

BAYFIELD COUNTY FORESTRY AND PARKS DEPARTMENT
COMMITTEE MEETING
July 14, 2025
County Board Room

Members Present: Fred Strand; Steve Sandstrom; Larry Fickbohm; Jeff Olsen

Members Absent: Charly Ray

Staff in Attendance: Jason Bodine, Administrator; Sara Hudson, Recreation Coordinator; Deanna Regan, Office Manager

Others in Attendance: Joseph LeBouton, WI DNR; Matt Dallman, The Nature Conservancy; Forrest Gibeault, Aurora Sustainable Lands; Ron Gropp, WI DNR

1. Call to Order of Forestry and Parks Committee Meeting.

This meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM.

2. Public Comment: None. Public comment closed at 6:01 PM.

3. Approval of the June 9th Meeting Minutes.

MOTION: (Fickbohm, Sandstrom) Approve minutes and place on file. All: Yes. Carried.

4. Presentation. Matt Dallman, Forrest Gibeault and Ron Gropp. Seeking support for the State of Wisconsin to apply for federal funding through the Forest Legacy Program to place a Working Forest Conservation Easement on Aurora Sustainable Lands properties. Question and answer session followed.

MOTION: (Olsen, Sandstrom) Express support as a committee. All: Yes. Carried.

5. Monthly Reports

- a) Forestry. Revenue for June was well below the 3-year average at just under \$300k. To date, total stumpage revenue is nearly \$2.16 million. This is significantly lower than the mid-year returns in 2024 (\$2.89 million), but not unexpected. Interviews for the new Forestry and Parks Technician were completed. Nick Brilla has accepted the position and will start July 28th.
- a. 2025 Budget. Total returns at the halfway point of 2025 are about \$830k less than stumpage returns at this point last year. Part of that was due to the short winter and wet spring in 2024, which pushed (and kept) many contractors in our high dollar sand ground sales for much longer than normal. Still too early to predict, but anticipating total stumpage returns to end much closer to budget this year (\$3.4 million). Expenses are on target
- b. 2026 Budget. Anticipating an increase in the parks and rec portion of the budget, especially as we start highlighting and planning for future projects. Carbon returns are still available for some of this work, but we'd also explore various grants and other funding sources. Not expecting any large forestry capital requests or big swings in any of the core forestry accounts other than traditional wage and fringe increases. With federal support no longer available for our CFI program after 2026, we'll need to explore other options, which could involve partnering with the WDNR, Iron County, Missouri DNR, and/or Indiana DNR to find viable solutions. One option is to commission a contractor to re-create and manage the FIA database/program (involving roughly 1 million lines of MIDAS code) that can be tailored to the needs of each agency. This would likely involve a \$20-\$30k budget item which could be addressed with carbon returns. Depending on how quickly the county surveyor position is filled, we may need to increase the budget for professional services by around \$15k-\$20k to cover routine projects that have traditionally been addressed by the county surveyor. Considering asking for an increase (\$75k to \$100k) in the Highway Fund. The amount

available for 2025 was set at \$50k. We still plan to continue replacing our oldest rec vehicles. This year, another snowmobile is in line for replacement.

