

NORTHERN COUNTIES LAND USE COORDINATING BOARD
Meeting Notes
Thursday, June 7, 2012
KOOTASCA Senior Center, Northome, Minnesota

Call to Order: The meeting of the Northern Counties Land Use Coordinating Board was called to order at 9:35 a.m. by Chair Brian McBride with the following in attendance:

NCLUCB Member Counties Present:

Commissioner Fritz Sobanja, Cook County
Commissioner Brian McBride, Koochiching County
Commissioner Wade Pavleck, Koochiching County
Commissioner Rich Sve, Lake County
Commissioner Todd Beckel, Lake of the Woods County

Others Present:

Mike Carroll, Department of Natural Resources
Craig Engwall, Northeast Regional Director, Department of Natural Resources
Douglas Skrief, NCLUCB Staff

Quorum:

As a quorum was not established, those present met informally. The following are notes regarding discussions that occurred.

Administrative Actions

1. Discussion of the Agenda with the following additions:

- a. State: Land Exchange
- b. State: PILT
- c. State: Summary of Legislative changes
- d. State: Spot zoning and cabin rentals

It was suggested that the Land Asset Project Manager Bob Tomlinson attend a future meeting.

Comm. Sve noted he would not be attending the next NACo meeting. He added that Lake County now no longer holds lands within the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. Cook County is awaiting completion of exchanges, Comm. Sobanja added.

3-4. NCLUCB Financial Report and Bills:

The Director was instructed to get Executive Committee approval of bills:

Bills:	Administrative expenses for Douglas Skrief for one month	\$824.33
	Meeting room and refreshments Northome	\$ 55.00

ISSUES OF DISCUSSION

STATE

1. Beaver Control – A general discussion touched on several aspects of control, including availability of Conservation Officers when permitting is needed. Mr. Carroll and Mr. Engwall assured commissioners that appropriate personnel can be located at such times. The dispatch number may be used. Comm. Beckel reiterated need for county engineers to establish a blanket policy as to garner BWSR funding for control purposes.

2. Communication Towers – Commissioner McBride raised the issue of a desire of AT&T to erect a tower on the border of Voyageurs National Park. A committee was formed to address the issue. The

tower will be sited on private land. Denying a permit would create a buffer. Lease income is possible when towers are sited on public land. Cook County in land exchange discussions has included the location of towers. There have been comments from tourists that they want 4G service or they will look elsewhere to vacation. Switching systems is expensive. Lake County has sought out and gained significant grant support for changing systems. Agencies are finding they need more than one system and may demand they be connected with a unique system. Dated technologies are a constant challenge. Cell phones are often sufficient for basic communications.

3. PILT – Comm. Beckel reviewed the high percentages of publicly owned land in Minnesota and in particular northern Minnesota. He reported that the most recent meeting of a state committee on PILT issues addressed tiers of compensation that would be dependent on percentage of public lands held. Budget and Management and Legislative Assessors are represented at the meetings along with four county commissioners and four township officers, among others. There is no opposition to PILT at the table.

Discussion touched on aspects of economic return, for example on sale of county or Trust land, especially riparian land, and the retention of mineral rights by the state. The current DNR Commissioner has prioritized land acquisition in other areas than the north.

4. Land Exchange – Mr. Engwall and Mr. Carroll reviewed a pilot Land Assessment Management project begun in 2007 to consolidate holdings. Staff has proposed an exchange of some 3000 acres in Lake County. The model would be aimed toward efficient land management. A second exchange involves the BWCAW and about 90,000 acres of state land in the wilderness that the DNR has no interest in. Different proposals include Federal legislative action of exchange of land for land; another proposal would include two-thirds buyout with one-third exchange. Value for value would make up for discrepancies. Parties affected include environmental interests, education contingents, tribal entities and corporate forestry concerns. Federal delegates may need to be involved. “Targeted conservation,” to be defined in consultation with counties, may be a goal. Roseau and Kittson Counties and other northern Minnesota counties would be future locations of exchange. The Minnesota River corridor is becoming a focus of attention for connectivity and development as a destination. The overall goal of asset management pilots is to establish means to reduce time for developing land management solutions.

Comm. Pavleck brought up an issue in Koochiching County regarding exchange of land to establish an irrigation system involving projects amounting to \$32 million. The Puck’s Point or Woodenfrog project is representative of situations described by Mr. Engwall in which private properties with less than optimal drainage wish to alleviate the situation with personal or community systems. Discussion included note that shallow soils and bedrock force drainage to state waters. In some areas the only suitable land available to establish proper drainage is state land. Woodenfrog is the third busiest campground in the DNR system. Studies have been ongoing regarding engineering options. The DNR will communicate as needed. Timely addressing of the issue is important to greater basin-based funding and private property owners. Legacy funding might be a likely source of support with partnership of state, county and park services.

5. Spot Zoning – Comm. McBride reported that four housing units on Rainy Lake have been advertising weekly rental opportunities online. Letters were sent. Three of the renters backed off; one threatened to sue. Koochiching County has a lodging ordinance that stipulates that rentals by day or week are subject to lodging tax fee, fire codes, septic and other state requirements, otherwise rental must be by the month. Fishing houses in Lake of the Woods are charged in the winter, Comm. Beckel said; conditional use is very restrictive; private renters usually do not rent past a single season. To change designation to commercial, it was pointed out, results in spot zoning and concerned neighbors. Comm. Sve recalled that in Lake County there were issues with two-acre parcels. A moratorium was placed on conditional use permits to establish short-term rentals that was extended to two years; an ordinance was written in the meantime. There are allowed uses and interim use permits that sunset. Not everyone is pleased, and there still is a hearing process. Granted permits are good for one year and are reviewed at the anniversary date. The renters work to get along with neighbors as a result. Public health department permits are also required. Koochiching may seek further information from Lake County.

6. Other – BWSR is now looking at agricultural credits statewide for tiling. Tiling in the Red River Valley, now unchecked, will require control mechanisms and a written plan.

Next meeting July 23, 2012, at Beltrami County Administrative Building, 701 MN Ave. NW. Bemidji

Submitted by Douglas Skrief