

Members present: Arnold Schlei (c), James Bove, Rick Seefeldt

Also present: Tom Lovlien-Forest Administrator, Jamie Polley-Director, Chad Keranen-DNR Liaison, John Beatty, Mike Lane, Gary Zimbric

Call meeting to order – Meeting called to order by Chairman Schlei at 12:30pm, Rm 3, 212 River Dr., Wausau.

Public Comment Period – Not to Exceed 15 Minutes – Mike Lane, 921 Landfried Ave., Mosinee, Wisconsin responded to public comments from the September 3rd meeting. He disagreed with closing the area immediate to the chalet to hunting to accommodate greater trail usage. Lane felt that trail usage has expanded to the point where the need to limit races and events has occurred, so that residents are not being denied access to recreate without paying an entry fee. He felt designed special use areas are elitism and should never be considered in a multiple use County forest unit which is owned by all county taxpayers. He said trails may be skied as soon as the snow conditions allow and skiers are not prevented by rules, usage is limited by the weather. Closing areas to hunters will create more wildlife refuge areas. Forest regeneration is a problem in certain areas. The muzzle loader and the four-day antlerless seasons are very important tools in deer management. Increasingly through Learn to Hunt programs offered by the DNR, non-hunters become new hunters primarily to provide healthy low fat non processed food sources. This new movement to get back to nature through hands on harvest will also promote tourism and growth and healthier lifestyles. While public lands are open to hunting and gathering are available they are not plentiful. Further restricting areas reducing opportunities which has been identified as a limiting factor in hunter retention and recruitment. Encouraging back to the land activities such as hunting will create a greater appreciation for our public forests, ecosystems and animal populations. He felt special use areas and limiting uses will cause more friction and animosity between the user groups. While this proposal may seem insignificant due to size, it may impact many acres beyond the chalet area and he believes this is only the first step in further closures. He felt the proposal to close a section of property would spur other groups to want their areas closed off. He is also concerned the next thing then would be for new sports to come in and want their own areas. He felt something like this can spur more unrest between the user groups.

Approve Minutes – **Motion** / second by Bove / Seefeldt to approve the minutes from the September 3, 2019 regular Forestry/Recreation Committee meeting. Motion **carried** by voice vote, no dissent.

Educational Presentations/Outcome Monitoring Reports

A. County Forest Tour – October 10, 2019 – Lovlien said the tour is set and he is hoping for better weather conditions. Forestry units to be toured include the Wisconsin River, Nine Mile and the Burma Forest Units.

B. Update on the 2020 Forestry Division Budget – Polley said that the Departments budget overall is just slightly over a 2.31 percent increase. The budget specific to forestry is at a zero percent increase. She noted some project funds were shifted to help pay for some of the land purchases that may occur in 2020. If the purchases do not take place the money can be moved back into those project areas or may be put into a segregated land account to help build up those funds. Lovlien said the County Board made a policy decision that land acquisition was important and the Department is starting to draw down the funds it has to match the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship grants. The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship program is in place for the next two years but after that it would have to be renewed by the State. They would like to utilize the 50% grant match for the next two years to acquire additional lands. Questions were answered.

C. 2019 Final Timber Bid Summary – Chad Keranen reported that four total bids were received on six sales. One sale sold at the Leathercamp Forest Unit and one sale at Mission Lake County Park. One bid was received on another sale and was rejected because it was below the advertised and appraised value. Loggers are backlogged because of the work from summer storms and also because most are frozen ground sales and loggers are two to three winters out as it is. Markets are down because there is so much wood out there right now. The four sales that did not sell will be opened on November 4th, 2019. The value of the sales sold was \$52,412.10. Questions were answered.

D. Ragnar Trail Relay Race Summary – Lovlien reported that the race had about 2900 participants. The County will receive approximately \$20,000 in total revenues from the race. It's a race that has very little impact on the resource. The organizers are looking at applying for a new three-year contract with the County going into the future.

E. Article – How Long Will the Paper Industry Stay Healthy – Lovlien said this was an article on the paper industry and how it is adapting. In Wisconsin it is an 18 billion dollar industry and the 5th largest manufacturing sector employing about 30,000 workers. The direct output in Marathon County's economy alone was one billion with almost 1,760 jobs working for 10 businesses. Local mills have changed their packaging to meet demand with some challenges including trade, shortage of truck drivers and young workers.

Operational Functions Required by Statute, Ordinance or Resolution

A. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee

1. Timber Sale Closeout – Bell Timber Inc. Contract #663-17 – A closeout summary was previously provided. Lovlien reported that the estimated number of tons was 1440 tons and 1253.72 tons were cut. Total revenue for this sale was \$32,272.84. Lovlien's recommendation is to close Bell Timber Inc. contract #663-17 and return their cash bond. **Motion** / second by Schlei / Bove to close Bell Timber Inc. contract #663-17 and return their cash bond. Motion **carried** by voice vote, no dissent.

2. Consider Alternate County Conservation Aids Project at Shooting Range Park – Lovlien said Committee had previously discussed a road project which would cost more than the grant and will instead look at a potential CIP project for that. They then discussed a second project for a retaining wall project. Staff discussed it a little more and feel that project can wait a year or two and a more pressing is a development project at the gun range which would be to construct twenty-two concrete shooting tables for users to site in their rifles. Currently, there are wood shooting benches with logs to sit on. This would be a project for poured in place concrete tables and possibly nicer seating. Lovlien said they have been used in other places and are well received. Questions were answered. **Motion** / second by Seefeldt / Schlei to approve the concrete tables as the project. Motion carried by voice vote, no dissent.

