

LOWER WISCONSIN STATE RIVERWAY BOARD

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MINUTES OF THE MAY 12, 2011, RIVERWAY BOARD MEETING

The Lower Wisconsin State Riverway Board (LWSRB) met on Thursday, May 12, 2011, at the Boscobel City Hall to conduct a regular monthly business meeting. The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Chair William Lundberg. All members were present with the exception of Ritchie Brown. Acknowledgment that the meeting was properly noticed was provided by Mark E. Cupp, Executive Director. A motion to approve the agenda was made by Don Greenwood, seconded by Melody Moore. **MOTION CARRIED.** A motion to approve the minutes of the April 14, 2011, meeting was made by Ron Leys, seconded by Nick Nice. **MOTION CARRIED.**

The Executive Committee report was presented by Chairman Lundberg. The guest speaker of the evening was introduced. Len Harris gave a presentation on "Trout Don't Live in Ugly Places", which described the habitat and types of trout found in the Driftless Area.

Under correspondence, Lundberg noted there has been no word from Governor Scott Walker's office regarding LWSRB appointments. Lundberg asked Moore, as Chair of the Personnel Committee, to have the committee serve as the Nominating Committee again this year. Moore agreed to the task. Cupp then reviewed two magazine articles that were recently published related to the Riverway. An article was published in Wisconsin Trails magazine regarding sand bar camping and an article penned by Cupp was published in Woodlands & Prairies magazine regarding Aldo Leopold and the Green Fire documentary.

The Operations Committee report was presented by Chairman Dorscheid. Cupp reported the American Transmission Company (ATC) project between Gotham and Muscodia will require a grading permit from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Timm Zumm, Co-Chair of the Friends of the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway (FLOW), reported that FLOW is proceeding with a contested case hearing for the Crystal/Fish/Mud Lake District pumping project in the Town of Roxbury, Dane County. Zumm said negotiations to avoid a contested case hearing continue but no agreement has been reached as of yet.

Cupp and Brad Hutnik, DNR Riverway Forester, then gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Boscobel Airport project. Cupp noted the initial contact for the Boscobel Airport enhancement project was made several years ago. Correspondence dating from 2006 and continuing to 2011 was reviewed. The project calls for installation of a computer aided landing system. The system requires a clear zone, which entails removal and/or topping of trees adjacent to the airport. Several field inspections have been conducted by the LWSRB Operations Committee, LWSRB staff, DNR staff, DOT staff, Boscobel Airport officials and consultants. Cupp said the scope of the project has been modified several times as new information and better data became available and as additional surveying was completed. The LWSRB approved the concept of tree removal and topping of trees, as well as subsequent efforts to restore native prairie vegetation, and required implementation of a planting plan to be developed by Hutnik. The initial planting plan then was reviewed.

Cupp said additional surveying has been completed and the need for topping of more trees or removal of trees has been identified. Hutnik met with the consultant to review the proposed additional work. Cupp and Hutnik then conducted a field inspection at the site on May 10, 2011. Four areas have been targeted for additional action. The sites are located on the highbank terrace. Bottomland vegetation will not be affected. The easternmost site is not visible from the Wisconsin River during leaf-on conditions due to the bottomland vegetation between the site and the river (10 red pine trees would be cleared). Two of the other sites will have some visual impact when viewed from the river and one site is fairly close to the edge of the highbank. If the trees are topped to obtain the necessary clear zone, between 1 foot and 5 feet would have to be removed from the red pine trees.

Cupp and Hutnik discussed the effects of topping the trees, both short term and long term. Hutnik said the topping would be accomplished with a bucket truck. There likely would be minimal short term effect on tree health but, in the long term, health will decline and mortality will occur. Hutnik said it is difficult to project the length of time under which the decline or subsequent mortality may occur. He said there will be maintenance issues regardless of tree health because the red pine will continue to grow and, at some point, will infringe on the clear zone again and require another round of topping. Estimates for the time lapse between topplings is 3-7 years. A bucket truck again would have to be used and vegetation established under the planting plan likely would be disturbed.

Cupp asked Hutnik if augmenting the existing planting plan adequately will address visual impact concerns if the trees marked for additional action are simply removed. There would be 70-75 trees affected at the three other identified sites. Hutnik suggested there would be some short term viewshed impacts until the additional screening vegetation takes hold and fills in. He noted there also are young oak trees at the site that will provide a natural enhancement to the planting plan, which will include mostly shorter species. He said the oak will not grow fast on the sandy, dry site and probably wouldn't affect the clear zone at the airport for several decades. Hutnik further noted that the Japanese honeysuckle at the site, while an invasive species, also provides screening vegetation under the canopy of the pine trees.

