

Ashland County Land Conservation Committee
February 25, 2020
Ashland County LWCD Office

Approved Minutes 2-25-20

LCC Present: George Mika, Joe Rose, John Wiener, Gerald Richardson, Charlie Ortman, Ken Lundquist, Richard Pufall (County Board Chairman)

Others: Clark Schroeder (County Administrator), Josh Rowley (Zoning), Dave Schultz, Mike Pero, Scott Caven, MaryJo Gingras, Mark Peterson, April Stone

1. Call to order - Meeting called to order by George Mika at 9:30 am.
2. Introductions – LCC and county staff introduced themselves. Mark Peterson and April Stone introduced themselves as representatives of the Superior Rivers Watershed Association.
3. Approval of Minutes - *Motion to approve December 3, 2019 draft minutes by Ortman, second by Wiener. MC.*
4. Public Comments – None heard
5. **Action:** Superior Rivers Watershed Association Presentation (SRWA) – Mark Peterson presented that the SRWA is seeking support from local municipalities to recommend a Bad River study be conducted for consideration as a Wild & Scenic River partnership program designation. The partnership program is a branch of the Wild and Scenic Rivers program. There are only 16 rivers designated as partnership programs of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act in the country. The partnership program affords protection and provides funding opportunities, but does not require federal land acquisition of the river. The land along the river would remain private, and land use management would be locally led. There would be federal funding available through the wild and scenic rivers partnership program. The request today is not asking for designation. This request is asking for a study to look at eligibility and suitability, including threats to the river. The study would take approximately three years. Then the DNR would publish a report of the findings. If the Bad River is suitable then congressional designation would be applied for. For a study to be conducted, SRWA has to show that there is local support. They are asking for local officials to support the effort. The Town of Morse unanimously approved the request, and SRWA will meet with Bad River Tribal Council, Mellen City Council, and Ashland County Board. The requirements to meet eligibility include that the river must meet one outstanding resource value. The Bad is already designated as an Outstanding Resource Water (ORV). It is also free flowing with no dams, and it supports a RAMSAR wetland of international significance. All of which support the eligibility. Suitability is proven through support by local municipalities.
A question was asked why the SRWA is not going through the federal portion of the act. Mark replied that the federal government would then want to purchase lands along the river and they felt there would not be the support for federal ownership, wanted to maintain local ownership. The partnership designation would give it more status nationally than what it has now.
What does study entail? A committee would have to be developed to create a management plan, watershed boundaries, and identification of concerns and goals.
How would this benefit the county? A national designation can be an economic driver to the community. Could help support Copper Falls State Park with a national designation. Provides a spotlight for tourism. This would also bring federal funds to address threats to the river. The river would be eligible for approximately \$200,000 annually in grants to address conservation threats.
Motion that the Land Conservation Committee supports federal legislation that would direct the National Park Service to conduct a feasibility study of the Bad River and its

associated tributaries to determine their eligibility and suitability to be included as a partnership Wild and Scenic River under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act by Rose/ second by Lindquist. MC.

6. **Action:** Approve 2019 Wildlife Damage Program Claims – **Motion to approve 2019 Wildlife Damage Program Claims by Ortman, second by Richardson. MC.**
7. **Action:** Approve 2020 APHIS Bear Damage Trapping Contract- Contract for this year is \$437.50. This will be for trapping and bear damage for 2020. **Motion to approve 2020 APHIS Bear Damage Trapping Contract by Ortman, second by Wiener. MC.**
8. Conservation Program Updates- Gingras provided update on annual Tree and Shrub program, requested the LCC to contact Senator Bewley and ask for support of SB 723 for county land and water conservation department staff funding, and Enbridge Pipeline information sessions.
9. Agency Staff / Partner Reports – None
10. LWCD Staff Reports
 - a. Mike Pero, Conservation Technician – Upcoming projects: wetlands, access roads and crossing, well abandonment, and livestock watering facility. Provided written report.
 - b. Dave Schultz, Wildlife Damage – In December the DNR mentioned they may eliminate the county administration of the wildlife damage program in 2022. Deer Donation: ended in early February 2020. Pearce Sausage Kitchen had 5 deer donated and 8 at the facility in Poplar. There were more donations this year than last. Schultz provided a written report.
 - c. Scott Caven, Aquatic Invasive Species – gave report and provided written. Ashland did receive two DNR grants to hire AIS interns this summer to conduct Clean Boats, Clean Waters at area boat landings.
 - d. MaryJo Gingras, County Conservationist – provided written report.
11. Other Business: An Ashland County Wetland Conservation Ordinance is being proposed by the zoning department. Land Conservation engineered practices would be exempt from permit requirement. Wetlands 2 acres or less, which have no current protections, will be protected under this ordinance. The ordinance places a 50-foot setback on building requirements. The ordinance will be voted on by Zoning next week, then it would go to public comment and on to county board.
12. Next Meeting Date: April 30, 2020 at 9:30.
13. Adjourned at 11:00 a.m. by George Mika.