

Ashland County Land Conservation Committee
November 8, 2013
Ashland County LWCD Office



Present:

George Mika	Tom Fratt
Gerry Richardson	Mike Pero
Charlie Ortman	Dave Schultz
Ken Lindquist	Gary Haughn (NRCS)
Randy Richardson	Seth Carlson (Ashland Daily Press)
Jim Oakley	Bill Heart (Trout Unlimited)

Call to order: by George Mika @ 9:35 AM. The meeting had been properly noticed.

Minutes: **Motion to approve minutes of 9-20-13 by G. Richardson/Ortman MC.**

Public Comments: Bill Heart spoke on behalf of the National Trout Unlimited organization. He had taken a resolution from Wisconsin Trout Unlimited and the Wild River Chapter to the national level. At the national level TU has been working with the EPA on mining issues specifically related to the Pebble Mine in Alaska, and they would now like to be more involved in Lake Superior mining issues including the potential for an iron ore min in the Penokee Hills. TU is looking into the possibility of hiring an intern to work on these issues by the end of January 2014, and Bill has been asked to gather local contacts. Bill suggested including Pete Russo and Tom Fratt as local contacts for Ashland County. On a related note, the Wild Rivers Chapter will be bringing in Tracy Hames - Executive Director of the Wisconsin Wetlands Association on or about December 13th to address the chapter on the wetlands of the Penokee Hills, and was hoping that he could do a second presentation for the County Board or Mining Impact Committee. Charlie will check with Pete to see if a second presentation could be arranged. If not, the board and committee could always attend the TU presentation.

Agenda Items

1. Poster and Speaking Contest Progress

The revised guidelines for the contests were recently posted on the WLWCA website, and Fratt forwarded that information on to Ortman and Kleinsteiber. There is not much progress to report from Charlie and Maxine was not at the meeting. There has been quite a bit of interest from the OLL school. It was suggested that Fratt provide a news release to Seth Carlson about the contests, and also reach out to the Bad River Watershed Association for watershed stories that could be told by students in the BR watershed.

2. Tree and Shrub Program Changes

Iron County decided to go it alone with the sale this year, leaving Ashland County with a mailing list and the need to start from scratch to do our own program. Fratt expressed concern that there is little time left to organize this effort and that it may already be too late to obtain some species. Despite these concerns, the committee felt that Ashland County should proceed to contact nurseries and see what can be done to have a sale next spring.

3. Revision and/or Update of LWRMP in 2014

The LCC reviewed the options to update the plan as presented by Fratt, with the understanding that he was waiting to hear back from Lisa Trumbull at DATCP for clarification. At a minimum, a 5-year work plan would need to be updated and strengthened with measurable outcomes, but it may be better to revise the entire plan to fit with an EPA 9-Element watershed plan that would enable us to access additional funding through the

EPA and WDNR in the future. Under any option, there would need to be an application to DATCP completed by February 1, 2014.

4. Maintaining or Increasing Department Capacity in 2014

Fratt talked about the big issues facing the LWCD in 2014 including the revision of the LWRMP, the development of the new Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA), contracting for the Farmland Preservation Program, Conservation Compliance monitoring, a new AIS grant application, and salvage of the tree and shrub program to name a few. Tom is already handing off some of his engineering projects to Pero, but felt that to sustain our current level of production and be responsive to new opportunities and grant funding two things would make a big difference – obtaining a third vehicle for the shared vehicle pool, and to hire an administrative assistant to help with the “administrivia” and paperwork.

- **Motion to have Mika forward the subject of a full-time administrative assistant for the department to the Executive Committee by Ortman/Oakley MC.**
- **Motion to have Fratt and Pero work with Jeff Beirl and finance committee to obtain a bank loan to acquire another vehicle for the department by Ortman/Lindquist MC.**

5. Metallic Mining in Ashland County

Both Ortman and Oakley have been appointed to the Joint Mining Impact Committee and Fratt has been appointed to the Ashland County Mining Impact Committee. There have been several presentations on geology of the Penokees recently in the area, and there appears to be an effort by GTAC to discredit the geologist’s findings. Ortman introduced an Executive Order from President Obama on climate change that could be used by the department for watershed protection and restoration.

6. **Conservationist Report:** Fratt provided a report of his activities since the last meeting and highlighted some upcoming deadlines and important dates.
7. **Engineering Technician Report:** Pero provided a handout with information about project status for 2013. Weather delays and slow starts continue to be a concern for both the NRCS and the LWCD.
8. **Wildlife Damage Specialist Report:** Schultz provided a handout detailing his program activities since the last LCC meeting. He reached the end of his assessment season on November 1st. There have been fewer bear damage reports this year, but Ashland County has the first documented crop damage occurring from elk in the state. There is still quite a bit of corn and soybeans left in the fields, but conditions are generally too wet to work the fields.
9. **AIS Coordinator Report:** Caven provided a handout of his recent activities.
10. **Grazing Specialist Report:** Tim Mika provided a handout of his activities since the last meeting.
11. **Agency and Partner Reports:** Haughn thanked Pero and the LWCD for helping to keep projects rolling during the government shutdown. EQIP application deadline has been extended to December 20th. There is still no farm bill. NRCS is continuing to make payments through the Conservation Stewardship Program.

Other Business:

- Schultz reported that the no-till drill is in storage for the winter. It was only used for 20 acres in 2013 and he is wondering if we are interested in selling it. The LCC felt that a sale should be last resort, and increased marketing should be tried first.
- G. Mika reported that the Pri-Ru-Ta council will be going into dormancy by the end of the year.
- Lindquist reported briefly on the NWLCA tour hosted by Burnett County. There was good participation from Ashland County and it was a very good tour.

Approval of Bills: A summary list of bills submitted for payment since the previous LCC meeting was handed out.

- **Motion to approve the bills by Ortman/Oakley MC.**

Next meeting date: Tuesday, December 17th, 2013 @ 9:30 a.m.

Adjourn: 12:23 p.m. by Chairman Mika