

Marathon County Forest Citizens' Advisory Subcommittee**Page 1**

Members present: John Burke, Mark Chickering, Susan Haug, Dale Heil, Greg Klos, Mike Lane, Susan Stomioski, Marcell Wieloch

Excused: Paul Klocko, Ryan Schleifer, Gary Weiland

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

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

I. Minutes

Motion by Wieloch to approve the March 13, 2019 minutes. Motion **carried**.

III. New Business**A. 2019 Anticipated Timber Harvest Activity at Nine Mile Forest**

Lovlien said the red pine harvest around the chalet and parking lot could happen as early as the end of June. Notices will be sent to the mountain bike and ski groups when it occurs. It will have a major impact on some trails near the chalet which will be closed and opened as the loggers complete sections. One other sale just south of the snowmobile trail in Nine Mile could potentially happen this fall and will have impact on a portion of the ski trail and the snowmobile/horse trail. The snowmobile and horse trail will still be passable during the harvest. Questions were answered.

B. September 2019 Subcommittee Appointments – Lovlien reported that Paul Klocko, Marcell Wieloch, Ryan Schleifer, Gary Weiland and Dale Heil terms expire on September 1st, 2019. Members should let Lovlien know by July 15th if they would like to remain on the Committee.

C. 2019 Scheduled Nine Mile Events – Lovlien discussed the events at Nine Mile. Lane expressed considerable concerns of the increased amount of races and because the IronBull bike race which was permitted October 19th after the October 15th bike closing deadline and it didn't come through this Committee for a recommendation to the Forestry/Recreation Committee. He felt the all the races occurring tie up Nine Mile from the residents of Marathon County. Lovlien said that IronBull's request originally wanted to go through numerous forestry units during the hunting season. They pared down their request to the snowmobile trail at Nine Mile on October 19, 2019. Because IronBull wanted to get established and only affects one Saturday afternoon utilizing the snowmobile trail and not the single track mountain bike trails staff and the Forestry Committee supported the event. The route and time that the racers are going through Nine Mile was made with the thought of what would be the least impact to other users. Lovlien agreed that the request did get fast tracked but for IronBull to move forward on their race they had to have an answer immediately from the Forestry Committee. The Forestry Committee agreed to it on a one year trial basis.

Polley mentioned that IronBull had been previously discussed in regards to the winter triathlon. CWOCC and the Wausau Nordic Ski Club worked together and the one day event includes fat tire mountain biking/snowshoeing/skiing was approved in January. Lovlien discussed each of the upcoming races at Nine Mile and said that most do not involve closures to the public. He said the Department is getting pressure to have more races at Nine Mile. The 15-year plan is going to be revised and could be a good time for people to voice support or concerns. Lane reiterated that the races take away opportunities for the Marathon County residents and the IronBull race should have been brought to this Committee first. Lovlien said all of the IronBull events were planned for 2020 so there would have been time to bring it to this Committee but the organizers decided on some races in 2019 so they could build upon them in 2020. Their request came on short notice so it went directly to the Forestry Committee.

Haug said their user group tries to avoid hunters who utilize Nine Mile from September 1st to the end of January and she thinks that is a lot of time. Stomioski also said that she doesn't go to Nine Mile in the spring because the trail is too wet and by the time she goes there she has to be aware of what hunting season it is so that really inhibits her riding. Lovlien noted that the County forests must allow hunting, trapping, and hiking year round.

Polley explained that County administration has been supporting the Chamber of Commerce's new strategic plan of trying to market Marathon County as an outdoor recreation mecca. Outdoor recreation includes all user groups so this is a good Committee to have because all get a voice. The County, Chamber, and CVB are looking to rebrand the area and the State is trying to market outdoor recreation. Nine Mile Forest is one of the top features the County has to offer in terms of amenities.

It's an area that is required to be managed for timber along with recreation and the Department will continue to get more recreational requests. Lovlien said staff didn't intentionally go around this Committee, this Committee has been very valuable to the Department in working through issues. Polley mentioned that IronBull has a joint agreement with the Parks Foundation to receive a percentage of gate and merchandise fees. The Parks Foundation highly supports the parks and forests. Lane felt that means that money has a lot to do with it and that's how it got fast tracked. Polley didn't agree that money was a factor and said IronBull's timing was the reason it got fast tracked. Registration for the fall 2019 race has to be open now. Also the Department has no idea if IronBull is even going to be successful. The number and kinds of races being held at Nine Mile were discussed. Lovlien said they are trying to get races scheduled outside of hunting season that starts early September but hunting season seems to be starting earlier and ending later. This is an issue that has to continue to be monitored and solutions found that limit user conflicts.

D. 2019 Spring Timber Sale Summary

Lovlien said the spring bid opening received twenty six-bids from thirteen different contractors. The County had a record bid opening, most of which came from an eighty five year old red pine stand at Nine Mile. Questions were answered.

