

MINUTES

Eau Claire County

• Committee on Parks & Forest •

Monday, April 12, 2021

4:00 p.m.

Virtual Meeting

Present: Kevin Stelljes, Joe Knight, Missy Christopherson, Gary Gibson, Tami Schraufnagel

Others Present: Josh Pedersen – Director, Jody Gindt – Supervisor, Winnie Parker – Administrative Specialist III (Committee Clerk), Kyle Johnson – DNR County Forest Liaison, Jacob Tumm – EC County Forester, Erika Gullerud – Fiscal Associate, Greg Leonard – Land Conservation Manager

Chair Stelljes called the meeting to order at 5pm and confirmed public posting of the meeting.

Verbal roll call was taken by the committee clerk and is noted above under present.

No members of the public were present.

The committee reviewed the minutes from the March 8, 2021 meeting. Supervisor Knight moved to approve the minutes as amended. The minutes passed unanimously.

Director Josh Pedersen highlighted Chapter 2000 of the 15 Year Plan. Because the focus of this document is the county forest, Lake Altoona Park is not mentioned.

2000-7 The table in this section was derived from the online timber management program, “Timber Base.” The numbers will deviate slightly based on annual changes.

2000-8 Correction made indicating that Lowe’s Creek Trails were broadened to include skate ski trails as well.

2000-10 Wood trails are open to public travel to those with a licensed vehicle. There was an edit made to chapter 700 reflecting road/trail closures.

Page 11 Wildlife Management – Fisheries biologist helped write this section referring to all our bodies of water in the county. Central District Ecologist, Dean Edlin, helped prepare this section. Burns on the state natural areas are managed by the DNR. The natural area on North Fork is not listed here because it is an area on which we have not had active management.

2000-21 As a matter of record, it would be appropriate to add reports done for the county here, like the annual work plan, annual report, and timber forecast model. Even though there is an abundance of natural regeneration happening, it is good to now be on a regular planting schedule.

Wildlife habitat in Eau Claire County is some of the best in the state and does not really get that much attention.

Page 26 Forest Composition – See transitions which come from our model as to how the composition compares to the history. There is more jack pine due to the fire regimen. Red pine is a naturally occurring species. Oak historically was here, just not as heavy as it is today.

Chair Stelljes suggested for a future agenda discussion of the pursuit of the acquisition of the canoe landing site on Highway 27 and the canoe rental business as a keystone property along the river.

Chair Stelljes motioned to get an informal review by the DNR, then a formal approval from the county board and, finally, back to the DNR for a final approval before the 15 Year Plan is published. All in favor, none opposed.

NOTE: Thank you for all the work that went into updating the 15 Year Plan.

Forrest Gibeault of Steigerwaldt Land Services presented the opportunities for forest carbon credits. Please see attached slides. Forrest's goal is to help counties like Eau Claire to get into the market.

Joe Knight brought up the fact that one of Eau Claire County's goals is to be carbon neutral by 2050, and wondered if Eau Claire County could partner with surrounding counties to have a larger presence in the market. It is not likely that many, if any, developers will entertain this idea.

Missy Christopherson asked about Eau Claire County hanging onto our own carbon credits to meet our carbon neutrality goals. To offset the cost of that, it is likely developers would have a higher cost. Developers have a certain threshold of credits that need to be met.

Most, if not all, timber harvesting practices in comparable projects have not changed, conducting "business as usual." Some in the program have intentionally left out certain wood types when creating their carbon credit project to allow for conducting "business as usual." Forrest anticipates that Eau Claire County will probably be able to continue as they always have and perhaps also increase northern hardwood enrollments.

Missy Christopherson asked if Forrest had a sense of what we could anticipate with regards to staffing needs. It takes approximately 20-40 staff hours, give or take, to help package this information. The most time is spent considering the footprint for long term goals and setbacks (buffers). The building of summary documentation for forest management with details, which could be pulled from already developed reports, is the first step. This information should be well thought out and assembled in such a way that represents the goals of the county.

Kevin Stelljes asked for a "good rule of thumb" for the magnitude of this opportunity. Base ground biomass 100/ton(+or-) range does not necessarily equate credits for sale. A conservative estimation is \$50/acre total net return in 40 years. This is highly conservative. They want quotes to over produce rather than under produce. Greater than 1 million but less than 5 million. A 40-thousand-acre productive forest is a very meaningful project. This is significant enough to be worth a developer's time. Most importantly, a carbon developer is going to be looking for a commitment from the county if they are going to put all the preliminary work into a project. Projects take 12-18 months to get to the market.

Spring Timber Sales. Jake Tumm and Kyle Johnson presented seven (7) new sales and three (3) previously opened sales. #1-21, 2-21, 3-21, 4-21, 5-21, 6-21, 7-21, 3-20, 10-20, 14-19.

