

Forestry and Recreation Committee

October 18, 2011

6:15 p.m.

Members Present: Chairman Ronald Nye, Tom Schultz, Dave Solin, and George Bornemann

Members Absent: Richard Olsen

Others Present: Steve Jackson, Terry Poltrock, Fred Heider, North Central Regional Planning Commission; Dave and Judy Peterson, Chris Berry, Sarah Repp, Tom Koss, Joe Jopek, and Stacy Blahnik

Location: County Board Room, Langlade County Safety Building, Antigo

1. Call to Order – Chairman Nye called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m. Motion was made by Schultz, seconded by Bornemann to excuse Richard Olsen from the meeting. All ayes. Motion carried.
2. Minutes – A motion was made by Bornemann, seconded by Schultz, to approve the minutes of the September 21, 2011, meeting. All ayes. Motion carried.
3. Discuss Belongia Request – Jackson informed the committee that when they were inspecting storm damage in the Township of East Upham that they observed that Mr. William Belongia, who owns property in Section 25; T33N-R11E in the Township of East Upham had an electric dog fence, electric box and remains of a gate on county property and was having construction done for a storage building partially on county property. The Land Records and Regulations Office is investigating the construction on county property, but Mr. Belongia is requesting a road use agreement so that he may access his property across the county land. After discussion, motion by Schultz, seconded by Bornemann to have the corporation counsel send Mr. Belongia a letter requesting that he remove his dog fence, electric box and gate from county land and explaining the terms of a road use agreement, which Langlade County will continue to monitor every six months for the next three years. All ayes. Motion carried.
4. Discuss Proposed Mishler Easement – Jackson informed the committee that he received a letter from Ken Mishler regarding permission for forestry staff to cross Government Lot 3, Section 20; T33N-R10E in the Township of West Upham. Access would only be allowed if the balance of \$13,433.75 that was owed on his two timber sales was forgiven.

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Jackson contact Mr. Mishler to see if Langlade County could purchase a perpetual easement to cross his property for the approximately \$4,800 plus interest that was owed on the timber sales. There were questions if a perpetual easement could be purchased as there are other judgments against this property. Jackson will have the corporation counsel investigate this issue. Motion by Bornemann, seconded by Solin to have Jackson pursue whatever option would be in the best interest of the county. All ayes. Motion carried.

5. Discuss Request for Mountain Bike Trail – Jackson stated that he was contacted regarding allowing a mountain bike trail on the Wolf River State Trail from Highway 64 to Lily. Jackson stated that there would be no surfacing of the trail and that the trail would be used as is for a mountain bike trail. Motion by Bornemann, seconded by Schultz to allow a mountain bike trail on the Wolf River State Trail from Highway 64 to Lily. All ayes. Motion carried.

Jackson will obtain permission in writing from the State and have Stowe review it prior to any signing of the trail being conducted.

6. Set Date for Fall Timber Sale Opening - The 2011 Fall Timber Sale Bid Opening date is scheduled for Tuesday, December 6, 2011, at 8:30 a.m., in the Clover Room of the Multi-Purpose Building, Fairgrounds, Antigo.
7. Review Payment of Paid Bills - A motion was made by Solin, seconded by Schultz, to approve the paid Forestry and Recreation Department bills. All ayes. Motion carried.
8. Review Budget Summary - Jackson reviewed with the committee the budget summary report of the forestry department revenues and expenditures through September 30, 2011.
9. Set Next Meeting Date – The next meeting date will be Tuesday, December 6, 2011 at 8:30 a.m. for the fall timber sale opening unless an agenda item(s) would come up that would need to be addressed before the December meeting.
10. Public Meeting – Langlade County Five-Year Outdoor Recreation Plan - The Langlade County Forestry and Recreation Committee conducted a public meeting on recreation needs for Langlade County. Langlade County is updating the five-year plan for the period 2012 to 2016. The purpose of the meeting is to review a draft of the plan and gather citizen input concerning countywide recreational needs for the next five year.

This plan will assess the existing recreation system in Langlade County, identify recreation needs based upon public input and recreation standards, sets forth goals and objectives to be used as guidelines in formulating outdoor recreation improvements, and establishes recommendations for improving the recreation system over the next five years. Submission of this report to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources establishes eligibility for the County and local units of government for a variety of Federal and State Aids. Non-profit groups, foundations and the general public may also

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use this document to coordinate their own private efforts for developing outdoor recreation facilities.

Fred Heider, North Central Regional Planning Commission, explained that adoption of this plan by the Langlade County Board and subsequent acceptance by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources will continue eligibility of the County and its local units of government for Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON), and Stewardship Funds. Adoption by all municipalities is not necessary if they wish to cooperate with Langlade County to use this plan for grant applications. Local government grant applications have a better chance of approval if Langlade County applies on their behalf.

