

NORTHERN COUNTIES LAND USE COORDINATING BOARD
Meeting with the Consolidated Conservation Natural Resources Joint Powers Board
Monday, July 23, 2012
Beltrami County Administrative Building, Bemidji, 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 Brian Napstad, Aitkin County
Commissioner Fritz Sobanja, Cook County
Commissioner Brian McBride, Koochiching County, Chair
Commissioner Wade Pavleck, Koochiching County
Commissioner Rich Sve, Lake County
Commissioner Todd Beckel, Lake of the Woods County
Commissioner Ken Moorman, Lake of the Woods County
Commissioner Don Jensen, Pennington County
Commissioner Jack Swanson, Roseau County

Others Present:

Commissioner Mike Hanson, Koochiching County
Commissioner Gary Keso, Marshall County
Commissioner Joe Vene, Beltrami County
Commissioner Quentin Fairbanks, Beltrami County
Craig Engwall, Northeast Regional Director, Department of Natural Resources
Bob Tomlinson, Land Asset Manager, Department of Natural Resources
Bob Lessard, Department of Natural Resources
Dan Stark, Large Carnivore Specialist, Department of Natural Resources
Ken Soring, Department of Natural Resources
Kristi Coughlon, Northwest Region Information Officer, Department of Natural Resources
Lori Dowling, Northwest Regional Director, Department of Natural Resources
Kallie Briggs, Consolidated Conservation Natural Resources Board Coordinator
Douglas Skrief, NCLUCB Staff

Administrative Actions

1. Discussion of the Agenda with the following additions:

- a. Local: Northeast Flooding
- b. State: Land Asset
- c. State: PILT Update
- m. J. Swanson s. Beckel

2. Minutes of the May 3, 2012 Meeting

- m. Napstad s. Jensen

3-4. NCLUCB Financial Report and Bills:

Endorsing the action of the Executive Committee's approval of old bills:

Old Bills:	Administrative expenses for Douglas Skrief for one month	\$824.33
	Meeting room and refreshments Northome	\$ 55.00
Add new bill:	Administrative expenses for Douglas Skrief for two months	\$496.60
	m. J. Swanson s. Napstad	

ISSUES OF DISCUSSION

LOCAL

1. Northeast Minnesota Flooding – Commissioner Napstad recounted circumstances leading to the county, state and federal states of emergency in Aitkin County due to immediate dramatic flooding in the St. Louis River watershed on June 20 and later cresting on June 30 in areas such as Big Sandy Lake which saw a seven-foot rise. Emergency meetings were held. Lessons were learned. Due to the nature of the lake areas, No Wake Policies were needed. Local authority without Department of Natural Resources approval allows for the establishment of no wake policies during the first five days of flooding. Levels are read on Big Sandy Lake by Army Corps of Engineers' instruments and appropriate levels can be determined; not so easy to determine are other lake levels where there is not electronic monitoring and where citizens voice concerns. Comm. Napstad recommended that when local comprehensive water plan groups meet they discuss emergency situations and procedures, creating policy ready for no wake situations. He also recommended considering the isolation of residents when flooding occurs. During the recent flooding there was a growing decrease of available boats and places to store them. Vehicles that could manage higher water levels were limited. He recommended planning ahead for evacuation and transportation with vehicles that can serve an affected population easier. Thirdly, Comm. Napstad encouraged electronic mailing links to lakes associations and residents be considered ahead of time. Also the Aitkin County website became very important for distributing information. Comm. Beckel noted that Lake of the Woods County and the schools have a "reverse 911" called "Code Red" that sends messages to everyone in the system. The National Guard is an option for evacuation, sandbagging and other help. Comm. Swanson recommended cash reserves be available to pay initial costs of disaster infrastructure damages, even though they may be reimbursable through FEMA. MNDOT has a fund that may also be accessed. Documentation and photos are important for establishing grounds for reimbursement.

STATE

1. Land Asset Management – Bob Tomlinson introduced the topic of Land Asset Management within the Department of Natural Resources, indicating that it has been a concept in progress. He related that he has 33 years of experience in the Division of Forestry, where he was Deputy Director for 14 years. Strategic Land Asset Management is a priority of the present administration, being an ongoing effort to review the state's portfolio of land ownership of lands that the state has an interest in, including easements and leases. Original and increased public values are to be considered while stakeholders are engaged. Comm. Swanson encouraged later discussion of state ownership of land closer to centers of population. Comm. Napstad noted that regarding con-con lands there was an initial void of conservation goals as financial survival of the counties was maintained in the state purchase of forfeited lands. Mr. Tomlinson noted that there are lands under DNR auspices, such as certain Trust lands, that are not being overseen with a view to their optimum value. He reviewed current reasons for asset management now within the context of large holdings of land by the state. Sale of land to raise money, as suggested by Comm. Swanson, to make other land purchases, he pointed out, is complicated by the funds involved as proceeds often must go back to the funds. Access of hunters to the land must also be considered in regards to sale of lands, added Mr. Lessard. Comm. Napstad asked if sale of Trust lands can include retention of easements for trail use. The Trust might be compensated, suggested Mr. Engwall, at an appraised value. Comm. Pavleck pointed to the difficulty of adding sewer near Voyageurs National Park when faced with gaining permissions on Trust lands. Time involved in getting permits is an issue, agreed Mr. Tomlinson, adding that the Commissioner of the DNR is very much involved in this initiative. He reviewed means of management, which do not always include ownership and include various management goals. The DNR wants to have a project in each of four state districts; Roseau County is the site in northern Minnesota. A state leadership team meets as necessary. The DNR is engaged in unifying its own approach to goals within any county before starting conversations. Lake County will be the site of one management effort. Five current work plan items relate to better decision making frameworks and include efficiencies of transactions and tools leading to better Trust Fund Land Asset Management and BWCAW land exchange. The long-term future of the DNR and land management is of concern. Comm. Beckel argued that the definitions may be too broad, considering that limitations on management have often been part of the original equation created by the legislature, "handcuffing" agencies and units of government. Defining of economic value of Trust lands is difficult, including questions of value of sports use and questions of general economic support realized from Trust lands for industries such as forestry and, more significantly at present, mining. Comm. Swanson brought up the question of what is sufficient land from a state perspective, especially regarding the large amount north

