

LOWER WISCONSIN STATE RIVERWAY BOARD

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MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 14, 2023, RIVERWAY BOARD MEETING

The Lower Wisconsin State Riverway Board (LWSRB) met on Thursday, September 14, 2023, at the Spring Green Community Library. The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Acting Chair Randy Poelma. All members were present with the exceptions of Gigi La Budde, Lara Czajkowski Higgins, and George Brandt. 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 Kim Cates. **MOTION CARRIED.** A motion to approve the minutes of the July 13, 2023, meeting was made by Meredith Beckman, seconded by Hillberry. **MOTION CARRIED.**

The Executive Committee report was presented by Poelma who introduced Barry Larson of the HNTB Corporation. Larson provided an update on the STH 130 bridge project at Lone Rock with a PowerPoint presentation. He said the project is progressing according to schedule. Cupp thanked Larson, Kramer North America, and the Department of Transportation for communicating and consulting with the LWSRB regarding design changes during the new “design/build” project. The new bridge is slated to be completed by October of 2024.

Poelma then introduced Ellery Schaffer of Jewell & Associates who gave a presentation on the proposed reconstruction of CTH C in Iowa County, between Hwy. 14 and Hwy. 23. A PowerPoint presentation was shown. Portions of CTH C are very visible from the Wisconsin River between the STH 23 bridge and Tower Hill State Park. There will be rock cuts east of the Frank Lloyd Wright Visitor Center and new retaining walls on both sides of the road, which will be widened. The LWSRB will be involved in the design process to address aesthetic considerations. Currently, the project is planned for 2027-28.

Cupp noted the re-appointment of Gretchen “Gigi” La Budde as Sauk County representative to the LWSRB had been formalized by Governor Tony Evers. He reviewed the recent LWSRB sponsored field trip to Cruson Slough and thanked the Friends of the Lower Wisconsin Riverway (FLOW) Science Committee for their assistance. He noted a separate meeting was held between Department of Natural Resources (DNR) officials and FLOW members to discuss overall water level management in backwater impoundments.

Cupp said he had received a complaint from a river user regarding airboat noise and operation. He passed the complaint on to Jesse Kellogg, DNR Riverway Manager. Cupp said he wasn’t sure if it was an airboat or hovercraft and explained to the kayaker that the only regulation is on decibels other than safe and prudent operation. Cupp then noted the next LWSRB field trip will be held the evening of Saturday, October 21st, in cooperation with John Heasley of Driftless Stargazing and with the FLOW Dark and Starry Skies Committee. The event will be held at the Avoca Prairie beginning at 6:00 p.m.

During the Operations Committee report, Chair Hillberry said an extension request had been received for a timber harvest on the Friar Century Farm in the Town of Woodman, Grant County. Field inspections have been conducted by Cupp in conjunction with previous permit activity at the site. An additional field inspection will be required prior to initiation of the harvest. Plans call for the selective harvest of merchantable hardwoods. No new roads will be constructed. The majority of the harvest area will not be visible from the Wisconsin River during leaf-on conditions.

A motion to extend the permit for a period of two years was made by Ritchie Brown, seconded by Poelma.

Conditions of the permit include:

- In the Bluff Zone and Riverview Zone, all trees selected for harvest shall be appropriately marked and reviewed by the LWSRB for compliance with the applicable performance standards prior to initiation of the harvest;
- In the Bluff and Riverview Zone, the harvest shall be limited to the times when the ground is frozen or dry and the leaves are off the deciduous trees;
- The LWSRB shall review the location and design of all new logging roads, if any, in the Bluff Zone and Riverview Zone;
- The new logging roads, if any, shall comply with the applicable performance standards regarding grade and erosion control and shall be re-seeded upon completion of the harvest;
- The LWSRB shall review the location and design of all small regeneration cuts, if any, in the Riverview Zone to assure compliance with the applicable performance standards;
- The Bluff Zone and Riverview Zone shall be delineated prior to initiation of the harvest, if necessary;
- The landowner or his/her agent shall notify the LWSRB within 10 working days upon completion of the harvest and, if necessary, the LWSRB shall conduct a post-harvest field inspection; and,
- The LWSRB shall review modification of the plans, as submitted, for compliance with the applicable performance standards.

