

MINUTES
Ashland County Forestry and Recreation Committee
Ashland County Forestry Department
304 West Michigan Street, Butternut, WI 54514
December 6, 2023

Members Present: Marty Vitek, Kathy Schutte, Louis Carl, John Weiner, Gary Mertig

Others present: Forest Administrator Chris Hoffman, Assistant Forest Administrator Tom Ernst, Forestry Office Manager Shana Curry, Avery Jehnke, Mary McPhetridge, Ryan Peaslee, John Westphal, Austin Bott, Zach Lawson

Present on zoom: Rec Officer Bruce Joanis, Dan Grady, Rich Huber

Kathy Schutte called the meeting to order at 2:01 P.M. and took roll call.

Motion by Gary M. to amend the agenda to move item #8 Recreation Officer report to #5a and approve the December 6, 2023 agenda. 2nd by Marty V. Motion Carried.

Chamber of Commerce - Mary states that tourism was strong this year. The only thing that was seen was that lodging was expensive. They are selling the visitor guides. They are going to be applying for a JEM (Joined Effort Marketing) grant for Ashland County. This helps with research in regards to what types of travelers are coming to the area, where they are coming from, what is bringing them here, etc.

No public comment.

Motion by Marty V. to approve the September 6, 2023 minutes. 2nd by Louis C. Motion carried.

Bruce Joanis gave the recreation report. He states that there is nothing new. They are preparing for a good snowmobile season. There weren't any crashes that he can remember. Citations and warnings were about the same. It was slow during hunting season.

Zach Lawson gave the fishery report. He has been doing a lot of field work. Loon Lake was restocked with large mouth bass. Those fish took a big goose egg so they went back this year to check for survival and didn't find anything. There is mainly pike. White River Flowage excelled down through the dam. In 2022 they brought it down to the river channel which then flushed all the game fish out. No game fish to be found. Augustine Lake had a hard winter with late ice. Pretty much all the game fish kicked the bucket. They will be working on that issue. They are working on Hwy GG lakes. Thankfully, some of our lakes are still producing as good as, if not better, than before. They did around 75 trout lake surveys. They found 7 unclassified trout streams.

Avery Jehnke talked with Jenna Malinowski for the wildlife report. They are working on otter and wolf track surveys. She wanted to talk about the rifle season. The northern zone is down about 20%. This is part of the state that was impacted by the winters. We had incredibly wet bow season. Hunters are getting older and younger hunters aren't coming in to hunt as much. Predators are on landscapes. The warm temperatures didn't help with the hunting seasons.

Avery Jehnke gave the forestry report. He gave an update for the time standard. They usually give about 900 hours of DNR time and right now they are sitting at 35% of that annual goal. They were behind because they had vacancies. They did fill one position with Austin Bott. Working in the woods right now is fantastic without the deep snow. DNR staff out of Mellen are getting involved with setting up some federal timber sales.

John Westphal gave the snowmobile/ATV report. He states that the clubs are working hard to prepare trails for the upcoming snowmobile season. He states that the snowmobile alliance is sitting financially well. They sold a bunch of older equipment that wasn't being used. That helped pay for new/used equipment.

Chris gave the administrators report. He states that we opened timber bid sales yesterday December 5, 2023. Out of the 8 that were up for sale, 6 sold. There has been 1 sale that has gone no bid for a while so they will revisit to see what they are going to do with it. Looking for a motion to approve the timber bid sales. Motion by Kathy S. 2nd by Gary M. Motion carried.

Chris added that since October, the hardwood market has freed up a little bit. We've seen wood moving. Loggers have been going in and out of the woods. It seems like the market is improving.

Kathy S. made an announcement that she will not be running for the county board in April due to family issues. Louis C. also announced that he will not be running in April. John W. said that he will be moving so he will also not be running in April.

Expense vouchers were looked at and signed by the committee.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 7, 2024 at 9 a.m. at the Butternut Village Hall.

Motion to adjourn by Louis C. 2nd by John W. Motion carried and meeting was adjourned at 2:47 p.m.

Submitted by Shana Curry
Ashland County Forestry and Recreation Office Manager