Cupp said he and Hutnik then spoke with the consultant by telephone. Cupp requested assurance that there would not be another modification to the plan resulting in more trees removed if the LWSRB approved the recently proposed changes. The consultant said he was confident ("95% sure") that additional tree removal or topping would not be necessary. He said additional surveying will be conducted when the latest round of tree removal (or topping) is completed so he didn't want to give 100% assurance that no additional trees will be affected.

Cupp and Hutnik then recommended the LWSRB approve removal of the red pine trees identified by the consultant with enhancement of the existing planting plan. Hutnik would provide a modified plan following completion of the tree removal. The existing suite of proposed species would remain the same but the number of trees and shrubs for each area would be increased. A motion to approve the additional tree removal at the airport was made by Greenwood, seconded by Fred Madison. **MOTION CARRIED.**

Dorscheid reported the Operations Committee had meeting Department of Transportation (DOT) officials to discuss proposed modifications to STH 60 between Gotham and Muscoda. He said DNR officials and Harriet Pedley, Richland County Zoning Administrator, also were present for the field inspection. Cupp said the only major realignment will occur on the east of the project near the intersection with CTH TB. The highly visible segment, between Bogus Bluff and the Bremmer property, will not be significantly changed in regard to lane width. Some structures will be removed and there will be attempts to reduce the encroachment of the rock wall on the roadway. A member of the public, Bill Rowe, asked about the scale of the project and Cupp replied the project has been scaled down compared to some of the earlier versions. Rowe asked about speed and Cupp said the design engineer said it will be designed for 45 mph to meet federal standards. Ron Leys noted the board's mission is focused on aesthetic protection. Rowe asked about the county clearing trees within the right of way on the north side of the road and then depositing the material on the south side (river side) of the road. Cupp said he was unaware of the activity but said DOT operations within the right of way are beyond the board's jurisdiction. Cupp said there are numerous design decisions to be determined based on environmental and cultural assessments. The approximate timeline for the project is 2015 or 2016. The road will be closed during construction and traffic will be detoured.

Dan Goltz, DNR Wildlife Biologist, noted he will present permit applications for management activities on state owned lands on the west of the Riverway at the June meeting. He suggested permits be issued by Riverway Unit with activities on individual properties highlighted.

The Budget & Office Committee report was presented by Chairman Nice who reviewed the status of the FY 11 budget. Cupp reported the Legislature's Joint Committee on Finance had approved the LWSRB budget request.

The Personnel Committee reported Cupp had received accolades from a UW-Madison graduate student class at which he had given a guest lecture. Madison said graduate students can be a tough crowd so the kudos must have been well deserved.

The Executive Director's report was presented by Cupp who reviewed the materials in the board members' packets. Cupp said screenings of the Aldo Leopold biographical documentary "Green Fire" continue to be well attended. He reviewed activities associated with the Muscoda Morel Mushroom Festival, including lectures and guest speakers.

Under board members' business, Leys said an active bald eagle is visible from the highway near Boscobel. He asked about the pile of gravel at the DNR boat landing at Boscobel. Brian Hefty, DNR Riverway Manager, said the gravel was staged there for a wildlife project but now may be used for the parking lot instead. Nice related stories of his father's trout angling prowess and noted the importance of introducing youth to the great outdoors.

The DNR report was given by Hefty. He apologized for missing the May meeting but said the Portage levy commanded his attention at that time due to high water. He said the Riverway crew continues to pick up trash and said household dumping on state lands continues to be a problem. Work on access roads also continues. DOT and DNR are working on a land transfer for property near Ferry Bluff that may offer wildlife viewing potential. Hutnik then noted timber harvest activity has been slow. Lundberg asked about 1000 cankers disease that afflicts walnut trees. Hutnik said it has not been found in Wisconsin. Dorscheid asked about release of wasps to fight emerald ash borer (EAB). Hutnik said wasps are being released in certain EAB infested areas.

During the public comment session, Timm Zumm of Spring Green, Co-Chair of the Friends of the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway (FLOW), noted FLOW and the River Alliance of Wisconsin are sponsoring an aquatic invasive species training program on May 21st.

A motion to adjourn until June 9th when the meeting will be held at the Rhinelander Cabin in the Riverway's Black Hawk Unit in the Town of Mazomanie, Dane County, was made by Madison, seconded by Greenwood.
MOTION CARRIED.

For further information, corrections, additions or deletions to the minutes, contact Mark Cupp, Executive Director, at (608) 739-3188 or 1-800-221-3792.

Minutes submitted by:

Mark E. Cupp, Executive Director
Lower Wisconsin State Riverway Board