

Members present: Rick Seefeldt (chair), Tom Rosenberg (vice-chair), Jean Maszk

Staff present: Tom Lovlien-Forest Administrator, Jamie Polley-Director, Joe Tucker-County Forester,
Michael Van Offeren-Recreational Deputy

Others present: Stacey Morache-County Board, Jeff Sorenson-DNR Liaison, Kelly Reith, Mike Lane

1. Call Meeting to Order – The meeting was called to order by Chair Seefeldt at 1:00pm, Rm. 5, 212 River Dr., Wausau. Official notice and the agenda for the meeting was posted publicly in accordance with State statutes.

2. Public Comment

Kelly Reith, 150097 Wineberry Lane, Wausau – Reith spoke mainly about the safety concerns he felt that unleashed dogs on the path near his property caused during deer and turkey hunting seasons. He had asked that Committee consider prohibiting dogs running at large during these hunting seasons and discussed changes to the existing ordinance to cover this. He said his changes follow some of the same language recommended for not allowing dogs on ski trails. He mentioned there are signs about hunting by the Nine Mile chalet and signs on the ski trails about respecting them.

Mike Lane, 921 Landfried Avenue, Mosinee – Lane hunts in Nine Mile with the aid of a dog and said the rule on the ski trail didn't apply to someone hunting with a dog. He didn't think they should close all of Nine Mile to dogs because one family has trouble by their house. He felt an officer could take care of trespassing issues or Reith could construct a fence to keep dogs off his property if he wanted. He asked Committee not to change the ordinance.

Reith clarified that he was not looking to exclude people hunting with dogs he was just referring to recreational dog walkers that didn't know hunting was occurring.

3. Approve Minutes – Motion / second by Rosenberg / Maszk to approve the minutes from the November 29, 2022 regular Forestry/Recreation Committee meeting. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 3-0.

4. Operational Functions Required by Statute, Ordinance or Resolution

A. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee

1. Review and Consider Revisions to Marathon County General Code Chapter 16 Relating to Dogs Off Leash in County Forests – Lovlien said County Forest Law requires the County to provide a rational basis about why a new ordinance is needed and show that they have authority to create one. Lovlien researched federal, state and other county forests to see if they had any ordinances restricting recreational dog walking in undeveloped areas. He discussed the differences between developed and undeveloped areas. No other county forests had ordinances relating to recreational dog walkers being prohibited from county forests or having dogs required on leashes in undeveloped areas. The federal and state forests have ordinances that dogs can't be in developed areas without leashes but nothing within their undeveloped areas. Corporation Counsels opinion states that the County has no authority to implement a citizen ordinance as written, enforcement of a stricter regulation would be extremely difficult and could be found to be contrary to state law.

Lovlien said specific regulations were set for the developed trail systems at Nine Mile because there were problems with people walking dogs on them. Something he thought might help this situation would be to put up a permanent sign at the parking lot on Laurel Road to let people know that hunting occurs on County forests. The sign could say "hunting is allowed according to state regulations, please respect private property, wear bright colors and consider leashing your dogs". He noted that there are over 30,000 acres of forest lands and 39 parking areas in the forest system so signing every one of them isn't feasible but signing the lots where there are issues is reasonable. They haven't had any other complaints anywhere else in Nine Mile other than the ski trail so he is hopeful that posting a sign may take care of some of the problems. If a dog trespasses on private lands there is always the option to call the Sheriff's Department. Staff will draft some language suggestions for the Laurel Road parking lot sign and bring it back to Committee for review. **Motion** / second by Maszk / Rosenberg to not move on with any revisions to the ordinances. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 3-0.

Reith and Lane left the meeting at 1:38pm

2. 2022 Department Year in Review – Polley highlighted some of the accomplishments from the previous year. There were increases in season passes and camping from 2021. The gross timber sale revenue in 2022 was \$790,000 and the net to the County was \$553,000. In 2022 the even flow amount was \$275,000 and was increased in 2023 to \$305,000. A few of the other highlights include work on the westside masterplan, 3.4 miles of new road at Big Eau Pleine Park, vegetation management at Barker Stewart Island, repairs to the 400 Block stage, new playgrounds, replacements to vault toilets, work at ice arena, park land acquisition, upgrades to high bridge at Eau Claire Dells Park, roofing at cattle barns, completed memorials and trial season for fat tire biking at Nine Mile.

3. 2023 Park, Recreation and Forestry Workplan – Polley highlighted some of the work planned which includes restroom replacements, Marathon Park water system update, redesign and build skatepark, treating and removing ash trees, planting new trees, planning the Department consolidation and expanding recreation program and events. Polley discussed upcoming small County and City projects. Some forestry work includes administering timber sales, site preparation for red pine planting, and evaluating trial season of fat tire winter biking. Staff will also be working on the sustainability plan, Rib Falls Master Plan, and ice arena/indoor sports feasibility Capital Improvement Project request.

B. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee to Forward to the Environmental Resource Committee for its Consideration - None

5. Policy Issues for Discussion and Committee Determination for Consideration by Environmental Resources Committee – None

6. Educational Presentations/Outcome Monitoring Reports

A. Marathon County Forest Program Review 2017 - 2021 – Lovlien reported that every five years the DNR does a program and financial audit. Lovlien discussed the commendations and recommendations from the audit results. He noted that the Department is current on its Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) certification requirements.

B. Winter Recreational Program Update – Lovlien said the freezing rain and wet heavy snow caused a rough beginning for winter programs. Currently winter tubing and ice skating are open. Also, all trail systems are open which include skiing, snowshoeing, biking, and most of the snowmobile trails. Winter events have been held except for the Badger State Games.

C. Wisconsin County Forests Association Spring Meeting – March 21-23, 2023 – Lovlien said if anyone would like to attend the meeting being held in Wausau this year they should let him know by February 20th. Seefeldt expressed interest and Lovlien will register him.

D. Parks, Recreation and Forestry Law Enforcement Annual Report – Van Offeren reported on law enforcement activity in the forest units. There were twenty-one total complaints which included four vehicle violations, ten cross-country ski patrols, five miscellaneous criminal, one illegal dumping and one lost hiker/hunter. There are more illegal dumping incidences but some are hard to trace and the forester takes care of picking up the items. Two citations were issued which does not include the violation notices. He noted that thirteen tree stand/trail cameras were confiscated and one that was reported couldn't be located. Questions were answered.

E. Billerud Corporation Investments in North America Operations – Lovlien reported that Verso had sold three mills to Billerud and it appears the Wisconsin Rapids mill will not reopen again. Billerud will be investing one-billion dollars into the mill in Escanaba to change it over to fiber container board and carton board packaging. It is possible they may take wood from Wisconsin and rail it up to Michigan.

F. Report on Timber Sale Activity on County Forest Lands and Revenue Assumptions – Lovlien reported the net revenue even flow amount for 2023 had been increased to \$305,000. This January has been warm so staff advised County Administration they may not make the even flow amount this year but had exceeded the amount the last few years. There will be timber sale extensions coming to Committee this summer.

7. Next Meeting Date, Time, Location: Tues., March 7, 2023, 11:30am, Rm. 5 and Webex, 212 River Dr., Wausau WI 54401 – Staff will keep Committee informed of status of this meeting if needed.

A. Announcements/Requests/Correspondence – none brought forward

B. Future Agenda Items: 2022 County Forest Annual Report, Forestry Division Expense/Revenue Report, Timber Sale Closeouts, 2022 Timber Stumpage Payments to Towns

8. Adjourn – **Motion** / second by Rosenberg / Maszk to adjourn the meeting at 2:45 p.m. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 3-0.