

Chippewa County Land Conservation
Committee Meeting
July 16, 2008

The meeting was called to order by the Chair, L. Willkom, at 7:30 a.m. Members present were D. Boettcher, J. Brost, M. Goettl, S. Lane, P. Licht, E. Rineck, and L. Willkom.

Agency staff present at times throughout the meeting were T. Lindsay (NRCS), M. Dahlby, D. Masterpole, J.T. Jensen, and J. Schemenauer - Recorder (LCD).

Item #1 – Approve Minutes. Review Summary of Plans/Contracts/Agreements.

The minutes from the 6/18/08 meeting were presented. Motion to approve the 6/18/08 minutes: Boettcher/Brost. Motion carried.

There were no plans, contracts, or agreements presented.

Item #2 – Overview of Land Conservation Services and Staff.

T. Lindsay (District Conservationist - NRCS) introduced herself and gave a brief description of her duties.

D. Masterpole distributed and the Committee reviewed the following material:

1. Chart titled: Organizational Chart of Chippewa County Land Conservation Dept. Illustrating Supervisory Responsibilities of Management Team(s), (LCD 7/14/08). The chart shows the staff positions and management structure of the Land Conservation Department.
2. Handout titled: An Outline of LCD Staff Experience and Assigned Responsibilities, (LCD 7/15/08). The handout provides a brief description of the assigned duties, education, and experience of the employees who fill the staff positions in the Land Conservation Department.

There was general discussion.

Item #3 – Overview of Agency Interactions, Program Management, and Accountability.

D. Masterpole distributed and the Committee reviewed a handout titled: Points of Reference Affecting Agency Interaction, (LCD 7/15/08). The handout is an outline and listing of management principles used by the Land Conservation Department to administer conservation programs and services. The management principles are organized and listed under the following subject areas:

1. Agency responsibilities and interactions.
2. Program management.
3. Accountability.

There was general discussion. Discussion focused on:

1. The common mission of cooperating state and federal conservation organizations (stewardship for sustainability).
2. The role of land-based performance standards and their application in pursuing state conservation and nonpoint source water pollution control goals.
3. The current use of voluntary (incentive based) approaches and regulatory (permit based) approaches to achieve conservation and resource management objectives.

J.T. Jensen distributed and the Committee reviewed examples of standard farm-based conservation records maintained by the Land Conservation Department. These records are maintained for agricultural operations in Chippewa County that either:

- a.) receive state conservation funding and are subject to contract requirements under administrative rules, or
- b.) are subject to regulatory compliance under state or county nonpoint pollution control permits.

There was general discussion. Discussion focused on the different management techniques and “Best Management Practices” (BMP’s) used by producers to meet state agricultural nonpoint pollution control standards as established in Wis. Admin. Code NR151.

Item #4 – Review USDA Policy on Proprietary Records; Introduce Landowner Release Consent Form.

J.T. Jensen distributed and the Committee reviewed a form titled: Agreement of Consent to Release Field and Crop Management Information to Chippewa County, (LCD 7/11/08). The form enables a producer, who is seeking county services, to authorize the release of his USDA files (FSA or NRCS) to the LCD, including information on past and current field management, cropping practices, and conservation program participation that is of a proprietary nature.

J.T. Jensen reported that the form has been developed because crop and field management information which historically has been available to the county, is no longer available through USDA agencies, as a result of a federal privacy provision included in the 2008 Farm Bill.

There was general discussion. Discussion focused on:

1. The management of public records that contain information that is proprietary in nature, and subject to protection under state and federal privacy laws.
2. The efficiencies in service delivery that can be gained through the use of a record release consent form.

Motion to approve the Agreement of Consent to Release Field and Crop Management Information to Chippewa County, (LCD 7/11/08) and to support the use of the form by producers to authorize the release of information from their USDA records: Brost/Lane. Motion carried.

Item #5 – Overview of CREP Easement Monitoring and Compliance Issues.

M. Dahlby distributed and the Committee reviewed the following:

1. Handout titled: Overview of CREP Easement Monitoring and Compliance Issues, (LCD 7/16/08). The handout provides an overview of the process used to conduct 2008 CREP conservation easement site reviews, the compliance issues encountered, and the existing policies and methods that will be applied to resolve the issues.
2. Table titled: Results of 2008 On-Site CREP Easement Compliance Reviews Conducted by Land Conservation Department, (LCD 7/11/08). The table contains the following information:
 - Current landowner of the CREP easement.
 - Original landowner of the CREP easement.
 - Date of on-site review by LCD staff.
 - LCD staff present at on-site review.
 - Concern regarding easement.
 - Nature of concern.
 - Preliminary follow-up regarding concern.

M. Dahlby reported that to initiate the easement monitoring program, the following process was followed:

1. Postcards were submitted to all landowners with land covered by a CREP easement (105 conservation easements). Each postcard included an aerial photo of the site and a brief message.
2. Fifty-two (52) of the landowners were informed that their site was selected for on-site review in 2008. The remaining (53) landowners were informed that they will be contacted in 2009 to schedule a site review.
3. On-site monitoring of the 52 easements was conducted between May 20 until July, 2008. Landowners were contacted by phone and invited to participate. Four (4) landowners participated on-site.

