

Members present: John Burke, Dale Heil, Paul Klocko, Greg Klos, Mike Lane, Ryan Schleifer, Susan Stomieroski, Gary Weiland, Marcell Wieloch

Excused: Mark Chickering, Susan Haug

Wausau and Marathon County Parks, Rec, and Forestry Department staff present: Tom Lovlien-Forest Administrator, Jamie Polley-Parks, Recreation and Forestry Director, Chad Keranen-DNR Forest Liaison, Pat Peckham

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

I. Minutes

Motion by Wieloch to approve the June 5, 2019 minutes. Motion **carried**.

III. New Business

A. Forest Citizens' Advisory Subcommittee Appointments

Lovlien reported that the five members whose terms were expiring expressed interest in staying on the Subcommittee. Those appointments were approved at the August Forestry/Recreation Committee meeting.

G. Marathon County Forest Timeline and Public Participation Process

Staff has started revisions of the 15-Year Plan. A general survey is available online and will close September 25th. This Committee will review chapters of the plan at each quarterly meeting and will recommend any changes to the Forestry/Recreation Committee. At the end of the process, the Forestry/Recreation and Environmental Resource Committees will approve the plan and move it on to County Board. It will be sent to the DNR for review and approval by December of 2020. There will be an Open House on July 14, 2019 followed by a public comment period until August 17, 2019.

B. Review Revisions to the Marathon County Forest Comprehensive Plan Chapters 100 - 300

Lovlien gave highlights of Chapter 100 which include the definition of County Forest Law. He stressed that the law states optimum production of timber is most important which is different than State and Federal forests. The 29 County forest system in Wisconsin is the largest public landowner in the State and provides the most public land timber to the forest industry. Other topics in Chapter 100 include plan updates and distribution, forest program history, development, trends and Forest Certification Commitment. He noted that currently the County is certified by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative. There are two different certification systems, and staff is studying the FSC system and will decide if Marathon County should become dual certified. Questions were answered. Discussion occurred about the certification systems. Chapter 200 includes information on general administration. It explains the different roles of County Board and other Committees, County expenditures, County records, personnel and equipment. Chapter 300 includes description of forests, County forest ownership, and natural feature information. Questions were answered. **Motion** by Burke to approve chapters 100, 200 and 300 and recommend that the Forestry/Recreation Committee approve and move those on to the Environmental Resource Committee. **Motion** by Burke. Motion **carried**.

C. Review 2019 Timber Sale Package

The fall timber sale package offers 327 acres of timber on six tracts with an estimated volume of 15,470 tons and 480.0 thousand board feet. Keranen discussed all of the sales. The sales will be advertised and the bid opening is September 30th. Questions were answered.

D. Results of the 2019 County Forest Certification Audit

Lovlien said a full recertification audit was completed this year. This was the first year there were no Corrective Action Requests, no Opportunities for Improvement, and no Observations. This means that the County forest program according to third party auditors is doing a very good job in balancing the needs of a lot of different users on the County forests and managing for sustainability.

E. Results of the Cross Country Skiing Survey from the 2018-19 Season

Lovlien said the survey was sent to the annual ski and snowshoe pass holders and the response rate was about 38%. From the written comments it seems there are people that are happy with grooming and people that are unhappy with the grooming

done at Nine Mile. Lovlien mentioned that a lot of things affect grooming including timing and temperature when they groom, the weather, and when people come out to ski. Staff is always looking for ways to improve. There are a lot of times the larger groomers cannot be used because there is not enough snow. Burke thought that grooming will always be commented on no matter where and he felt it was hard to make everyone happy especially when dealing with marginal snow conditions. Discussion followed.

F. Oak Wilt Confirmed at Nine Mile and Planned Treatment

Keranen said that three more pockets of Oak Wilt have been found at Nine Mile. Oak Wilt spreads either through the root systems or by beetles. The beetles feed on the sap of trees that are cut or damaged in storms. An effective way of controlling the spread is to girdle and treat the infected tree with chemicals to kill them so that the disease cannot spread through the root systems. Because of all the storms this year Keranen felt there would be more pockets next year. Internal discussions are occurring whether oak is the best species to grow long term at Nine Mile if Oak Wilt continues to be a problem.

H. Wisconsin Endurance Mountain Bike Participation and Revenue

Lovlien reported the event had 79 participants and the County received \$642.75 in revenues. The trails are not closed to the public during the event.

I. Good Neighbor Authority in Wisconsin

Keranen explained that in 2014 the State signed a master agreement with the forest service to perform timber sale establishment on the national forest. The DNR is helping to set up the timber sales and the revenues from those sales are paying for the work that is done. In 2016 the Chequamegon/Nicolet National Forest was the number one timber producing forest in the nation. Ten thousand acres have been sold since they went into the agreement with a seven million dollar bid value. The extra money from the sales have been going back into the forest for beaver control, timber stand work, and updating all the recon on the national forest. The County forest program in this State is the model forestry program in the whole U.S. in how efficient and productive it is.

