

## Forestry and Recreation Committee

March 9, 2017

8:30 a.m.

**Members Present:** Chairman Ronald Nye, Sam Hardin, Joe Novak, Duff Leaver, and David Solin

**Members Absent:** Donald Scupien

**Others Present:** Erik Rantala, Josh Waukau, DNR Liaison; Dave Peterson, Joe Jopek, and Terry Poltrock

**Location:** Conference Room, Forestry Office, Fairgrounds, Antigo

1. Call to Order – Chairman Nye called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Motion by Novak, seconded by Leaver to excuse Scupien. All ayes. Motion carried.
2. Minutes - A motion was made by Leaver, seconded by Novak, to approve the minutes of the February 9, 2017 meeting. All ayes. Motion carried.
3. Public Comment on Agenda Items and Consideration of Requests for Items to be Added to Future Meeting Agendas – Joe Novak and Dave Peterson provided comments to the committee.
4. Discuss Forest Stewardship Council Certification – Rantala informed the committee that he was contacted by Don Peterson of Renewable Resource Solutions and he stated that he would not be attending today's meeting as he has not heard from loggers in Langlade County that this is something that they have great concern about at this time due to the current timber markets. This issue will be tabled until next month.
5. Approve Memorandum of Understanding with Elcho Cross Country Ski Club – Rantala informed the committee that the lodge will be donated to the county using the standard donation form. The Elcho Cross Country Ski Club will provide all the maintenance to the lodge, and Langlade County will pay the utilities. Motion by Leaver, seconded by

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Solin to approve the Memorandum of Understanding with the Elcho Cross Country Ski Club for Michelle's Lodge and to forward to the Elcho Cross Country Ski Club board for their approval. All ayes. Motion carried.

6. Update on ATV Trail Connection at Langlade – Rantala reminded the committee that in the past that there have been continued requests for the section of the Wolf River Trail from Hwy. 64 to Lily to become motorized in the interest of making trail connections. Documentation was received in October, 2012 stating why this could not happen “*the DNR would not be able to approve a master plan change that would allow for summer motorized-use on the section of the Wolf River State Trail (WRST) between Hwy. 64 and Lily. Another factor that played into our decision is our continued concern that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) could rule that allowing summer ATV use on this stretch of the trail would be contrary to federal regulations. The Upper Wolf River Fishery Area (UWRFA) was purchased in part, and is managed with Sport Fish Restoration dollars granted to us by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The DNR is prohibited from allowing recreational activities and related facilities that would interfere with the purpose for which the State acquired, developed, or is managing the land. Although DNR determines what recreational activities allow, the USFWS retains oversight responsibility. If the DNR were to approve summer ATV use on this stretch of the trail, there could be serious ramifications that might leave the State open to loss of federal funding or the responsibility of finding replacement lands of at least equal value and fishery benefits.*” Currently two ATV clubs in Oconto County and the White Lake ATV Club are working to make a connection to Oconto County with assistance from the DNR that would not need this section of the Wolf River State Trail. The White Lake ATV Club applied to the DOT to allow ATV use over the bridge on the Wolf River on Highway 64 at Langlade and was denied. In 2014, the legislature passed Wisconsin Act 316, which states that a local town board and county board may pass an ordinance approving bridge crossing of less than 1,000 ft. This would be a short-term solution to cross the river completing the connection of the Wolf River State Trail and Oconto County. The clubs state that they have the easements across private lands necessary to make this connection. The long term solution to maintain this connection would be to build a new recreational bridge along side of the current bridge. This proposal could cost more than \$500,000; but could be cost-shared between the DNR ATV and snowmobile grant programs. Rantala also informed the committee that the DNR may amend the Master Plan regarding the old ranger station property. Information only.
7. Discuss Land for Sale in Town of Elcho – Rantala informed the committee that he was contacted by a landowner in the Township of West Elcho regarding his property in Section 30, which is entirely surrounded by county land to see if Langlade County would be interested in purchasing the property. Rantala stated that there is a swamp on the property, but there is also aspen and hardwood. The committee stated that Rantala should continue to negotiate with the landowner.
8. Discuss American Transmission Company Project in Ackley and Approve Selling Forest Products Associated with Project – Rantala stated that Langlade County had signed an easement with American Transmission Company shifting the right-of-way 50 ft. south.

