski club could give approval or not for snow biking. He said they can have an opinion but not say what another group can or cannot do there. Lovlien said when the first regulations were developed not everyone was happy but people compromised. What they don't want to do is have so many events there that the locals can't use it because it's open to everyone. During some big events Nine Mile is essentially closed. Haug questioned if any of it was financially motivated. Lovlien said revenue generation is important but not the most important. Lane said when this group was formed these kinds of things were discussed and what came out of it was to not love Nine Mile to death. He is glad that it is being addressed again and did not realize that Lovlien was fielding some complaints. Chickering said the regulations would be good to reinforce, he is surprised people are complaining and felt it was because of Ragnar and the size of that event. He thought the bike club may have contributed to some confusion because rather than bug the County by constantly asking for fat tire biking they felt if they had the blessing of the ski club they could maybe work together. There are more places to ride now than there has been and he felt the bike club didn't complain as much about opening and closing dates and the fact that they can't build new trails. Lovlien said if the use can be spread out to other venues other than Nine Mile it would help everybody. Lovlien said the plan is to vet the proposal in staff, send it out to this Committee in February, come back and discuss and hopefully have some type of recommendation to the Forestry Committee in April.

K. Member Items

Heil questioned if the elimination of the forestry mil tax would have any effect on the County. Lovlien said not for the next two years because the Governor has backfilled the forestry mil tax money with the same amount of general purpose revenue dollars that it would have had for each year. The counties and the State will get all of their grants and aids. Also during the next two years there will be a fiscal audit of the forestry account to determine what draws were being made from that account. Lovlien said the Wisconsin County Forest Association is prioritizing all of the funding they receive from the State right now.

Lane has noticed new signage along the ski trails. He questioned if there was some type of change as far as utilizing the ski trails for other than skiing. Lovlien said that dogs are not allowed to be walked on the ski trails. If someone is hunting and has their dog that is completely legal. As a general rule cross-country skiers prefer that nobody walks on the skate or the classic tracks so that is discouraged. Lane also wanted to know if it was still okay for hunters as it had been in the past to park where the no parking signs were in certain areas if they put up a hunter sign. The no parking signs are primarily for the mountain bikers and skiers so they wouldn't be able to park and jump onto the trails without paying the fee. Lovlien said that was fine and he just asked that they don't park in front of the gates.

III. Old Business

A. Ragnar Trail Relay Running Race Summary

Lovlien explained that Ragnar has a three year contract at Nine Mile during the same week in September. Staff will be working with them a little closer to have them start setting up their trail closer to the chalet and move their way out as the week progresses. The organizers are a great group of people and have races all over the country. They agreed to a three year contract paying a lump sum of \$12,500.00 for the one day race and ten percent of all their sales at Nine Mile which amounted to \$9,000 so that was \$21,500 two day event. Trail running isn't as intensive as mountain biking so resource damage has been minimal. Lane wondered if the race could be kept closer to the chalet. Lovlien said with the amount of participants and the different types of loops and races that they run during the event he didn't think so. Staff will be working to have the setup of race course further out from the chalet later in the week to try and help curb some of the hunter complaints.

B. Division of Forestry Headquarters Location

Lovlien said the Chief State Forester, the Operations Deputy Administrator and a couple of bureau directors will be moving to Rhinelander. Some other positions will be moved over the next year and a half. It had been discussed that Hayward, Wausau or Rhinelander were possibilities and the DNR might build new offices or rent space, however Rhinelander was selected because it had some available office space. There wasn't any available space in Wausau. Lovlien believes some of the northern senators and representative's first choice was Rhinelander. The DNR will still maintain their office space in Madison and some forestry positions that need to will remain there.

C. Update on the County Deer Advisory Council Recommendation to Split County Into Two Separate Units – Mike Lane

Lane said at the last CDAC meeting they decided to maintain the deer population as it currently is and they also had the opportunity to decide if they wanted to split Marathon County into different units. The consensus was the biggest problem area is in the southeast corner of Marathon County so they decided to split the County to have the section south of Highway 29 and east of Highway 51 be one unit and then the rest of Marathon County be another unit. That recommendation was forwarded to the DNR and was going to be presented at the Natural Resources Board. Lane was told that the DNR wasn't going to support the splitting of Marathon County or any of the six counties. The Conservation Congress also supported the DNR's position. Lane felt the County Deer Advisory Council could accept this decision for another three years but after that, people on the Council may wonder if it pays to be on a Council.

D. Updates on the Town of Harrison and Town of Rib Mountain Properties for County Forest

Lovlien said the appraisal for 120 acres in the Town of Rib Mountain has been completed and has been communicated to the five owners of the property. The owners are still considering the County's offer. The owners of the Town of Harrison property have agreed to the County's offer of the appraised value. Because of the way the Knowles Nelson Stewardship grant rules are written if the 40 acres is purchased for \$60,000 and not entered into County forest Law until the Town of Rib Mountain property is purchased the County can use the \$60,000 as match to the Town of Rib Mountain property. At a minimum the County will receive 50% grant of the purchase price.

E. Wausau 24 Bike Race Participation and Revenues

Lovlien reported there were 406 participants and the revenue was \$3,654.00 from the Wausau 24 Bike Race that was held last August.

IV. 2018 Tentative Meeting Dates – March 21, June 6, September 19 and December 19, 2018 at 6:00 pm.

V. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by Chickering. **Motion carried.** Meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm.

Thomas Lovlien
Secretary