#1-21 We are leaving seed trees in this area, taking 2/3rd out and leaving 1/3rd. This area will be replanted with white spruce which is native to Wisconsin.

#2-21 One part of this area has never been thinned while another part has been thinned three (3) times. We can do a product comparison here. When we go to replant, we will use red pine in the area next to Goat Ranch Road to replant after clear cutting and the area near Horse Creek Road will get a first thinning.

#3-21 This is another big sale which has two sections that can be accessed off two ATV trails.

#4-21 There is a stand of pine along the trail that did not sell the last go around. There are two (2) to three (3) different age pines with an oak area that did not sell before. We will clear cut this and it will come back to oak. Kevin Stelljes had a thought to get a group like the Boy Scouts to make sparse bunk houses using the local wood.

#5-21 There is quite a bit of aspen here, a larger stand broken up into smaller sections to have various age ranges of trees. The plan is to leave oak 10" and over for a visual barrier and wildlife habitat. It will regenerate to aspen. In 2015 an access road north of Chaney Road was improved due to funds from a Ruffed Grouse Grant. Currently there is a cable up across the access, but there is a plan to put up a gate to allow for only walking access.

#6-21 This sale is largely a thinning. It is coded as aspen but is mostly a pine plantation and natural white pine that has not been treated. It is a larger 50-acre sale of oak regeneration. Kevin Stelljes expressed concern about this being mainly "wild" right now and how adding a culvert for access would impact the current state of the naturalness of the land? To create better access, the plan is to have a permanent culvert added with the supervision, oversight, and approval of the DNR. This is the least invasive to the creek and is not an environmental "trade off" when done appropriately. This would require a Chapter 30 permit and the cost is minimal to the county (about \$303 for the permit itself plus supplies and county employee labor). This solution has minimal cost to the county and minimal impact to the forest.

#7-21 This sale has a tough access point on Black Creek. It is jack pine regeneration after a clear cut with aerial seeding in a few years. We plan to release seed in a few years to the white oak region.

#3-20 No change on this sale.

#10-20 Third (3rd) time this sale is open for bids. There is not much to harvest to make it lucrative.

#14-19 This is a very small sale with an access road off H.

All contracts are for two (2) years.

Tami Schraufnagel moves to put all sales up for bid. All in favor, none opposed.

Transfer of sale #1800-1, 1806-1, and 1835-1. Dan Nelson, owner/operator of DMS Forestry passed away. We have been willing to work with Dan's wife to wrap up his affairs. After consulting with Chauncey Effensen from counsel, it was suggested that we close out these three (3) sales and allow Krizan Logging to take them over. Because these bids were already offered to the public it is not necessary, according to Chauncey, to do this again if Krizan is willing to take the bids as written. Joe Knight motioned to approve the transfer of these three (3) sales as written. All approved, none opposed. Tami Schraufnagel expressed appreciation for the humanity given and expressed in helping DMS in this situation.

Resolution 20-21.128 Knowles Nelson Stewardship Program – After some discussion it was decided that Joe Knight will add examples to the fact sheet of things more than land acquisition, for instance the chalet, and bike trails which shows other diverse uses. Gary Gibson moved to accept the motion as is and modify the fact sheet only. All in favor, none opposed.

Willett Woods Old Growth Management Area Proposal. After discussion about whether or not we honor Bruce Willett by making this a wilderness area it was decided to forward this onto the Advisory Committee to research and make a suggestion to the Committee. There is no objection to honor Bruce Willett, it is just a matter of how best to do so. We would like to get this accomplished before the family has a memorial for Bruce sometime this summer. The Advisory Committee will have until the end of May to report to the Committee during the June meeting. The family has been informed already of our intent to honor Bruce. Joe moved to send this to the Advisory Committee and report back to the Committee in June. All in favor, none opposed.

Gary Gibson reported on the 1930's history of a Federal Government Works Project and Public Works Projects to build dams which provided work after the Great Depression. Kevin inquired as to the cost of the project. The Lake Eau Claire Association is looking for donations toward their \$5,000 goal to raise money to place a plaque in the area commemorating the rich history of the Altoona Dam. While we are not generally opposed to donating to this project, more information is needed, for instance, is there a working model? And what is the actual cost? Josh Pedersen indicated that the Parks and Forest Department would have some say as to the type of sign and its location.

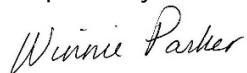
Director's report – No comments.

Committee Updates – No comments.

The next meeting date was set for May 10, 2021, at 5:00 PM virtually.

The meeting was adjourned at 7pm.

Respectfully Submitted by,



Winnie Parker
Committee Clerk
Administrative Specialist III – Parks & Forest