This Outdoor Recreation Plan was prepared pursuant to Wisconsin Statute 23.30 Outdoor Recreation Program. This section serves to “promote, encourage, coordinate, and implement a comprehensive long-range plan to acquire, maintain, and develop for public use, those areas of the State best adapted to the development of a comprehensive system of State and local outdoor recreation facilities and services...”

This plan addresses the outdoor recreation needs for the entire County and each local government within Langlade County.

Background information on Langlade County was compiled to develop an understanding of the environmental and social characteristics of the County and their meaning for outdoor recreation. The existing recreation system was analyzed to determine current and potential future deficiencies through the year 2016. A combination of public survey, standards analysis, and the Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) were utilized to define recreational and open space needs. Goals and objectives were created to guide the direction of recreational planning efforts within Langlade County.

The recommendations are general strategies and five-year action programs for recreational facility development. The plan concludes with a note on updating to insure that it remains relevant to the needs of the County over the entire five-year span.

This plan was written to continue the parks and recreation program established in the Langlade County Outdoor Recreation Plans since 1979.

Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) 2011-2016 – Projected completion in the Winter of 2011, this plan attempts to classify, measure, and ultimately provide for the preferences and needs of a statewide recreating public. Many factors, from changing demographic and land use trends, to recreational supply, and conflict with other recreation uses, affect the quality, supply, and demand for outdoor recreation. This plan is what the State will use to determine where to approve grants.

North Central Wisconsin Regional Bicycle Facilities Network Plan – This 2004 document is intended to guide the development of an interconnected bikeway system for the North Central Wisconsin Region. Potential trails are identified and an improvement description was created for each County that trails existed to facilitate how the plan can

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become reality in a cost efficient manner. Langlade County trails within this regional plan come from the 1999 Citizen Bike Route Initiative Plan, which established a network of on-road bike routes and asks WisDOT to improve STH 64 to accommodate bicycles between Antigo and Merrill.

State Trails Network Plan – This 2001 document clarifies a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) role and strategy in the provision of all types of trails. The plan identified a series of potential trail corridors that would link existing trails, public lands, natural features, and communities. This statewide network of interconnected trails would be owned and maintained by municipalities, private entities, and partnerships of the two. Preserving transportation corridors, such as old rail lines, is specifically discussed as a very important strategy in the creation of recreational and alternative transportation corridors.

Segment 19 – Langlade County to Michigan – This abandoned rail corridor links the State of Michigan with the Mountain Bay Trail near Eland in Marathon County. It passes through a few state wildlife areas and some county forests. This corridor also links to the proposed Three Lakes to Rhinelander and Crandon to Tomahawk abandoned rail corridors, the Washburn to Rhinelander corridor at Monico and the Antigo to White Lake proposed corridor. The grade runs through portions of Langlade County Forest, and lake area around Kempster in Langlade County and the popular tourist areas of Three Lakes and Eagle River in Vilas County.

Segment 56 – Argonne to Shawano – Argonne is on the Dresser to Michigan corridor in the north, and Shawano links to the Mountain Bay Trail in the south of the corridor. The Crandon to Tomahawk corridor and the White Lake to Antigo corridor link to the Langlade County to Michigan corridor to form a loop. An old abandoned corridor east of White Lake in the future could link this corridor to the Nicolet State Trail or connect it to road routes. In Langlade County, this segment follows the Wolf River for about seven miles and continues south through the Northwest portion of the Menominee Indian Reservation, terminating at Shawano and its connection to the Mountain Bay Trail.

From the 2007-2011 Outdoor Recreation Plan, the following have been accomplished: a shelter for tow operators at Kettlebowl Ski Area was built and upgraded grooming equipment as well as installing electricity at the ski area, blacktopped the boat landing and replaced boat launch planks and replaced the pier at Moose Lake, developed area from White Lake to Hwy. 64 for ATV travel on Wolf River State Trail, developed area from White Lake to Forest County line for snowmobiles on Wolf River State Trail, the White Lake Depot was remodeled to be trailhead for White Lake ATV/snowmobile trail, replaced decking and added rails to existing trestles for the Wolf River State Trail, ten gates were installed on the Wolf River State Trail, the parking lots of Sherry Road and at the trailhead in White Lake were developed, connected Augustyn Springs ATV trail to new Pickerel ATV trail and new Pickerel ATV trail and new White Lake/Crocker Hills ATV trail and the Wolf River State Trail A & C, grant funding was received for recreational crossing at Hwy. A, fourteen miles of trails and routes were added to the ATV trail system in order to connect the entire county system, local ATV clubs sold ads so a new ATV map could be printed and distributed, a pit toilet was constructed at the Augustyn Springs trailhead, worked with local club to develop an ATV trail from White