E. County Forest Tour – September 12, 2019

The Forestry Committee requested a County forest tour which will be September 12th from 10am to 3pm. The tour will include viewing invasive species, timber sales and different recreational activities. The County Board, Forestry Committee, this Committee, and administrative staff will be invited. If any members are interested they should let him know. He will email the Subcommittee the agenda when it's available.

F. Wausau Bird Club Restoring Barker Stewart Island – Haug reported that their Bird-a-thon funds were used to restore native species on Barker-Stewart Island. Three trees and some native shrubs were planted. She also mentioned that the Bird Club is also helping to restore the shoreline there. She mentioned that a member of their club donated \$500.00 toward restoring bird habitat.

G. Wisconsin Tourism Industry Generates 21.6 Billion - Lovlien commented that 2018 visitor spending rose five percent to \$13.3 billion and most of the growth was tied to recreational activities. The different events promoted through the Department will help the local area. Marathon County tourism has also been increasing the last several years.

H. Report Says Wisconsin Forestry on the Upswing - Lovlien commented that the forestry employment sector increased nearly five percent and the value of timber sales increased by nearly ten percent. Consumption of pulpwood has decreased because some of the pulpwood mills have been closed but because the forests are aging more high quality wood is being shipped.

I. Electronic Assist Bikes – E-Bike Articles – Polley said the concept had previously been brought to Forestry Committee and Park Commission and eventually will come back whether or not to allow the electronic assist bikes on the County's mountain bike trails. Currently, electronic assist bikes are allowed on the Mountain Bay Trail. The articles discuss the pros and cons of these bikes and the new legislation being brought forward for them. Polley said the only electronic assist bikes the Marathon County Pedestrian and Bike Committee are discussing are the Class 1 pedal assist bikes and not the other classes that are throttle only. The bike has levels of assistance and needs to be pedaled in order for it to move. These bikes are becoming more popular among older cyclists. Chickering personally felt there could initially be problems at Sylvan Hill as these bikes would make it a lot easier to ride back up the hill. He didn't believe they would be that much fun on the single track trails at Nine Mile. He hopes everyone keeps an open mind.

J. Member Items – Haug reported that Wausau's application to once again be a Bird City was approved. Their high-flyer status remains even though the City has a trap, neuter, release policy for cats. Haug thanked Polley and staff for assistance on the application. Lovlien mentioned that Jon Daniels the Chief Ranger/Motorized Recreation Administrator will be retiring this fall. He said the State is in its third year of a three year trial to allow tree stands to remain in the woods and attached to the trees so depending on that outcome the County may be looking at revising its tree stand ordinances. Burke mentioned that Gary Zimbric is the new Wausau Nordic Ski Club president. Burke has stepped aside but will still be active and involved with the club.

II. Old Business

A. Update on the County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan – Polley said an online survey had been taken by 1200 people. An open house was also held with about 35 people in attendance. Staff is in the process of inventorying every park and forest unit's infrastructure. Staff will give the information to the consultant who will compile everything. They will provide a working document which will be reviewed by various committees.

B. Update on the Potential Land Acquisitions in the Town of Hewitt – Lovlien discussed the two parcels the County is looking to acquire. One of them he has a signed offer for the appraised value. Because the request is for more than \$250,000 from the Knowles Nelson Stewardship Grant there is a passive review process with the Joint Finance Committee that will be undertaken starting June 15th. The other parcel will have a second appraisal done on it because of issues with the first appraisal. The County will order the appraisal and work with the appraiser but the seller is responsible for all costs.

C. 2021 – 2035 County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan Revision

Lovlien said a small group of DNR and County staff are developing a template for the plan. He would like to bring the chapters to Committee so there may be an extra one or two meetings. He is envisioning a kick-off and a public input meeting but is undecided on having a survey yet. This plan is for the next fifteen years so it's important to get input from all the users. All input will be considered however not everything that user groups request will be feasible on the forests. The plan will go through committees, County Board and to the DNR for approval and it can be amended in the future.

D. IronBull Events at Nine Mile Forest Approved

IronBull events include the winter triathlon in January, the Rib Mountain Adventure Challenge which rotates parks and lands every year, the October bike race, and their signature event which is an extreme triathlon. This extreme triathlon consists of kayaking, mountain biking and running. Staff didn't know whether it will include Nine Mile or not.

E. Final Antlerless Deer Quotas Approved by Natural Resources Board

Lane reported that the final recommendation was approved. The Natural Resources Board did have a couple counties that were asking for antlerless only seasons which the Board didn't approve. Wieloch felt the Board was trying to use it as a wake-up call so that people would be aware that they can't make hunters shoot antlerless deer. Heil felt the problem was the privatization of the lands and hunters are the ones managing the deer herd.

F. Update on Proposal to Add Snowmaking at Nine Mile Forest – Burke reported they are in the process of setting up some site visits to look at operations in Minnesota and he also has to check into the status of the water study.

IV. Remaining 2019 Meeting Dates – September 18 and December 18, 2019 at 6:00 pm.**V. Adjourn**

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

Thomas Lovlien
Secretary