

March 26, 2025, 4:00 pm West Iron District Library Minutes of the Iron County Watershed Coalition

"ICWC works to ensure the highest possible water quality in Iron County lakes, streams and wetlands by educating and engaging our communities in projects that will restore and preserve our watersheds for future generations."

Call to Order at 4:00

Attending: Bette Premo, Sara Basso, Perry Sipl, Dorien Howe, Jim Fogarty, Doug Felger, Dave Martwick, Rich Sloat, Dodi Felger, Mike Golas, Maggie Scheffer. John Reed by phone.

Review and Approval of Minutes: Previous meeting. Dave moved to approve; Doug 2nd, all accepted.

Approval of Agenda and Treasurer's Report: Doug Felger. Jim moved to approve; Dodi 2nd; passed.

Old Business:

- **Wild River Road Project Update:** (Bette) Trout Unlimited, Sarah Topp, has two \$500,000 requests in to help fund the project. Brad Toivunen, IC Road Supervisor, has communicated that he is looking for more money in the county, but feels the project cannot start until 2026.
- **Dober Pit Actions:** Sara Basso suggested that we go to the top of EGLE with an appeal to the director, along with contacting legislators. Ed McBroom visited the site last year and said he'd support it if EGLE agreed to put it in their budget. Jay Parent is in charge of the Surface Water Quality Division, along with Scott Richards and Lindsey Ringuette, who have been to the site to oversee data collection last year, performed by Rich and Gary Pisoni.
- **Status of Cooks Run Historical Site:** The MEF study of water quality at Cooks Run has been completed. Bette provided a map of the site, pointing out the diversion ditches, Cooks Run, dam remnants and the cabin. Speaking for Whitewater Associates (who collected the data), she gave a final report of the evaluation of the hatchery and stream quality. The water quality is excellent, with cold temperatures and dissolved oxygen levels. It's critical to know that the area is a forested wetland, with adjacent ponds. The county currently plans to cut harvestable timber next winter, which would require crossing the creek and disturbing sensitive habitat. Mike Golas walked the site in 2017 with Brock VanOss (forester), who was favorable to

logging. Mike expressed concern about the degradation of the vegetation in the wetland that would result from harvesting. Rich relayed the status of the legal deed of the property and of local interest in forming a 501(c)(3) to adopt the site. The reverter clause states it can only be used for public purposes. Recently, Rich raised an objection to the county commissioners, expressing that a private logging firm benefiting from timber harvest is not "public use", and could revert the property to the state. Steve Tinti, county's attorney, disagreed. Getting the county to agree to the 501(c)(3) is the first step to moving forward. Letters of support from local organizations disputing the logic of cutting the timber are needed. Bette suggested drafting a letter of support from ICWC, focusing on the findings of the Whitewater studies. Maggie moved for the letter to be written by Bette; Doug 2nd the motion, motion passed. Rich will give public comment at the April 15th County Commissioners meeting. Other organizations with a vested interest will be appealed to for letters of support.

- **Miskwaagamiwiziibi Shelter:** Rich reports continued efforts at the Paint River. Trail work, canoe launch, and interpretive signage remain to be accomplished.

New Business:

- **ICWC Scholarship Applications:** Jim responded to two applications and considered them well written, but asked for clarification on whether the scholarship would be awarded to two students or just one. One WIC student will be awarded this year, and a student from Forest Park will receive the scholarship next year. Jim moved that the scholarship be awarded to Jackson Starkey; Dodi 2nd and it passed. Doug will follow up with the student and administration at WIC, and present the check to Jackson on May 7th, in the WIC high school gymnasium.
- **Leadership Update:** Rich Sloat suffered brain trauma from an accident last August. Consequently, for health reasons, he is pulling back from some of the commitments he's had, including ICWC. He received encouragement and support from the group.
- **Float Event:** Jim's request to schedule a float event with the Silent Sporters group at Fire Lake, to convene at the Miskwagamiwiziibi shelter afterwards on August 2nd.
- **Shoreline Conservation Seminar:** Mike announced a June 14th seminar sponsored by the Lakes and Streams Association at the Windsor Center from 9:00 - 4:00. Natural shorelines will be the educational emphasis of the speakers.
- **Little Finland Road Issue:** Mike informed members of a matter at Little Finland Road that extends from Sunset Lake to within 1/2 mile of the Paint River, alongside

Morrison Creek. Private property owners are intending to ask the County Road Commission to abandon the public road to prevent the public from using the last stretch of the road, taking away access to the Paint River and use of the roadway. It was suggested for people to talk to road and county commissioners, appealing for Little Finland Rd. to remain open to the public.

Date of Next Meeting

April 23, 4:00 at the library.

Adjournment

Jim moved to adjourn, and John 2nd; motion passed.

Submitted by Secretary, Maggie Scheffer