The Summary of Findings is as follows:

| # of Sites | Nature of Concern | Action |
|-------------------|--|---|
| 34 | None | |
| 9 | Boundary concern – Inadequate boundary marking | Added boundary markers on |
| 3 | Boundary concern – Boundary markers removed | Replaced boundary markers will add more |
| 1 | Use concern – corn planted on access lane | No harvest, no more planting |
| 1 | Use concern – No trees planted, area being hayed | Replace boundary markers & plant trees |
| 1 | Use concern – Scrap metal pile in easement area | Landowner agreed to remove |
| 3 | Boundary concern – fences built inside of boundary | Will review with USDA-FSA |

There was general discussion. Discussion focused on the issues of concern and the process to be used to confirm and remedy the concern.

Item #6 – Overview of Wild Lakes and Little Lake Wissota Planning Grant Proposals.

M. Dahlby distributed and the Committee reviewed a handout titled: Overview of Little Lake Wissota and Wild Lakes Reserve Planning Grant Projects.

M. Dahlby presented a PowerPoint report (on file). The report outlines a project proposal titled: Little Lake Wissota Watershed: Field-Level Non-Point Source Pollution Reduction & Hydrologic Restoration Project. The project has been prepared to:

1. Complete a field level inventory of land uses and nonpoint pollution sources in the watersheds that contribute to Little Lake Wissota.
2. Determine the current nonpoint pollutant loads and estimate the load reductions that might be anticipated through the use of buffers, wetland restorations, and agricultural best management practices.
3. Determine the extent of landowner and community interest to advance a project to implement Total Maximum Daily Load Limits (TMDL's) in the Little Lake Wissota Watershed.

The proposed budget and funding sources are as follows:

| Source | Amount |
|--|-----------------|
| Chippewa River Natural Resources Fund | \$15,000 |
| Chippewa County (in-kind services – staff) | \$15,000 |
| Wisconsin DNR (Lake Management Grant) | \$10,000 |
| Wisconsin DATCP | ≥\$ 5,000 |
| Anticipated Project Total | \$45,000 |

There was general discussion. Discussion focused on:

1. The status of the DNR TMDL planning process and the public value of conducting a field inventory before advancing a project to implement TMDL's.
2. The fiscal and workload implications of the project.

Motion to approve the county grant proposal and to authorize the Land Conservation Department to seek grant funding totaling \$45,000 for the Little Lake Wissota Watershed Field-Level Non-Point Source Pollution Reduction & Hydrologic Restoration Project: Brost/Lane. Motion carried.

M. Goettl left the meeting at approximately 9:20 a.m.

M. Dahlby distributed and the Committee reviewed a handout titled: Summary of Proposed Grant Project Titled Chippewa County Wild Lake Reserve: Voluntary Conservation and Biologic Inventory, (LCD). The content of the Wild Lakes Reserve project summary is as follows:

1. Primary Objective – Permanently protect wild lakes and adjacent lands from development so that high quality plant and animal communities remain intact and continue to provide valuable ecological services.
2. Project Overview – The LCD will contact owners of undeveloped lakes to inform them of the Chippewa County Wild Lakes Reserve.
 - Tier I – Information and services will be provided to landowners who enter a non-binding conservation agreement with the County or non-profit land trust, through which they agree to not develop a wild lake under their current ownership.
 - Tier II – Information and services will be provided to landowners who chose to place a permanent conservation easement, that would serve to permanently protect and restrict the development of a wild lake.
3. Grant Funding, (\$100,000 over 5 years) – As proposed, Chippewa County would seek \$20,000 from the Wisconsin DNR during each of the next five (5) years.
 - \$10,000 per year that would be applied to support Chippewa County’s efforts to inform landowners of the Wild Lakes Reserve and to seek their participation.
 - \$10,000 per year to contract the Beaver Creek Citizen Science Center to conduct biologic inventories on approximately five (5) sites per year in support of the program.

There was general discussion. Discussion focused on:

1. The public and environmental benefits of preserving wild lakes in an undeveloped state.
2. Issues regarding the expenditure of public funds for conservation and considerations for public access.

Motion to:

1. Approve the county grant proposal and to authorize the Land Conservation Department to seek grant funding over the next five (5) years for the Chippewa County Wild Lakes Reserve: Voluntary Conservation and Biologic Inventory Project, and
2. Authorize the Land Conservation Department to pursue a working agreement with non-profit conservation organizations and land trusts to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the county and land trusts under the program, as needed to manage conservation easements on protected lakes:

Brost/Boettcher. Motion carried.

Item #7 – Committee Communication.

D. Masterpole reported that the Hawks Metals property acquisition is being advanced by the West Wisconsin Land Trust with fundraising support by the Chippewa Valley Outdoor Resource Alliance (CVORA) and area lake associations.

Staff will provide periodic updates.

Item #8 – Public Wishing to be Heard.

There was no public wishing to be heard.

The next LCC meeting is scheduled for 8/20/08 at 7:30 a.m.

Motion to adjourn: Boettcher/Licht. Motion carried..

The meeting was adjourned at approximately at 9:55 a.m.