

LOWER WISCONSIN STATE RIVERWAY BOARD

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MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 13, 2023, RIVERWAY BOARD MEETING

The Lower Wisconsin State Riverway Board (LWSRB) met on Thursday, January 13, 2023. The meeting was conducted via Zoom and was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Chair Gigi La Budde. All members were present with the exceptions of Steve Wetter and Ritchie Brown. (NOTE: One vacancy exists.) Acknowledgment that the meeting was properly noticed was provided by Mark E. Cupp, Executive Director. A motion to approve the agenda was made by Dan Hillberry, seconded by Lara Czajkowski Higgins. **MOTION CARRIED.** A motion to approve the minutes of the November 10, 2022, meeting was made by Hillberry, seconded by Kim Cates. **MOTION CARRIED.**

The Executive Committee report was presented by Chair La Budde. Cupp introduced the guest speaker for the evening, Brad Hutnik, Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Silviculturist. Cupp noted Hutnik is a former DNR Riverway Forester spending ten years working in the Riverway and has served as one of the DNR's statewide silviculturists for over a decade since leaving the Riverway. Hutnik spoke about the need to research sustainable forestry management techniques as a management strategy on public and private lands to adapt to climate change. Among the factors to consider are longer growing seasons, carbon dioxide fertilization, increased drought risk, extreme weather events, less frozen ground conditions, enhanced fire risks, range shifts for some species, and an increase in stressors such as disease, insects, and non-native invasive species. Hutnik noted the multiple state research team is focused on the Driftless Region and will include research sites in the Riverway.

Cupp noted 2023 represents the 350th anniversary of Marquette-Joliet journey from Green Bay to Portage up the Fox River and then down the Wisconsin River to the Mississippi River in June of 1673. He said a kickoff event will take place on February 18th with a dinner in Prairie du Chien. Other events will occur the weekend of June 16-18. Cupp said Travis Anderson, DNR Wildlife Biologist, will lead a Natural Resources Foundation field trip in the Riverway on May 12th. The focus will be on birdlife, but Cupp will provide information on effigy mounds. The field trip will be held in the Avoca Unit. The FLOW annual meeting will be held on January 21st in Arena. Cupp said La Budde has agreed to seek re-appointment as Sauk County representative and Czajkowski Higgins has agreed to continue as the Crawford County representative. He will work with the respective county boards and the Governor's office on the process. Randy Poelma and Ritchie Brown also are expected to have hearings before the Senate committee on their appointments as at-large members. Cupp noted Adam Payne has been selected as the DNR Secretary. He said the STH 60 reconstruction project from Gotham to Muscodia will begin in the next few years. He will send a memorandum to DOT reiterating the board's commitment to working with the department on protecting aesthetics while providing safety for the highway users.

Discussion on meeting dates and times ensued with various options considered from maintaining the status quo of meeting monthly, to meeting every other month, to having a reduced meeting schedule in winter months. In addition, the value of a virtual option was discussed as was the moving the board meeting to locations to sites throughout the Riverway. Cupp suggested a concept of adding field trips in months where meetings weren't held as part of the board's education/outreach mission if the board chose to go with an every other month schedule. Consensus was reached that a virtual option for meetings was important and that maintaining a presence in communities up and down the Riverway as much as possible also was positive. A motion was made by Czajkowski Higgins, seconded by Poelma, to pursue a six-meeting schedule in 2023 with meetings to be held in odd number months with both an in-person/virtual option or virtual option only concept as needed and to continue with locations at Muscodia and other communities where technology would allow the virtual option to be viable. **MOTION CARRIED.** Hillberry then made a motion, seconded by Cates, to schedule field trips on the

even numbered months (non-meeting months) on either the second Thursday or on a weekend to provide educational opportunities for board members and the general public. **MOTION CARRIED.** (NOTE: The Executive Committee will continue to meet monthly, and the Operations Committee will be available to meet on an as needed basis.)

The Operations Committee report was presented by Acting Chair Poelma. The permit extension request from Mike Finlay on behalf of the Department of Natural Resources was considered. Field inspections have been conducted by Mark E. Cupp, Executive Director, in conjunction with previous permit activities at the site. Plans call for a timber stand improvement (TSI) project in the Town of Mazomanie, Dane County. The TSI work will focus on removal of invasive woody species and undesirable trees by felling or forestry mowing. Planting of trees will follow the TSI work. The TSI project will not be visible from the river. A motion to approve a two-year extension to the permit was made by Czajkowski Higgins, seconded by Poelma. **MOTION CARRIED.**

Cupp reported timber harvesting had been initiated at the MacEachern property in the Town of Bridgeport, Crawford County, and at the Trussoni property in the Town of Wyalusing, Grant County. Cupp had issued a permit to Mary Burke for a rooftop solar panel project in the Town of Troy, Sauk County; an extension to general permit for timber harvesting to Gerald Bennett for property in the Town of Orion, Richland County; a timber harvest permit to Mike Genthe for a parcel in the Town of Wauzeka, Crawford County; and, an extension to BugTussel for a utility permit for placement of fiber optic cable at the Hwy. 23 bridge at Spring Green (Peck's Landing).

The Budget Committee report was presented by Chair Beckman who reviewed the status of FY 23 budget. Cupp said there were no changes to the board's budget request for the next biennium. Governor Evers will make his budget address to the Wisconsin Legislature in a few weeks. He noted the Budget Committee had approved purchase of equipment associated with the enhancement of the board's ability to conduct meetings virtually.

There was no report from the Personnel Committee.

Under Executive Director's report, Cupp reviewed materials in the board members' packets related to activities and correspondence and river flow.

Under board members' business, Beckman said Bald Eagle Watching Days will be held in Sauk Prairie on January 14-15. La Budde said there will be a workday at the Blue River Sand Barrens SNA on January 14th.

The DNR report was presented by Jesse Kellogg and Mike Finlay. Kellogg said his crew has mainly been engaged in snowplowing. Finlay reported on forestry activities with several active harvests taking place to take advantage of frozen ground conditions.

During the public comment session, FLOW President Timm Zumm said the annual meeting will be held at Grandma Mary's in Arena on January 21st from 4:00 to 6:00 with a program and meal. Suggested donation is \$6.00.

A motion to adjourn was made by Hillberry, seconded by Beckman. **MOTION CARRIED.**