

# Land & Water Conservation Committee

## Minutes

March 18, 2009

**1. Call to order:**

The monthly meeting was called to order by Committee Chairperson, Michael Burow at 8:30a.m. Committee members Carlton Zentner, George Jaeckel, Karen Christian and Gregg Torres were present. Mark Watkins, Director, Land & Water Conservation Department; Nancy Lannert, Resource Conservationist; Brian Resch, District Conservationist with NRCS; and citizen guest Betsey Delorey (arrived 8:34 a.m.) were also in attendance.

**2. Roll Call (establish a quorum):**

A quorum was established.

**3. Certification of Compliance with the Open Meetings Law:**

It was determined that the committee was in compliance with the Open Meetings Law.

**4. Review of the March Agenda:**

The March agenda was reviewed by the committee members.

**5. Citizen Comments:**

No citizens were present at this time, however Ms. Betsey Delorey arrived after this agenda item was concluded and her comments were heard following discussion of agenda item 8. Ms. Delorey asked the Committee what their responsibilities were concerning management and stewardship of Rock Lake. She also asked about the sedimentation of Korth Bay and who handles water quality and sampling on the lake. Mr. Watkins explained that navigation through Korth Bay was overseen by the Wisconsin DNR. Other stewardship issues were addressed by the Lake Management Plan. He suggested to Ms. Delorey that she meet with him following the meeting to address her concerns more specifically.

**6. Review and Approval of the February Meeting Minutes:**

Mr. Jaeckel made a motion to approve the February meeting minutes as written. Ms. Christian seconded. Motion carried.

**7. NRCS Report (Natural Resources Conservation Service):**

Mr. Resch distributed a handout detailing the various programs available to agricultural landowners from NRCS. Some programs have ongoing sign-up periods; others have dates by which applications must be turned in to NRCS. For example, EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program) applications are due by April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2009 and the Floodplain Easement Program deadline is March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Applications for the Wetlands Reserve program are ongoing. Further information on these programs is contained in the handout. NRCS will be attending the Wool Festival at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds in September, 2009 to promote the EQIP program. See attached reports.

**8. NRCS Floodplain Easement Program:**

Mr. Resch discussed the new Emergency Watershed Protection Program – Floodplain Easement Program. This program is funded through the Federal Government as part of the Federal Stimulus Package. Eligible landowner must have land in the floodplain, prove crop loss and restore the wetlands in order to qualify to receive up to \$4,000 per acre in this permanent easement program. NRCS personnel have discussed the program on the radio, mailings have gone out to prospective participants and various newspaper articles have been written to publicize the program. Interest at this time appears to be fairly strong.

Mr. Watkins provided additional handouts on this program. Mr. Jaeckel asked how this program affects taxes. While that is still not clear, it is expected that the land will be changed

to Natural Resource Zoning and be taxed at 50 percent of that value. It was asked if Jefferson County Zoning can deny this change in zoning and make the zoning recreational which has a higher tax rate. This is something that needs to be looked into. Mr. Burow asked if there were any restrictions on land placed in this easement program. Most landowner rights are retained but noxious weeds must be controlled at the owner's expense. Mr. Resch explained that landowners wishing to enroll timberland or pastureland must have been actively managing their land as such. No specific crop history is required. NRCS is planning that contracts and restorations be complete by December of 2010. Land currently in Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is not eligible unless removed from CRP or scheduled to expire at the end of this fiscal year (September 2009). See attached report.

**9. Report on Emerald Ash Borer Mitigation:**

Mr. Watkins provided a handout on the Emerald Ash Borer. Funding for this program is partially provided under the Federal Stimulus Program. Mr. Zentner asked if there was any clear idea of the number of trees in Jefferson County that could be affected. This is just part of the information that will be pursued through the strategic planning process. Periodic updates will be provided to the Committee.

**10. Renewable Energy Facility:**

Discussion is underway concerning use of Federal Stimulus dollars to build methane digesters. Dane County is planning on one such facility and there is some interest in the County to look into this possibility. Mr. Watkins will keep the committee updated on any new developments.

**11. Request for Proposals for Gravel/borrow pits on County Property:**

Mr. Watkins met with a representative from Mashuda Contractors to gauge the potential for gravel extraction for the Hwy 26 bypass on the County farm. The land is located along highway W. The contractor expressed more interest in private property south of the proposed County site. Bids are due to the State DOT in June, thus other contractors may be contacting the County in the near future to discuss the possible purchase of gravel.

**12. Review of 2008 Expenditures:**

Mr. Watkins provided the committee with a spreadsheet detailing how various County departments ended the year financially. The LWCD ended the year with a \$6,356 surplus, or approximately 5% under budget. This includes cost-sharing allocations that were carried forward into 2009. Mr. Watkins pointed out to the Committee that the Department budget is reviewed often and overruns are not an acceptable practice. In looking at the figures presented, the deficit spending from the Sherriff's Department alone could fund the Land and Water Department for over 3 years.

Mr. Burow asked if the Committee could receive quarterly budget reviews. Mr. Watkins will provide this in the future.

**13. Correspondence:**

An email from Patricia Cicero, Water Quality Specialist for the Department was received listing the status of two DNR grant applications. The application for funding of a sediment study along with funds for an internship for Rock Lake was approved. The application to fund a plant survey on Lower Spring Lake was denied. The denial was due to the large numbers of applicants for this grant funding.

**14. Next meeting date and possible agenda items:**

Due to staff conflicts (Tree Sale dispersal) it was decided to hold the next Land and Water Conservation Committee Meeting on Tuesday, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2009 in room 202 at 8:30 a.m. Mr.

Burow asked that the proposal to develop a forestry management plan on County lands be revisited. It will be added to the next agenda.

**15. Adjournment**

Mr. Zentner made a motion to adjourn, it was seconded by Mr. Torres, motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 9:34 a.m.