

Members present: Tom Rosenberg, Arnie Schlei(c)-(via webex), Rick Seefeldt-(via webex)  
Also present: Tom Lovlien-Forest Administrator, Jamie Polley-Director, Chad Keranen-DNR Liaison-(via phone),  
Brandon Stefanski-DNR Wildlife Biologist-(via phone)

1. Call Meeting to Order – The meeting was called to order by Chairman Schlei 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 Schlei / Rosenberg to approve the minutes from the November 2, 2020 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. 2021 Forestry/Recreation Committee Tentative Meeting Schedule – Committee agreed to keep the meetings on the same schedule that the Environmental Resource Committee follows which is the Tuesday before the first Thursday of every month. This meeting will continue to be held at 1:30pm.

2. Consider the Renewal of Private Road Access Permits 2021-2025 – Lovlien gave history about the road access permits. The County has offered them for many years and they are for private landowners that have no legal access through their own means. The fee for existing permits is \$150 for five years and for new permits is \$250. Lovlien discussed some of the permit requirements. He does not have any issues renewing the four permits that are expiring. Questions were answered. **Motion** / second by Seefeldt / Rosenberg to renew the four road access permits from 2021-2025. 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. Review and Consider Approving the 2021 Wildlife Work Plan – Brandon Stefanski, DNR Wildlife Biologist – The work plan had been previously distributed. Stefanski reported on accomplishments from 2020. He discussed 2021 plans including flowage maintenance, dike maintenance, cattail management at the Bern flowage, wild rice seeding, alder and invasive species management, forest opening maintenance and the Nickel-An-Acre budget. Questions were answered.

2. Review and Consider Approving the 2021 County Forest Work Plan – Resolution to Approve – Lovlien reviewed the work plan. He gave highlights on upcoming work including timber management, road and trail maintenance, conservation aids projects, administration and GIS work and professional development. **Motion** / second by Schlei / Rosenberg to approve the 2021 County Forest Work Plan and forward the Resolution and work plan to the Environmental Resource Committee for their consideration. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 3-0.

3. Resolution: Application for County Forest Acreage Payment – Lovlien explained that this interest free loan is based upon the number of County forest acres at 50 cents for the purchase, development, preservation and maintenance of county forest lands. In the last several years, the loan has mainly been used to match the Knowles-Stewardship grants to purchase land. The loan is paid back through a 20% severance tax on timber. **Motion** / second by Seefeldt / Rosenberg to approve the application for County Forest Acreage Share Loan Payment Resolution and forward it to the Environmental Resource Committee. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 3-0.

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

6. Educational Presentations/Outcome Monitoring Reports

A. Press Release – Wisconsin County Forest Program Exceeds Certification Standards – The Wisconsin County Forest Associations press release explains what the certification process is. Lovlien said twenty-seven counties are certified and Marathon County has been certified for seventeen years. The counties are exceeding certification standards. He pointed out that counties have 2.4 million acres of public forest land in Wisconsin and a lot of money comes off timber sale revenues, some of which is shared with the townships to reduce their tax burdens. Also, Wisconsin’s County Forests provide more than 9000 miles of snowmobile trails, 1800 miles of ATV/UTV trails, 1800 non-motorized trails (biking/hiking/cross-country skiing, snowshoe and horseback) and 330 campsites along with many hunting, fishing and nature viewing opportunities. Polley mentioned that according to a Google Community Mobility Report, usage of parks in Marathon County was up 136% in July and August of this year compared to an average year. Lovlien believed that because of COVID a lot of people are using and appreciating the forests and parks and staff looks forward to maintaining these resources into the future for the public to use.

B. McMillan Marsh Lease Amendment – Lovlien gave history that most County forest lands originated from tax delinquent property. There was an initial 22,000 acres entered in 1967 that wasn’t sold off. The State manages the McMillan-Mead Wildlife Area in the southwestern part of the County and Marathon County owns about 1,642 acres of mainly lowland marsh that abuts the State’s property. In 1966, the County leased the 1,642 acres to the State as part of their McMillan–Mead Wildlife Area. The County has a one-hundred year lease with the State which was revised in 1980 to increase payment from thirty cents to ninety cents per acre. It was amended in 1997 because the County acquired more land next to the wildlife area that was included in the lease. Lovlien discovered an oversight in that amendment left out about 240 acres so the lease needed to be amended to include that acreage. Lovlien also mentioned that he looked at other terms of the lease and ninety cents an acre is still the going rate for similar leases so there is no opportunity to increase the lease payment at this time. Lovlien wanted to update Committee on why the County is leasing land to the State and for what purposes.

C. Updated Fall 2020 Bid Summary – Keranen reported that he updated the bid summary after the last sale was sold. He said the values didn’t change too much. Overall they are down because of a combination of the Verso mill closure, frozen ground only sales, and markets. He felt the County was lucky to sell all of its sales and is hopeful things turn around with the spring sales.

7. Next Meeting Date, Time, Location: January 5, 2021, 1:30pm, Rm. 5, 212 River Dr., Wausau WI 54403

A. Announcements/Requests/Correspondence – none brought forward

B. Future Agenda Items: Nine Mile County Forest Event and Use Regulations, County Forest Ordinance Amendments, Cash Farm Lease Town of Easton

8. Adjourn – Motion / second by Seefeldt / Rosenberg to adjourn the meeting at 2:15pm. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 3-0.