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Rantala would like to advertise the wood for sale that was harvested due to the right-of-way being shifted. There are approximately 250 cords. The town would be paid severance for this wood. Motion by Hardin, seconded by Novak to approve Rantala to advertise the wood for sale. All ayes. Motion carried.

9. Update on Land Acquisition Projects – Rantala stated that our Camp Lyle appraisal is done and the DNR is currently doing their appraisal. The DNR will then revise the two appraisals and then certify a value for the property that would be used for the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship grant. This would then go to Joint Finance for their review. Rantala also informed the committee that the Grogan grant application will be going before Joint Finance within the month. Also, Rantala is still waiting to hear regarding federal approval on two of the DNR properties that Langlade County is interested in purchasing.
10. Discuss Contract Extensions – Rantala informed the committee that there are 23 winter timber sale contracts that expire on April 1, 2017. Rantala is requesting to extend these contracts for one year with no increase in timber stumpage due to the unusually warm winter. Motion by Leaver, seconded by Hardin to extend the winter timber sale contracts for one year with no increase in stumpage. 3 ayes, 2 abstain. Motion carried
11. Langlade County Forestry & Recreation Department Annual Report - Rantala briefly reviewed the Forestry and Recreation Department's Annual Report for 2016 and asked they review it further and call him if they have any questions. Motion by Novak, seconded by Leaver to accept the Langlade County Forestry & Recreation Department Annual Report. All ayes. Motion carried.
12. DNR Liaison Report – Josh Waukau, DNR liaison, updated the committee on several DNR items.
13. Administrator Report – Rantala stated that early weight limits have slowed logging activity. Many winter sales were not completed this winter due to unusually warm weather. A few crews have moved into summer ground to keep working, but will not be able to haul until it dries out.

Water control structures in Ackley will be improved with DNR funding in the next summer or two. This will also improve the snowmobile trail that is located on some of these structures.

ATV Route policy/application is being revised with Corporation Counsel and Highway Commissioner. Forestry committee will be updated when it is adopted by the Highway Committee.

Public hearing on ATV route designation of Hwy's J and B in relation to the Augustyn Springs/Bass Lake trail will take place at the Highway meeting in April. County Board will consider this in April or May.

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There is a bill being introduced that would increase the grooming rates from \$250 to \$300/mile for snowmobile clubs. Also, an increase in supplemental rates would go from \$150 to \$200. These rates have not been increased in nearly 20 years.

Snowmobile trails were open a total of 50 days in the northern trails and 41 days for the entire system.

Foresters are getting started on the Good Neighbor Authority contract that was authorized last year. They will be marking approximately 80 acres of red pine. They will be working 4-10 hour days doing county work, with the 5<sup>th</sup> day working on GNA. The County will be reimbursed their pay as well as an overhead cost and mileage.

Carry forward amount from 2016 will be \$59,164.24. This money will replenish the Recreation Fund to \$100,000 as per county board resolution. Extra funds were available because we were under budget in both Forestry and Parks budgets in 2016.

Park caretaker house had the water heater pressure tank replaced. That was not an insurance claim, but the flooring and a couple of doors will be turned into insurance. Doors and flooring are not complete yet.

Rantala will be attending the Wisconsin County Forest Association meeting in Madison on March 15-17. WCFA has a legislative hearing scheduled for the afternoon of the 15<sup>th</sup>, which I will be presenting information about the importance of County Forest as it relates to tourism.

Governor's budget calls for the elimination of the forestry mil tax. This was a segregated forestry account, now it will be funded through General Purpose Revenue. With this proposal, this will be fully funded in the '17-'19 biennium.

Tom Lazars and I met with a few individuals who are interested in expanding the Splash 'N Dash to include mountain biking. They also showed interest in developing mountain bike trails in the Jack Lake area.

Five applications were received for the Invasive Species casual position. Planning on interviewing on Monday, March 20.

14. Review Budget Summary - Rantala reviewed with the committee the budget summary report of the forestry department revenues and expenditures through February 28, 2017.
15. Set Next Meeting Date - The next meeting will be scheduled for Thursday, April 13, 2017, at 8:30 a.m., in the forestry office conference room, Fairgrounds, Antigo.

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16. Adjournment – Motion by Novak, seconded by Hardin to adjourn at 9:53 a.m. All ayes. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Poltrock  
Recording Secretary