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Lake to the Parrish area, entered into two-year Light Utility Vehicle pilot program, improved and added mileage to the Jack Lake cross country ski trail, further developed snowshoe trail at Jack Lake, developed an 18-hole disc course at Veteran's Memorial Park, added electric service to shelters at Veteran's Memorial Park, playground equipment was donated at Veteran's Memorial Park, the boardwalk located on the nature trail at Veteran's Memorial Park was replaced, approved Ice Age Trail land use agreement as a perpetual agreement, assisted Moccasin Lake Horseback Riding Club in developing camping area and well at trailhead, assisted the Triple R Horseback Riding Club in further development of trailhead in Elton, repaired the 100-yard rifle range and redid retaining wall at the Langlade County Bow and Gun Range, electrical service was added at the Langlade County Bow and Gun Range for campers at statewide shoots, and a metal roof was installed over the small bore shoot bench area at the Langlade County Bow and Gun Range.

Volunteers are a very necessary part of the equation and much of what has been accomplished could not be done without them.

Heider explained that the surveys were sent to all townships in Langlade County as well as the outdoor recreation groups. Comments were received from the Townships of Ackley, Antigo, Evergreen, Neva, Parrish, Rolling and Vilas. Under the question what are the top three outdoor recreational issues facing Langlade County, responses were as follows: safety of ATV trails, which can be addressed by keeping ATV trails off all roads, ATV trails, railroad grade from Hwy. 64 to Argonne, and snowmobile trails. Under the question, what existing outdoor recreation facilities in the county need improvement, responses were as follows: expand camping sites at Jack Lake as they are in high demand and ATV trails.

Responses from the outdoor recreation groups were as follows: under top three outdoor recreation issues facing Langlade County: lack of long range planning/contingency plan for county takeover of maintenance and grooming of cross country ski trails currently maintained by friends groups, financing and providing adequate personnel to maintain/enhance recreational trails now and in the future, completion of the Wolf River State Trail as a bike trail and a snowmobile trail in the winter like the Mountain Bay trail, arguing between motorized/non-motorized trail usage, funding to adequately maintain and promote trails, vandalism – garbage dumping, more camping sites and expand use of existing trails for hiking and biking.

What improvements would your group like made at any park or area in the forest? New privy constructed at the parking lot of Gartzke ski trail, new privy constructed at the shelter of Jack Lake ski trail, construct new shelter with fireplace/stove at the Moccasin Lake ski trail, develop more snowshoe trails in the county forests, including at all cross country ski locations, develop more off-road bike trails in the county like Vilas County/Boulder Junction area, Moccasin Lake – improved signage to trailhead, improved gates to deter dumping/non-motorized use, much improved promotion at county level, parking area improvements, and pavilion.

What improvements would your group like made for any trail?

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Construct separate cross country ski trail from the Kettlebowl lodge to the main ski trail, construct/place more benches along ski trails, have more wildlife viewing areas along ski trails, Jack Lake – open area to equestrian use in summer on a formal basis, improve promotion and signage, parking lot improvements including shelter/pavilion and picnic tables, improvements to existing shelter on trail, develop trail (hiking/biking) from Elcho to Summit Lake and on to Jack Lake (could use old railroad bed part of the way).

Do you feel that there should be new outdoor recreational facilities developed? If so, where and what type of facilities?

Develop a bike route system with signage on town roads and/or county roads if there is no alternative – develop and public (webpage) bike route maps, construct the Wolf River State bike trail, and new ideas should be encouraged – but before build new, maintain and promote what we already have.

Suggestions/Comments: Continue to support the City of Antigo with the maintenance/tracking of the City boardwalk trail and the development of other walking/hiking/biking and skiing trails in the City, erect more signage reminding people to take their trash with them, there should be recognition that Langlade County is a destination for silent sports like road biking, mountain biking, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, river canoeing and kayaking, and horseback riding. In comparison to surrounding counties, we are the premier county for a diversity of these silent sport activities.

Public Comment:

Tom Koss stated that there are a lot more opportunities for motorized recreation in Langlade County, which generates more revenue. More effort needs to be made for non-motorized recreation even if it does not generate as much revenue. Energy needs to be focused on improving the cross country ski trails that we have. More family-oriented recreation is needed and it needs to be promoted correctly. If possible, concentrate attention on one cross country ski trail in Langlade County to make it a premier trail like Nine Mile in Marathon County. The trail grooming needs to be consistent, but they do show potential. Consider a connection from Jack Lake to Kettlebowl.

Steve Jackson stated that only 12-13% of Langlade County is non-motorized.

Judy Peterson stated that Langlade County needs to do a better job to promote Kettlebowl and all the trails in the county. Would like to be able to hike and bike on the Wolf River State Trail.

