

Members present: John Burke, Taylor Dorsey-(via webex), Carmen Engleman, Susan Haug, Dale Heil, Paul Klocko-(via webex), Greg Klos, Mike Lane, Gary Weiland, Marcell Wieloch

Members excused: Aaron Ruff

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

Others Present: Rick Seefeldt, Marathon County

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

I. Minutes

Motion by Wieloch to approve the September 20, 2023 minutes. Motion **carried** unanimously 10-0.

II. New Business

A. 2024 County Forest and Wildlife Work Plans

Lovlien reported on upcoming wildlife work which includes flowage maintenance, dike maintenance, cattail management at the Bern Flowage, wild rice seeding, alder and invasive species management, and forest opening maintenance. He discussed the Nickel-An-Acre budget. Other county forest upcoming work includes timber management, road and trail maintenance, conservation aids projects, administration, GIS work and professional development. Questions were answered.

B. 2021 – 2035 County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Amendments

Lovlien said most of the changes to the plan were minor. He discussed each amendment to the plan and the reason for the change.

C. 2023 Fall Timber Sale Results

Lovlien explained that the four bids received at the first opening were below the advertised value so the sales could not be sold. At the second bid opening the bids fell between the advertised and appraised value so then were sold. The same contractor received all three of the sales because the other bidder didn't submit a ten percent bid bond which was rejected per bidding regulations. With the poor markets, Lovlien was happy the sales were sold and that the forests can keep being managed.

D. 2024 Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department Budget Update

Polley reported overall there was a budget decrease of .6 percent from 2023 in the Department's budget. She gave detail on expenses and revenues. Lovlien said forestry division expenses and revenues stayed pretty much the same from 2023 to 2024. The Department made their evenflow number this last year and the extra funds will go into the general fund. In the future, County administration will look at that surplus revenue and possibly set it aside for department capital improvements.

E. Wisconsin County Forests Association Special License Plates

Lovlien explained WCFA is working on an initiative to put forth a proposal to have a special license plate. It will help promote and advocate for sustainable forest management in the State. If funds are raised they will be used for WCFA operations, grants, projects, scholarships, education, research and more. Five hundred signatures are needed to move the proposal forward with the Department of Transportation. A contest will be held for artists to design the plate and winner will receive \$1000.00.

F. Wisconsin County Forests Association Resolutions

Lovlien discussed the resolutions that the Legislative/Certification Committee and WCFA Board of Directors have endorsed which include support of 1) restoration of Division of Forestry budget cuts, 2) exceptions to DNR County Forest Administration Grant standards, 3) concerns with the State Snowmobile Recreation Council actions and 4) support to serve on councils/committees.

G. Misconduct of the Governors Snowmobile Recreation Council

WCFA sent a letter to Governor Evers and the Secretary-Designee of the Department of Natural Resources noting in detail numerous issues that are causing concern. In particular, potential conflict of interest among Council members and possible failure to comply with statute, code and Council guidelines.

H. Winter Recreational Program Update

Lovlien said staff is waiting for snow and cold both on the forestry and recreation side. Hopefully it comes after Christmas. Polley noted that better snowshoe signage has been installed at Nine Mile.

I. Member Items

Haug mentioned that this Saturday the Wausau Bird Club will be doing the annual Christmas bird count. Burke said the ski club had a fundraising campaign primarily for youth program equipment.

III. Old Business

A. Lake States Forest Management Bat Habitat Conservation Plan

Various bat species because of white nose syndrome disease became listed as federally endangered in March 2023 and WCFA has been working with DNR on how to continue to manage (harvest) the forests. Signing on to the Lake States Bat Conservation Plan is not a requirement but is an easy way to receive incidental take coverage and be sure Marathon County forests and parks are in compliance with the Federal Endangered Species Act with respect to federally listed bat species. Staff have been working with the DNR on the landowner agreement which includes a recommendation to the Environmental Resources Committee to sign on to the Lake States Forest Management Bat Habitat Conservation Plan.

B. 2023 Gun Deer Harvest and Activity on Marathon County Forest

Lovlien said there was a good amount of activity in Ringle and Leathercamp opening morning but after that it slowed down. Lane did not hear much activity in Nine Mile. Across the State the gun harvest was down 17% from last year. Discussion followed.

C. 2023 Ragnar Trail Wisconsin Update

Lovlien said the race is well organized and registration for the event was closed because it was considered full. Polley discussed the race itself.

D. Update on Big Eau Pleine Archery Hunt and Any Impacts on Bike or Equestrian Users

Lovlien reported that the bikers have not had any issues with archery hunters. Engleman also reported that equestrian users have not reported any problems. Lovlien said staff has only received information that three bucks and two does were harvested. After the archery season staff will and take this item back to Park Commission who will determine if another hunt will be held next year.

IV. 2024 Meeting Dates – March 6, June 5, September 18, and December 18, 2024.

V. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by Burke. Motion **carried** unanimously 10-0. Meeting adjourned at 7:36pm.

Thomas Lovlien - Secretary