

# Rusk County Land and Forestry Committee

## Meeting Minutes

### December 22, 2021

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The monthly meeting of the Rusk County Land and Forestry Committee was called to order at 8:00 am, Wednesday, December 22, 2021.

**Present from the Rusk County Land and Forestry Committee:** Phil Schneider, Lyle Lieftring, Alan Rathsack, Terry DuSell; Jerry Biller (Absent)

**Also present:** Jeremy Koslowski – Forest Administrator, Heidi Woldhuis – Office Manager, Mike Zimmer – Parks Manager, Jerrad Macholl – Assistant Forest Administrator, Dane Gravesen – Forester, Derek Jochimsen – DNR Rusk County Forest Liaison, Megan VanDoorn – Youth County Board Representative, Andy Albarado – Administrative Coordinator, Pat Zimmer – DNR, Nolan Kriegel – DNR, Doug Brown – DNR, David Kaufura – WCFA

**Present from the Public:**

George Sihsmann, Bob Grunseth, Don Manske, Bob Devoe – WRA, Theodore Strzok, Al Gerber, Jim Gerber

**Approval of Minutes:**

Motion by DuSell/Lieftring to approve November 17, 2021 meeting minutes. No Opposed, Motion carried

**Public Comment:**

- Thornapple Rd Sturgeon Viewing area – WRA
- Big Bend Snowmobile bridge, multi-purpose bridge – WRA
- Timber Sale Contract Renewal language in regards to COVID pandemic – Strzok
  - Contracts issued prior to COVID
- Access Rd being utilized by Logging Companies to access Rusk County Lands - Gerber

**Parks and Recreation Report:**

Mike reported on the following:

- Campground usage has slowed down due to winter.
- Legislation on 40 ft rule for snowmobile trails allowing trails to be within 40 feet from the road to receive funding – passed
- Ice Age Trail – Blue Hills Trail reroute updates
- Weirgor ATV Trail project updates
  - North section graveled
  - On schedule

**Timber Sale Report:**

Jerrad reported on the following:

- Broke \$2M in revenue for the first time for Rusk County
- Few active sales currently
- 10 acres of one timber sale cut incorrectly due to contractor miscommunication
- 4-year contracts coming due following this winter
- Handful of sales completed and closed out this past month
- 10 sales with wood to haul that has been scaled and paid for
- Sales set up for Spring Bid

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- Off-road vehicle use damage along forestry roads is directly affecting timber bidding negatively

**Administrator Report:**

- Verso Corporation – Billerudkorsnas press release regarding the purchase
- Elk Knuckle/Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation project report
- WCFA Quarterly Conference Call updates
- Timber Sale Contract policy regarding COVID
  - 1 yr penalty-free awarded to all contracts
  - Minimums on sales were dropped by about 30%
- Accessing County Forest through Private Land
  - Set by contractors and the private landowners
  - Compensation between the contractor and private landowners, not county funds

Comments from Committee Chair regarding Sturgeon Viewing area and bridge

- Concerns from Parks Department regarding funding, maintenance, plan, etc.
- Grant for the bridge has been applied for, waiting for an award letter

**Best Management Practices – Water Quality Presentation: - WI DNR**

DNR and WCFA Presented on:

- Stream and wetland crossing violations by motorized traffic
  - County currently non-regulates recreational traffic over majority of forest
- Direct and indirect costs associated with violations
- Non-permitted crossings of waterways
- 15-year plan must be followed regarding these issues
- Will cooperate and assist county to address the non-conformances of the 15 year plan, certification and state laws

Request the committee addresses the current violation and creates a policy to correct systemic issues and avoid future environmental degradation of the county forest.

**Summer Tour Planning 2022:**

- June 21-24<sup>th</sup>
- No new updates

**Direct Sale of Unsold Timber Sales**

- 12-21 – Roger Hoyt
- 20-21 – Al Webster

Motion by DuSell/Rathsack to award direct sales as listed above. No Opposed, Motion Carried

**Gravel Pit MOU with Highway Department:**

- Agreement to have all Gravel pits managed by one department, Highway

Motion by Lieftring/DuSell to approve the MOU with Highway Department– No Opposed, Motion Carried

**Out of County Travel:**

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- Spring Meetings, end of February
- Schneider, Koslowski, Macholl, Gravesen

Motion by DuSell/Rathsack to approve out of county travel. No Opposed, Motion Carried

**Budget Review:**

- Gross timber stumpage is over \$2M
- Utility costs at parks is significantly higher than the budget amount due to increased usage

**Review and Approve Bills:**

Motion by DuSell/Lieffring to approve the November AP report. No Opposed, Motion carried.

**Adjourn:**

Motion by Lieffring to adjourn at 9:51 am. Motion carried.

Request from public to reopen meeting for public comment  
Meeting opened by Schneider at 9:51 am.

**Public Comment:**

Commentary by landowners regarding access road maintenance along a private road.

**Re-Adjourn:**

Motion by Lieffring to adjourn at 9:55 am. Motion carried.

The next meeting will be Wednesday January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022 at 8:00 a.m.