Jackson stated that grants have been applied for, but Langlade County has not been fortunate enough to receive the funding to date.

Stacy Blahnik questioned whether the comments from the two year pilot program for Light Utility Vehicles has been positive and what the status is.

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Jackson stated that when the pilot period is over all counties involved will meet to discuss the findings and how/if to go forward with the program.

Dave Peterson stated that younger volunteers are needed. Also, younger cross country skiers want cross country ski trails groomed for skate skiing while older skiers want the more conventional grooming.

Tom Schultz stated that more manpower is needed to adequately groom the cross country ski trails at Jack Lake and Kettlebowl. Financially this is not possible at this time and would a user fee to increase revenue for Langlade County be accepted. Schultz also stated that Kettlebowl is such a wonderful facility that it would be nice if it could be open more of the year.

Dave and Judy Peterson stated that Kettlebowl can only be open if there is a volunteer available to open and close the facility due to vandalism. Judy Peterson stated that a user agreement was created several years ago so that it could be used by other groups during the year, but it was only used once and having a volunteer available is difficult.

Chris Berry questioned if a better tow rope system could be installed at Kettlebowl as the current system is difficult for older skiers.

Bornemann stated that other lift systems are quite pricey.

Jackson stated that a \$25 button for the country ski season has been considered so skiers do not feel the need to drop a donation in the box each time that they ski.

Dave Peterson had the following suggestions: complete in 2012, the resurfacing and development of the Wolf River State Trail between Highway 64 and Highway 55 for bicycles, hiking, fishing and nature walking; develop on the Wolf River State Trail at Hollister Road a handicap accessible trail to the Wolf River bridge include parking area, small shelter, and other amenities to assist the handicapped and make this trail available for users of wheelchairs, powered wheelchairs and other handicap conveyances; complete resurfacing and development of the Wolf River State Trail from Highway 55 to join trail in Forest County; consider a bike-ATV parking lot at Lily alongside the trail; monitor DOT highway construction projects where a bike lane could be added under the Complete Streets Law and request grant funding for these projects; monitor DOT bridge replacement projects to work for a bike, walk, snowmobile or ATV lane included with bridge replacement. There are several bridges such as Highway 52 bridge at Lily and Highway 64 bridge at Langlade, which may come up on replacement bridge schedule in 2012-2016 time frame and request appropriate grant funding for these projects. Develop on- and off-road bike trails/routes and sign county roads as bike routes and coordinate with town boards, village and city. Continue to expand the cross country trails at Kettlebowl. Develop with user groups a water trail system on lakes and rivers in Langlade County. Develop and add handicap accessibility to various sites around the county and strive to add accessibility at one new site each year. Revisit the user fee concept, look at surrounding counties, or other counties that have implemented a user fee to obtain their pros, cons and experiences. Actively pursue Federal, State and private grants to help with funding recreation projects. Establish a user advisory committee

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from organized user groups to assist in planning, pursuing grant funding, user fee concept and issues of concern. Consider having a county board member chair this committee and report to the forestry committee. Have the forestry committee request the forestry and recreation department report on progress, action or inaction on the various recommendations in the plan to the forestry committee at least twice a year.

Joe Jopek stated that Ice Age Trail coordination is ongoing in Marathon County, and they will be looking to purchase easements in 2012.

Ron Nye suggested taking reservations at Veteran's Memorial Park again as he has heard of frustration of campers who drive up to the park only to find that it is full.

George Bornemann suggested a bike trail on the Wolf River State Trail from Hwy. 64 to Hwy. 55 with an open shelter at the Oxbow. Bornemann spoke of a creating a mountain bike trail in the Langlade-Nicolet area. The trail would follow established logging roads from Parrish to Summit Lake to Jack Lake to Stevens Springs to the Otto Mauk Road. The trail would be approximately 60 miles and the only cost should be signage and maps.

Dave Peterson also stated that the county should look into a signing program – scenic vista sign. The Wolf River Territory from the Menominee County line to the Forest County line on Highway 55 should be a national scenic highway. Fred Heider stated to be a national scenic highway that there must be a minimum of 35 miles and a start and end point.

Chris Berry stated that Langlade County will be featured again on Discover Wisconsin and that the episode will include the Ice Age Trail, horseback and mountain bike trails, and the farmers market.

Jopek stated that an additional accomplishment that should be added is the land use agreement with the Knights Templar.

Dave Solin stated that since the Knight Road was opened to motorized travel that there are very few areas for silent sports in Langlade County.

Jackson thanked those in attendance for coming and for their comments.

11. Adjournment – Motion by Bornemann, seconded by Schultz to adjourn the meeting at 8:22 p.m. All ayes. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Poltrock
Recording Secretary