

Members present: Rick Seefeldt (chair), Tom Rosenberg (vice-chair), Jean Maszk  
Staff present: Tom Lovlien-Forest Administrator, Jamie Polley-Director  
Others present: Stacey Morache-County Board Member, Jeff Sorenson-DNR Liaison Forester

1. Call Meeting to Order – The meeting was called to order by Chairman Seefeldt at 1:30pm, 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 – none brought forward.

3. Approve Minutes – **Motion** / second by Maszk / Rosenberg to approve the minutes from the July 5, 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. Timber Sale Closeout – Tigerton Lumber Company. Contract #660-17 – A closeout summary was previously provided. Lovlien reported that the estimated number of tons was 2018 and 4041.17 tons were cut. Total revenue for this sale was \$140,381.85. Lovlien’s recommendation is to close out Contract #660-17 and return their cash bond and remaining balance in their account. **Motion** / second by Rosenberg / Maszk to close out Contract #660-17 and return their cash bond and remaining balance in their account. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 3-0.

2. County Forests Citizens Advisory Subcommittee Appointment – withdrawn

3. Discuss Fee Increase for Undesignated Camping on County Forests – Lovlien explained there is an application for applying for an undesignated camping permit which is currently fifteen dollars for one day up to fourteen days. A permit is needed for safety and to follow-up if an individual leaves a mess. He surveyed other counties and their permit fees vary in price. Staff believes an increase of ten dollars is warranted to cover administrative and law enforcement costs for the permit. Discussion followed. **Motion** / second by Rosenberg / Maszk to increase the fee for undesignated camping on county forests to \$25.00 for one night up to fourteen nights beginning January 1, 2023. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 3-0.

4. Consider Approving 2023 County Conservation Aids Project – Lovlien explained that this grant matches fifty percent of State funds with fifty percent of County levy for fish and game projects County wide. He described different projects that have been done in past years. He explained that the boat planks at Big Eau Pleine Park only go out a certain distance and sometimes in the summer there is not enough water because the reservoir is drawn down. His recommendation is to spend the 2023 funds for three boat landing plank extensions at Big Eau Pleine Park. If there are not enough funds to cover all three, he may request the 2024 grant funding go towards finishing the project. **Motion** / second Seefeldt / Rosenberg to approve the 2023 County Conservation Aids Project to extend three boat launches at Big Eau Pleine Park. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 3-0.

B. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee to Forward to the Environmental Resource Committee for its Consideration

1. Marathon County Strategic Plan Objective 5.2 Outcome Measure 3 – Polley explained that the objectives in the County’s Strategic Plan are being reviewed. Staff will be discussing Objective 5.2 which is to promote sound land use decisions that conserve and preserve natural resources in decisions with economic development and growth-Outcome Measure 3 which is that by December 31, 2022, an average of 320 acres of land per year will be acquired for the Marathon County Parks and Forests System. Staff recommends this objective remain in the Strategic Plan. It is highlighted in both the Marathon County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan and the 15-Year County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan. Polley discussed the guidelines and reasons used when purchasing park lands. She noted the County considers purchasing forest land if it is within the established blocking boundaries. Lands have been purchased using the State Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Grant which funds up to fifty percent on purchases of land. The Objective says “will acquire 320 acres” but that amount of land is more of a goal as staff only purchases from willing landowners and doesn’t actively pursue land to buy. Questions were answered and discussion followed. Lovlien discussed how over the last ten years the average has been \$355,000 a year in timber sale revenue to the

County. The forest industry supports jobs, has important nature, recreation, and economic impacts as well. The DNR pays townships with forested acres sixty-three cents an acre and the County pays those townships ten percent of the gross timber revenue based on their acreage. Lovlien mentioned that only 3.1 percent of the total land base in Marathon County is in county forests and only eight percent of the million acres in the County are in public parks and forest areas. A video was shown that the Wisconsin County Forests Association put together on the benefits and value of county forests are to the citizens of Wisconsin.

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

6. Educational Presentations/Outcome Monitoring Reports

A. County Forest Tour Draft Agenda – Lovlien said the forest tour will take place on September 15<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. Kronenwetter and Nine Mile Forest Units will be visited. He encouraged everyone to attend as there will be a lot of information given and interesting things to see.

B. Status on Voluntary Carbon Markets – Lovlien said through direction from the County Administrator a feasibility study was done for a carbon project on Marathon County forest. They are trying to determine the best approach to engage the Committees and County Board on whether to move forward with this project. The four Chairs of the Committee’s that are involved will be reviewing the feasibility study and staff will work with them to determine what the next step is and to get direction. If the decision is to move towards an engagement plan with Committees and County Board then information and education will be provided over the next several months. Lovlien noted that this doesn’t have to be rushed, the County Board will need to study and consider the positives and negatives of moving forward or not.

C. Preliminary Results of the 2022 Forest Certification Audit – Lovlien explained that Marathon County is certified under the Sustainable Forest Initiative (SFI) and a subset of counties are audited every year. No Corrective Action Requests (CARs) were found in the counties that are certified SFI. There was one Opportunity for Improvement (OFI) found statewide to improve understanding of “Special Sites” designation. There are twenty-seven county forests that are certified and will be working together on this Opportunity for Improvement.

D. State Capital Update Regarding County Forest Budget Issues – Lovlien discussed the Wisconsin County Forest Association’s 2023-2025 biennial budget priorities which include: increasing the county forest administrator grant to address inflation and ever-increasing costs of salary and fringe benefits; allocating \$250,000 solely for the sustainable forestry grant, above and beyond what is made available for the administrator grant; allocating the full \$0.10/acre, as allowed in statute, for the wildlife habitat grant. It is currently being prorated to less than half of that amount; increasing the time standard hours to keep pace with the growing complexity and size of the county forest program; and continuing financial and technical support of the Wisconsin Forestry Inventory Reporting System (WisFIRS) program. Additionally, asking for increased funding for the ATV/UTV budgets to help counties pay for law enforcement and maintenance on county trail systems. Lovlien also mentioned that Governor Evers had announced an investment, funded by the state’s allocation of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), in supporting several stewardship projects, including a major project in Bayfield County. Questions were answered.

7. Next Meeting Date, Time, Location: October 4, 2022, 1:30pm, Rm. 5 and WebEx, 212 River Dr., Wausau WI 54403

A. Announcements/Requests/Correspondence – Seefeldt requested the starting time of the meetings be changed to 1:00 pm. **Motion** / second by Rosenberg / Maszk to change the meeting start time from 1:30 pm to 1:00 pm keeping the meeting dates the same. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 3-0.

B. Future Agenda Items: Consider Forest Ordinance Revisions, Consider Approving the Fall 2022 Timber Sale Package, DNR/County Partnership Meeting, 2023 Budget Update

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