J. County Forest Tour – October 10, 2019

The tour will take place on October 10th from 9:30am to 3:00pm. Items discussed include invasive species and planned park development at the Wisconsin River Forest Unit; road aids, wildlife, balancing competing uses, a timber sale, rotating 80 year old red pine, and oak scarification at the Nine Mile Forest Unit; and the Burma Forest Unit ATV trail. Lovlien will email a reminder about the tour.

K. Member Items

Burke said the Nordic Ski Club is hosting an open house on October 13th at Nine Mile to welcome anyone wishing to find out more about the facilities and the Club. Wieloch said that hunters can help the local Citizen Deer Advisory Committees by using their bonus and doe tags.

II. Old Business

A. Revised Nine Mile Event and Use Policy

Lovlien said staff incorporated some of the items discussed at the previous Subcommittee meeting when revising the Nine Mile Event and Use Policy. Staff would like to have everything spelled out in the policy because they continue to receive more requests for use. He discussed the current regulations in the policy that did not change. He mentioned that the regulation prohibiting E-Bikes may be revisited in the future as more guidance is received from bike groups and the State who now allows one category of E-Bikes on State trails. Lovlien discussed the application policy for holding events at Nine Mile and the criteria used to evaluate event applications. He noted if some events are not approved at Nine Mile that staff will assist in finding a different venue such as a park if possible. Lovlien discussed the upcoming 2020 schedule of events at Nine Mile and whether or not the trails will be closed or open to the public. The biggest change in the policy is that a maximum of six weekend trail based special events can be held from May through October 15th. And of those six, only two

will be allowed between September 1st and October 15th to accommodate fall hunting seasons. An exception is an IronBull bike gravel race located on the snowmobile trail which may occur the Saturday following October 15th each year that had been approved by the Forestry/Recreation Committee. Staff is trying to see if that race could be moved before October 15th for 2020 and will not approve any other events after October 15th. Burke commented that the policy isn't changing who is using what and when. Lovlien said the policy will be given to event organizers. Lane questioned how many of the events close the road. Lovlien thought that only two events and that was for safety reasons because of crossing the road. Lovlien said he is asking this Committee to approve the policy, they are not approving the event schedule itself. Questions were answered. **Motion** by Burke to approve the regulations as presented. **Motion carried** unanimously.

B. Update on the Proposal to Add Snowmaking at Nine Mile Forest

Burke explained that two holes were dug at Nine Mile to determine water table depth. In both cases, water was found ten to twelve feet down. They talked about pumping the water and then seeing the recharge rates but their water specialist felt that wouldn't make much difference. He suggested they consider digging a third test hole a little bit closer to where the projected wetlands area would be and make a determination from there. Lovlien said that the water specialist suggested shooting some grades to determine where another test hole should be dug. The ski club needs to figure out through their engineer whether or not shooting grades and digging another test hole is going to give some scientific evidence that's going to say a two acre pond 10 feet deep is going to have enough groundwater that is needed about two million gallons. A hydrologist or an engineer should be involved throughout this process. Burke said they know that the pond will fill itself to a certain level. Will the drainage provide sufficient flow to fill it up the rest of the way to give them the appropriate amount of water or would a well need to be drilled and pumped during a part of the year to fill it up? They are at a point now where they know they have some water but is it enough? None of them are in a position to answer that and they need the engineer's experience. Lovlien said they need to know if there is enough water first and he thought it was important to know that probably by freeze up or it will wait another year. Burke agreed. Lovlien said the project is in a holding pattern. He will keep the Committee updated every meeting. A lot of questions need to be answered before moving forward.

C. Status of the County Forest Land Acquisitions

Lovlien reported that staff closed on the addition of 200 acres to the Hewitt-Harrison County Forest Unit and also on 80 acres in Easton that had been donated by the Park Foundation. The County was able to acquire all of that land for around \$8,000. Currently, staff is working on acquiring a 200 acre parcel from CERES timber. A second appraisal was done on that property and because it came in over \$350,000 automatically triggered a third appraisal which is paid for by the DNR. Eventually the DNR appraisal reviewer will look at all of the appraisals and certify one of them. Once the appraisal is certified we would be eligible for a fifty percent grant. He is also working on a 40 acre parcel in the Village of Kronenwetter that is attached on two sides to County forest. Lovlien mentioned that acquiring land is in the County's Strategic Plan and that the County only works with willing sellers.

D. Ragnar Trail Relay Running Race September 20, 21, 2019

Set-up has begun for the Ragnar Race. The trail systems will be closed to the public during the race on Friday and Saturday and then opened back up on Sunday. Last year there were approximately 2600 racers.

IV. Remaining 2019 Meeting Dates – December 18, 2019 at 6:00 pm.

V. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by Wieloch. **Motion carried.** Meeting adjourned at 8:00pm.

Thomas Lovlien
Secretary