

Joint Counties Natural Resources Board
May 18, 2015
Beltrami County Conference Room
10:00 AM

MINUTES

Attendance: Commissioners:

Gary Kiesow – Marshall	Todd Miller - Roseau
Daniel Stenseng - Clearwater	Wayne Skoe – Koochiching
Brian Napstad – Aitkin	Ken Moorman – Lake of the Woods
Joe Vene – Beltrami	Scott McCollum - Mahnomen

Absent: None

DNR: None

Guest: Tim O'Hara, MN Forestry Industry; Vice President of Forest Policy

Other: Kallie Briggs; Administrator

Call to Order: Chairman Commissioner Kiesow called the Joint Counties Natural Resources Board to order at 10:00 AM on Monday, May 18, 2015 in the Beltrami County Conference Room.

Agenda: Motion by Stenseng, second by Miller to approve the agenda with additions. Motion carried unanimously.

Minutes: Motion by Vene, second by Skoe to approve the minutes from the March 23, 2015 meeting as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Guest: Tim was invited to the meeting to talk about the forest industry and the Northern Long-eared Bat. Tim has been with MFI for 20 years. A trade association who represents twelve forest industries, a 9 billion dollar industry. He told the Board the closing and downsizing of some mills has also caused a reduction in wood products which means there are no young forests being created. As the forests age the timber rots causing forest bugs, it is not a good habitat for grouse and other wildlife and has the risk for fire. Timberlands are 57% special designations and 33% without special designations meaning forests are just sitting and not being cut which also equates to dollars. The wood products economy will eventually come back as housing development gets stronger but not so for the paper industry. The demand for paper continues to go down forcing paper companies to stay competitive and continue to run efficiently. Some of the challenges facing the forestry industry are:

1. Cost of stumpage: High stumpage costs cause mills to have down time or close.
2. Weather access: Thirty percent of wood is taken in the summer and 70% is taken in the winter. If conditions are not right loggers cannot get equipment into the woods.
3. Logging capacity: The age of loggers and their equipment, trucking capacity and employer retention all effect the industry.
4. Private timber supply: There should be more foresters hired to assist with increasing the timber harvest.
5. Energy prices: The cost of industrial electricity is very expensive.

Tim concluded his presentation by telling the Board the biggest challenge he has seen in his 20 years is the Northern long-eared bat (NLEB). The NLEB has been found in 37 states and 2 years ago the

fungus they eat was found in Minnesota. The fungus, White Nose Syndrome, came from Europe and needs to be the focus more-so than the bat itself. The bats rubs its nose in the fungus and then during hibernation gets fidgety and burns up its fat storage. This causes it to then go out of the cave to find food and in Minnesota the ground is covered in snow so the bat dies before re-entering the cave. Fish and Wildlife's research says the fungus is what causes the bat to die not the forest. However, the bat is listed on the endangered species list which could cause real problems for the forest industry. One example is loggers having to do a survey which is very expensive, before they can cut. For more in depth information you can find Tim's power point presentation is on our website.

Financial Discussions:

- Administration/Office Expenses: Motion by Napstad, second by Skoe to approve the April/May administration/office expenses. Motion carried unanimously.
- Miscellaneous Expenses: Motion by Stenseng, second by McCollum to approve the miscellaneous expenses. Motion carried. Vene Abstained.
- The Treasurer's report: The May Treasurer' report submitted by Josh Stromlund and distributed by Coordinator Briggs was approved. Noting that all counties have paid their membership dues a Motion was made by Vene, second by Moorman to approve the May Treasurer's Report. Motion carried unanimously.
- Checking Account: Kallie told the Board she has sent out an email trying to recruit a county to take over the checking account and bookkeeping. She has also talked to the Kooch county Administrator to see if she could do it. No one has stepped up and Kallie told the Board she can continue to seek out someone or she could do it and have two folks from Kooch sign the checks. The Board questioned if LOW was the fiscal agent or does the Board have their own check book. Also, are there yearly audits being done? Kallie will do more research and report back at the next meeting.

Discussion:

- Waters of the U.S.: Miller said Senator Klobuchar was not a proponent of the language in the rule and has split from Obama on her stance. He suggested a thank you be sent to her and other delegates who did not vote for the language in the rule. Napstad suggested getting a copy of the appreciation letter NCLUCB sent. Also a separate letter should be sent to Representative Colin Peterson in the House. Senator Frankin and Nolan along with the congressional congregation will receive a cc and will hopefully understand our disappointment in their vote. **Motion by Miller, second by Skoe to send a thank you letter to Klobuchar expressing our appreciation for her vote on the Waters of the U.S., to send a separate letter to Representative Colin Peterson and to cc Frankin, Nolan and the congressional congregation.** Motion carried unanimously.
- Legislative Update: Miller gave the Board a brief overview of some of the items that were up for review during the legislative session.
 1. Miller and Napstad told the Board the Tax Bill was dead however the \$300,000 for back taxes for the next 10 years received a \$9000 increase due to a 3% increase in PILT.
 2. 50' Buffer strips passed for public drainage ditches and will be enforced by 2020.
 3. It looks like AIS will be moved to the DNR and/or counties for education and enforcement.
 4. The Lessard-Sam's council is opposed to the 2000 acres of land the tribes are trying to obtain with a grant for funding so it probably will not happen.
- **New Business**: The following was discussed:
 - Polymet Resolution: Briggs received a call from Steve Veverka who is involved with the Polymet project and he asked that the Board consider adopting a resolution supporting the project as did Aitken County. A sample was distributed to the Board. **Motion by**

Miller, second by McCullum to send a resolution supporting the Polymet Project as job creators. Motion carried unanimously.

- BigFishDigitl.net: Briggs was contacted by Big Fish Digital who will be taking over web hosting from North Star Publishing. They are selling packages with the least costly one at 89 per month. We are currently paying \$170 per year. Kallie is looking into other web hosting businesses and will report back. The Board also suggested she contact Big Fish Digital and try to negotiate our cost.
- Power Company: Skoe said the power company has begun processing the power lines and some re-routing will start in the summer and be completed by November 2016. If it goes through Kooch it will be the second largest tax payer in Kooch.
- DNR Commissioner: The Board asked Briggs to contact Greg with the DNR to see if we were to switch our July meeting to the 20th if there may be a chance the Commissioner could attend our meeting.
- **Next Meeting Date**: The next scheduled meeting will be on Monday June 22. Briggs will contact John Ongaro again to see if he is available to make the meeting.

Adjourn: Motion by Stenseng, second by Miller to adjourn the meeting at 12:10 PM.

Minutes submitted by Kallie Briggs-Administrative Coordinator