of Highway 2. A mosaic of land ownership might be shifted. In Koochiching County significant easements were purchased regarding which county residents may now have to pick up subsidy costs due to diminished state funding and where public access is being denied as gates are installed. Questions can be addressed to Mr. Tomlinson at (651) 259-5394.

Comm. McBride noted that he, Comm. Pavleck, Craig Engwall, commissioners from St. Louis County and the DNR Commissioner would be meeting in St. Paul regarding streamlining of land exchanges. Comm. Napstad noted that meetings of the Environmental Quality Board and focus groups held around the state pointed towards a need for single decision-making by agencies such as the DNR. Mr. Tomlinson agreed that decision-making in a timely manner is paramount in land asset management and is a goal of the program he is heading. The counties present offered help. Ms. Dowling suggested that help may be needed as cases are reviewed in which individuals wish to sell or buy small parcels.

2. Wolf Management – Mr. Stark distributed copies of proposed wolf season rules as well as a map that outlined wolf season zones for 2012. He reviewed the early, late and trapping segments of the season, licensing availability and application process as well as the harvest target and registration of animals taken. The wolf was taken off the endangered specie list in January, at which time the DNR began to take steps to implement a season. The limit is conservative during this trial season, and the season will be closed when the quota limit of 400 is reached. Non-resident licenses will be capped at five percent. Groups of up to four would be able to apply together.

Comm. Swanson mentioned a concern expressed in favor of local preference especially for trapping. In order to apply, Mr. Stark responded, it is necessary to have had a hunting license or to have currently a hunting and trapping license validated by a hard copy, or one would have to buy a license on the spot. Experience with bear licenses do not indicate an issue on this front. A threshold of 1600 wolves in the state is desirable but managing a population goal is not part of the current management plan. Ms. Dowling added that this inaugural season is to be cautiously undertaken while data is gathered and of note is input from tribal interests with whom there is considerable consultation.

Further discussion included note that there is not a preference system or lifetime quota for hunters. Landowners may outfit, sell lure and house other hunters but not guide. Licensed hunters may assist other licensed hunters. Baiting is allowed. Hunters should be cautious when in the vicinity of tribal lands and use a GPS. Taking of wolves collared by tribes would be a concern.

Mr. Stark added material and information about trapping of wolves where there has been depredation, noting that 80 private trappers have been engaged to carry out such trapping and 20 more who are certified may be added. Sixteen wolf control areas have been opened in northeast Minnesota. About 150 wolves have been taken annually in cases of depredation. This USDA Wildlife Services program contract amounted to about \$240,000 a year whereas costs have been much higher, up to \$450,000. In other states some livestock associations have helped to pay for this service. Various groups would like to see harvesting where there is depredation. Success of the federal program has argued for its use over and above county management.

3. PILT – Comm. Beckel reviewed current Payment in Lieu of Taxes to counties in Minnesota and projected payments had inflation been added, which would have added \$4 million to the total. He pointed out disparities in payments according to a number of categories. Total gross payment for the northern part of the state is high though per acre payment is low. While more land acquisition might be encouraged in the southern part of the state, suggested Comm. Swanson, Comm. Beckel responded that further purchase of public land by the state at the county level is not to be pursued. Locking in PILT payments might encourage more land purchase nearer population centers. Land is not now purchased by the state with a regard to future PILT burden, it was pointed out. Comm. Beckel looked for some guidance in regard to combining of categories at one set rate. Discussion included means of establishing value in the public mind of public land and more equitable means to determining PILT. Ms. Dowling asked for clarification on what would satisfy commissioners as to fair and equitable PILT reimbursement that is guaranteed and would permit commissioners not to care about the number of public acres in their county. Comm. Beckel explained that for counties with extensive public lands and wetlands, development opportunity is limited, and funding county expenses, even with PILT, is likewise limited. In addition, Lake of the Woods County has 327,000 acres of water that does not receive PILT but which is extensively utilized and demands more service costs, paid by the county, than those directed towards land. The county does get \$8,000 for boat safety, but the winter population doubles due to visitors. Ms. Coughlon asked if there were a way to measure visitor residency for comparison purposes. The Department of Tourism has figures available,

noted Comm. Swanson. Further discussion included precision acquisition. A suggestion was made that public land be assessed similarly to private land, though the current system shows that equitable assessment and oversight is already a hurdle. Ms. Dowling encouraged a one-sheet information page to be written on the need for PILT. Comm. Beckel recommended that something be produced closer to the end of the current PILT committee work. The September meeting might be an opportunity to outline a one-page document and time is to be set aside on the agenda for same.

**Next meeting Sept 6, 2012, at Reclamation Classroom, Range Resources Building, Chisholm, MN.
Future Joint Meeting to be held during the AMC Conference in St. Cloud December 2-4.**

Adjournment

m. Napstad s. Jensen

Submitted by Douglas Skrief