

LOWER WISCONSIN STATE RIVERWAY BOARD

202 N. Wisconsin Avenue
P.O. Box 187
Muscodia, WI 53573
(608) 739-3188 or 1-800-221-3792

MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 12, 2024, RIVERWAY BOARD MEETING

The Lower Wisconsin State Riverway Board (LWSRB) met on Thursday, September 12, 2024, at the Spring Green Community Library. The meeting was called to order by Chair Gigi La Budde. Also present were Kim Cates, Randy Poelma, Dan Hillberry and Rich Ten Pas. Lara Czajkowski Higgins, Meredith Beckman and Ritchie Brown were not present, however technical difficulties with Zoom connection may have prevented some participation. (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 Hillberry, seconded by Cates. **MOTION CARRIED.** A motion to approve the minutes of the July 11, 2024, meeting was made by Cates, seconded by Ten Pas. **MOTION CARRIED.**

The Executive Committee report was presented by La Budde who introduced the guest speaker, George Archibald of International Crane Foundation who gave a presentation entitled “My Life with Cranes.” Archibald described his life working with cranes and establishing the International Crane Foundation near Baraboo. He noted there are 15 species of cranes, the whooping crane being the rarest. Archibald’s tremendous PowerPoint presentation provided glimpses of his global travels and adventures conducting research and serving as an international ambassador for protection of critical habitat for cranes and other wildlife.

Under correspondence, Cupp noted the 35th anniversary of establishment of the Riverway will be observed with an event at the Wisconsin Riverside Resort near Spring Green on October 27th at 1:00 p.m. He described a historical presentation given by him at the Blue River Autumn Fest on the use of the Riverway for transportation from canoes to steamboats. He then noted upcoming events such as the Natural Resources Foundation tour of the Avoca Prairie, a presentation at the Sauk Prairie Area Historical Society, and three events at the Cross Currents Heritage Center in October. Cupp said the voyageur canoe trips were successful again this year despite the forced cancellation of trips during the early part of the schedule due to high water. The boats have been booked for summer of 2025.

The STH 130 bridge construction continues in earnest and is nearing completion. A vehicle was found submerged in the river by divers conducting mussel surveys. The bridge is expected to be open in late September or early October.

During the Operations Committee report, Chair Hillberry said a permit request for the modification of a transmission line had been received from Nathaniel Sievers on behalf of Wisconsin Power & Light in the town of Troy, Sauk County. Field inspections have been conducted by Cupp in conjunction with previous permit activity in the vicinity. Plans call for burial of an existing overhead line on lands within the Riverway. The resulting activity will improve the aesthetic integrity of the area. Cupp asked Hillberry to comment on the movement toward burial of distribution lines based on his experience with the Richland Electric Cooperative. Hillberry said many cooperatives and others are finding burial of lines is becoming more cost effective than overhead lines due to long term maintenance. A motion to approve issuance of a utility permit with conditions was made by La Budde, seconded by Cates:

- All reasonable efforts shall be taken to minimize the visual impact of the utility facility;
- The LWSRB shall review any changes to the plans as submitted and shall approve any modification to the plans if compliance with LWSRB regulations is achieved;
- The activity shall comply with all other federal, state, and local regulations; and,
- WP&L or the consultant shall notify the board upon initiation and completion of the project.

MOTION CARRIED.

A permit request for the modification of a public access site was reviewed from Jake Hebl on behalf of Wisconsin Power & Light in the Town of West Point, Columbia County. Field inspection was conducted by Cupp on August 9, 2024. Travis Mueller with Alliant Energy was also present for the field inspection. Plans call for re-sloping and placing additional rip rap protection along the existing kayak access path. Additional river rock on the kayak path and self-leveling grout placement as well as tree removal alongside the existing kayak path also will occur. The location is below the dam on the east side of the river. A motion to approve issuance of a public access permit with conditions was made by Poelma, seconded by La Budde:

- All reasonable efforts shall be taken to minimize the visual impact of the utility facility;
- The concrete shall be tinted brown similar to a sand bar color;
- The LWSRB shall review and changes to the plans as submitted and shall approve any modification to the plans if compliance with LWSRB regulations is achieved;
- The activity shall comply with all other federal, state, and local regulations; and,
- WP&L or the consultant shall notify the board upon initiation and completion of the project.

MOTION CARRIED.

Three permit requests were considered for Mike Finlay on behalf of the DNR, for pine plantation thinnings and invasive species treatment. DNR Foresters Trevor Hamdorf and Scott Lancaster have submitted applications for pine plantation thinnings or clearcuts and windbreak removals as well as hardwood saw log and hardwood pulp clearcuts and thinnings on state owned lands in Grant and Dane counties. Mike Finlay, DNR Forestry Team Leader, is supervising the activities. Cupp has conducted field inspections at each of the sites in the past. The Operations Committee has visited the sites in the Town of Mazomanie, Dane County.

The Millville Bridle Trail site is part of a joint study area with the Hallock Demonstration Forest located nearby. Brad Hutnik, Department of Natural Resources Silviculturist, described the climate change study being conducted. Small patch clearcuts and shelterwood cuts will be employed on lands not visible from the river on the upland sites. The sites will be assessed for natural regeneration and possible future tree planting. The study is part of a larger multi-state initiative research project. A motion to approve issuance of a general permit for the harvest with the following conditions was made by Cates, seconded by La Budde;

- 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.

Lancaster then described the Mazo Oak North activities and indicated the site is not visible from the Wisconsin River during leaf-on conditions. A motion to issue a general permit with the following conditions was made by Poelma, seconded by La Budde;

- 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.

Lancaster then described the Mazo Oak & Pine activities and indicated the site is not visible from the Wisconsin River during leaf-on conditions. A motion to issue a general permit with the following conditions was made by La Budde, seconded by Ten Pas;

- 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 one permit since the last meeting. A utility permit had been issued to Wisconsin Power and Light for burial of fiber optic cable on lands not visible from the river during leaf-on conditions in the Town of Wauzeka, Crawford County. The site is located along STH 60.

The Budget Committee report was given by Cates who reviewed the status of the FY 25 budget. Cupp noted the LWSRB budget request would be submitted on September 15th. He thanked Paul Neumann from the DNR Budget Office and Andy Potts and colleagues from the DOA budget shop for their assistance in preparing the board budget documents.

The Personnel Committee reported was presented by Cupp who reported meeting with Department of Administration officials to explain the problems with a small agency's inability to provide additional compensation to personnel through DERA or DMC awards and the frustration experienced by supervisors, board members and staff. Cupp said there are no immediate solutions, but the DOA human resources team are conducting similar interviews with other small agency executives. The situation may be addressed in the next Executive budget bill.

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

The DNR report was presented by Harry Stone, DNR Riverway Park Manager, who discussed activities of DNR Riverway staff.

During the public comment period, Timm Zumm, President of the Friends of the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway (FLOW), thanked Cupp for meeting with the Environmental Law and Policy Center staff prior to the group embarking on a canoe trip on the river. He also thanked the first responders who were on the scene of the recent drowning on the river at Peck's Landing for their professionalism. Zumm noted FLOW is working with Cardinal Glass, DNR, Cupp/LWSRB and the local Lions Club to enhance multi-lingual signage for recreational users to emphasize safety.

A motion to adjourn was made by Cates, seconded by Poelma. **MOTION CARRIED.**