MOTION CARRIED.

An extension to a previously issued management permit to Mike Finlay/DNR for habitat work at the former Mathews tract in the Town of Clyde, Iowa County was considered. Field inspections have been conducted in conjunction with previous permit activities at the site. Plans call for the use of a forestry mower to control invasive species and undesirable woody vegetation and trees. Some hand cutting will occur on steeper slopes. The activity will be the first step toward a future timber harvest intended to regenerate oak and walnut. No structures become visible from the river as a result of the activity. A motion to extend the permit for a period of two years was made by Poelma, seconded by Brown. **MOTION CARRIED.**

Finlay then described two permit applications submitted by Scott Lancaster, DNR Forester for sites in Iowa County. A timber harvest on the former Mathews tract in the Town of Clyde, Iowa County calls for harvesting of timber on lands both visible and not visible from the river.

A motion to approve issuance of a permit with the following standard conditions was made by Bob Cary, seconded by Brown:

- In the Bluff Zone and Riverview Zone, all trees selected for harvest shall be appropriately marked and reviewed by the LWSRB for compliance with the applicable performance standards prior to initiation of the harvest;
- In the Bluff and Riverview Zone, the harvest shall be limited to the times when the ground is frozen or dry and the leaves are off the deciduous trees;
- The LWSRB shall review the location and design of all new logging roads, if any, in the Bluff Zone and Riverview Zone;
- The new logging roads, if any, shall comply with the applicable performance standards regarding grade and erosion control and shall be re-seeded upon completion of the harvest;
- The LWSRB shall review the location and design of all small regeneration cuts, if any, in the Riverview Zone to assure compliance with the applicable performance standards;
- The Bluff Zone and Riverview Zone shall be delineated prior to initiation of the harvest, if necessary;

FINLAY/DNR (continued)

- The landowner or his/her agent shall notify the LWSRB within 10 working days upon completion of the harvest and, if necessary, the LWSRB shall conduct a post-harvest field inspection; and,
- The LWSRB shall review modification of the plans, as submitted, for compliance with the applicable performance standards.

MOTION CARRIED.

Finlay said a timber harvest on lands not visible from the river on the former Laudon tract in the Town of Pulaski, Iowa County, east of Avoca, was planned. The previously planned timber harvest had been scaled back to exclude the ridge top areas visible from the river (Bluff Zone).

A motion to approve issuance of a general permit with the following standard conditions was made by Poelma, seconded by Cary:

- The harvest shall be limited to areas not visible from the Wisconsin River during leaf-on conditions;
- The landowner or his/her agent shall notify the LWSRB within 10 working days upon completion of the harvest and, if necessary, the LWSRB shall conduct a post-harvest field inspection; and,
- The LWSRB shall review modification of the plans, as submitted, for compliance with the applicable performance standards.

MOTION CARRIED.

Cupp said he had issued two permits since the previous meeting. A utility permit was issued to Jason Schaad for placement of solar panels for residential power generation in the Town of Spring Green, Sauk County. The site is not visible from the main channel(s) of the Wisconsin River during leaf-on conditions. A general permit was issued to William and Sheryl Borrer for a timber harvest on lands not visible from the river in the Town of Buena Vista, Richland County. The consultant is Mark Berg.

The Budget Committee report was given by Chair Beckman who reviewed the close-out figures of the FY 23 budget and the status of the FY 24 budget.

The Personnel Committee reported was presented by Cupp who acknowledged Marsha Curtis, LWSRB Executive Assistant, for her 22 years of service and noted he had approved a discretionary award to increase her salary. He expressed concern that the LWSRB, as a very small state agency, was not able to do more to recognize staff longevity or exceptional performance. Cupp said he continues to work with DOA and DNR in seeking creative solutions to the problem. Cupp noted Curtis is a tremendous asset to the board and thanked her publicly for all her efforts on behalf of the agency.

Under Executive Director's report, Cupp reviewed the materials in the packets related to activities and correspondence, river flow and articles of interest. He noted an equinox observance would be held at Frank's Hill, and highlighted speaking engagements and meetings forthcoming.

The DNR report was presented by Jesse Kellogg, DNR Riverway Property Manager, who discussed activities of Riverway staff.

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