- c. Carbon Project. Revenue from the most recent carbon sales was received this week. As per the last transaction, that was allocated at 60% FCOR and 40% CCOR. No new sales have been reported. Still working on providing data associated with reporting period 4, as well as migrating our project to ACR IFM version 2.1.
- d. Land Acquisition Projects. In the process of compiling a list of lakes in Bayfield County without public access. Of the roughly 175 lakes in Bayfield County that are 20 acres or larger and then excluding based on existing permanent public access opportunities, location, difficult access or type of private inholdings, only about 20 lakes remain. The list could be reduced even further once we take a deeper dive. This was done to develop a baseline for current public access opportunities to lakes in Bayfield County, which will also help with an assessment of need. Based on rough preliminary estimates, only about 8-9% of lakes 20 acres or larger in Bayfield County do not have public access opportunities. It would be possible to develop a top 3 or 5 list to consider in the future, but it's worth having further discussion. If only 8-9% of the lakes don't have public access, how important is securing public access to those last remaining few? Should we prioritize improvements to those lakes that already have access instead?
 - i. Knowles-Nelson Stewardship. All 8 properties included in this project closed on July 8. Including the match property, nearly 723 acres will be added to the county forest. Next steps will be to withdraw all the parcels currently enrolled in MFL, complete the paperwork to receive reimbursement from the grant, and enroll all parcels into CFL.
 - ii. Whittlesey Creek. No new updates. Still anticipating Landmark to formally approach the county for the remaining \$28k balance to complete the grant.
 - iii. Siskiwit River. The landowner agreed to an extension through Oct 31, otherwise no updates on this project. It's still hinging on formal grant support from WI Coastal.
- e. WCFA Board Member Update. Knowles-Nelson funds for 2026 are going fast. About \$800,000 still available.
- b) Campgrounds and Day Use Parks. Campgrounds have been busy. The Twin Bear native planting project next to the new retaining wall near the lake is growing nicely. Made contact with the DNR about creating a Rec Use Agreement for Big Rock Campground and river access. The concrete vault toilets at all day use areas were power washed before the 4th of July. The Big Rock sign at the corner of Hwy C and Big Rock Rd was also installed last month. Looks really nice and have received numerous compliments.
 - a. RFPs for Big Rock, Topside Lake, and Fire Hill. Each property has previously been identified as a high priority for improvements. Funds for planning at Fire Hill were approved in the last few budgets but haven't had the time or resources to accomplish much. A primary goal of the RFP would be to consider professional third-party assistance in the conceptual planning and design phase for each site, helping to visualize opportunities and options, while adhering to our goals and objectives. We are reaching out for third-party assistance to help get these projects moving. Depending on the responses and estimated costs, we could move forward with the development of plans on one or more of these properties in 2025 then budget the rest in 2026. The goal is to send out the RFP within the next week and have responses ready to review during the Aug or Sept meeting. No costs for the RFP and if we get good proposals, then we can decide if it's worth moving forward with contracting for planning and design assistance on these properties.
- c) Trails and Recreation.
 - a. Motorized Trail Updates. New grant contract year started 7/1, including the addition of ATV/UTV trails on federal land. Held meetings with each club to review and update contracts and maps. It's going to be a learning curve for the clubs and our department. DNR motorized grant requests/applications were reviewed this week. Sara and Lindley both attended the virtual grant review meetings.
 - b. Non-Motorized Trails Updates. The native wildflower garden prep at Siskiwit Falls is planned for the beginning of August, with the plants going in the ground 8/16-8/17. We are working on an agreement with the Town of Bell to maintain the privies at Lost Creek and Siskiwit

Falls. The plan is to add trash receptacles at each location, which would be part of the agreement (garbage removal). We have been working to update and/or create Rec User Agreements with Ashwabay, CAMBA, Birkie, and BATs. Those should be ready to review shortly. CAMBA's trail work at Mt Ashwabay looks good. They finished work on Diesel Bear and should be finishing up with Tsuga Daddy this week. Trail work on the Ojibwe Trail in the Cable block started the end of June. The NC Maxwell Property (Northland Legacy Lands) is still in play and slowly moving in a positive direction. An updated Special Events Permit will shortly be found on the Forestry and Parks webpage. Sara continues work on updating the LCORP. Letters were recently distributed to local units of government asking for input on the updated plan. The goal is to have a draft to the Committee by Oct and approved by the County Board by Dec/Jan.

- c. Yurts. Maintenance days are scheduled at the Cable yurt for later this month, which includes deep cleaning and painting floors. Sara and Lindley have also been working with the Tourism Department to promote the Cable yurt. Occupancy rates there over the last few months have been some of the lowest since its construction, with only two nights rented in June! It can now be found on the Wisconsin Tourism Website. We'll continue to explore promotional options through advertising and discounts.
- d. Events. Nothing new to report.

Committee acknowledges that reports are received and placed on file.

6. Committee Members Discussion. None.

7. Joseph LeBouton, DNR Representative, Comments: None.

The next Forestry and Parks Committee meeting has been scheduled for **Monday, August 11th, at 6:00 PM** in the County Board Room.

Meeting adjourned at 7:18 PM.

Submitted by,
Deanna Regan