3. Review Timber Bids and Award Contracts – Lovlien reported that one bid was received on tract 6-19 that was well below the advertised and appraised value so it was rejected. The only bid received on tract 7-19 was from Verso Corporation and it was over the appraised value so his recommendation is to enter into contract with Verso Corporation for tract 7-19. **Motion** / second by Seefeldt / Bove to enter into contract with Verso Corporation for tract 7-19. Motion **carried** by voice vote, no dissent. Tract 11-19 was a Mission Lake County Park Sale. United Wood Products was the high bidder on that sale so his recommendation to the Park Director will be to enter into a contract and she will inform the Park Commission.

5. Consider Request by National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA) to Allow Charging for Parking at Nine Mile Forest – Lovlien said the organizers of this high school race are requesting if it would be permissible to charge for parking in the Nine Mile Forest Unit lot during their races. Their request is based on potentially fundraising for their program. Lovlien said similar requests to allow charging have come up in the past and he would like Committee to decide whether to allow/not allow all groups the ability to charge for parking. That policy then would be put into the fifteen year plan. He said neither the current fifteen year plan nor County Forest law addresses charging for parking so it would be up to each County to decide. However, if they charge for parking, there's a caveat that says they may want to look into recreational immunity laws based on either profit or non-profit status of the group holding the event. County forest ordinance that deals with parking is silent on this. County Forest law says they must be open to hiking, hunting, trapping, off trail cross country skiing, and fishing and cannot charge for these activities. There's a 2009 legal opinion from the DNR on the recreational immunity law that deals with charging spectators for events. That law says if the owner charges spectators to watch an event on County forest the recreational immunity law no longer comes into play so the County would take on all the liability if someone would get hurt. Lovlien said the entire Nine Mile Forest Unit is never closed to all people at all times. At times, portions of it are closed for events. Lovlien presented a situation where if a group was charging for parking and a member of the general public wanted to hike nearby and pulled into that parking lot they would have to pay. How could they determine who is a spectator or part of the event and who isn't? Why should a general user have to park down the road and not be able to park near the area he wants to use? Lovlien said this may not apply to County park property if there is an event that closes down an entire park that may be an area where they may want to charge for parking if the recreational immunity law protects the County. **Motion** / second by Bove / Schlei to deny the National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA) to Allow Charging for Parking at Nine Mile Forest Unit. Motion **carried** by voice vote, no dissent.

4. Consider Proposed Changes to the Nine Mile Event and Use Policy – Lovlien said the revised draft of the policy attempts to balance all the uses at Nine Mile noting that all the uses are important. Nine Mile has been a multi-use forest for a long time and the user groups have to make compromises. A Forest Citizen Advisory Committee was formed in 1998 to try to manage all the different uses. This revised draft policy went to the citizen group in September and was unanimously approved. Lovlien discussed the each of the regulations in the policy. He said there were no changes on most of what was proposed in 2018. One item that may be revisited in the future is the use of e-bikes. A major revision in the policy is where it spells out the application process for events and the criteria used to evaluate applications. It also spells out how many events and when the events can be held. He noted that if an event is not approved, staff would assist the organizers in trying to find a different venue if possible. He mentioned that between May 1st and October 15, seventy-five percent of the weekends are available to the public without any scheduled events. Between October 16th and April 30th, eighty-two percent of the weekends are open to the public. Lovlien discussed the events that have been scheduled for 2020 and whether parts of Nine Mile are closed or open to the public. His job as land manager is to look at County Forest Law and make sure user conflicts are minimized. He would like Committee to consider this revision and to include it in the next fifteen year plan so that the policy can be given to event organizers. He suggested adding the denial of charging for parking or spectators at events into the County forest use and event regulations. Discussion followed and questions were answered. **Motion** / second by Bove / Seefeldt to deny charging parking or spectator fees for events at all County Forests county wide. **Motion carried** by voice vote, no dissent. **Motion** / second by Seefeldt / Schlei to adopt the Nine Mile Forest Event and Use Policy including the amendment regarding not charging for parking or spectators and then to add that policy into the Forest Comprehensive 15 year land use plan.

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

1. Review of Proposed Policy Revisions to the Marathon County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan Chapters 100 – 300 – Lovlien explained that Committee is not approving chapters specifically today because at the end of the process they will consider approving the entire plan and forward to the Environmental Resource Committee. He will bring a couple of chapters every quarter so that Committee doesn't have to review the entire plan at the end. The first three chapters have gone to the Forest Citizen Advisory Subcommittee and were approved unanimously for acceptance. Lovlien said that a lot of the language in the first three chapters is State statute, description, and administration information. Bove questioned an item under Federal Funds and Programs that Lovlien will research where language came from and get back to him by the next meeting.

Next Meeting Date & Time, Location – November 5, 2019 at 12:30pm, 212 River Dr., Rm. 3

A. Announcements/Requests/Correspondence – none

B. Future Agenda Items – Review Timber Bids and Award Contracts, Land Acquisition Updates, Wausau 24 Race Participation and Revenue, Feasibility of buying farmland for County Forest and planting with high dollar wood such as black walnut.

Adjourn – **Motion** / second by Seefeldt / Bove to adjourn at 2:00pm. **Motion carried** by voice vote, no dissent.