

October 22, 2025, 4:30 pm Petrucelli Law Office 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 4:30

Attending: Bette Premo, Rich Sloat, Maggie Scheffer, Doug Felger, Dodi Felger, Jim, Dorien, Dave Martwick.

Approval of September meeting minutes: Motion to approve by Jim, 2nd by Dodi. Approved.

Approval of Treasurer's report: Motion to approve: Maggie 2nd: Dave. Approved.

Approval of Agenda: Motion to approve: Dave, 2nd: Dodi. Approved.

Old Business:

- **Wild River culvert project:** Bette: Bette has been in contact with Sara Topp and waiting to hear back. DNR has extended fish habitat grant another year.
- **Minutes of zoom discussion with DNR on Sept. 2nd**
- **Items from Sept 3rd minutes:** Parks and Rec mtg on Sept 22nd. Brock chaired the meeting and discussion pertained to the FMP, threatened species not addressed in the plan, or other concerns. No response was given. The Oct 2nd meeting at cooks run was promoted.

New Business:

Cooks Run developments since formation of steering committee in early September:

- Don Litner volunteered to be on the committee. In a Sept. 5th email to Bette and I, he clarified that his intention was to chair the committee. He has called two meetings of the committee since Sept. 3.
- He familiarized himself with the site and began to contact individuals from the conservation groups discussed at the Sept. 3rd meeting.

- He contacted Iron Baraga Conservatio District, Michael Paling of ABC, and Emily Klegg of the Nature Conservancy in the U.P.
- He spoke with Brock Van Oss, forester for Iron County and learned of the timber harvest scheduled for the winter of 2026-27, as well as a meeting scheduled for Oct. 2 (more on that below), and other sustainable forestry training sessions to be held there when a removable bridge will be installed, compliments of USFS, to enable logging equipment to cross the stream to access the 20 acre 'island' for a 5 acre clearcut.
- Following his conversation with Brock, Dor asserts that the steering committee "is not the proper tool to fight the county on their planned timber harvest".
- Sept. 16th emails addressing the steering committee volunteers: Don clarified the desired outcome for Cooks Run, to include:
 - Remain in county ownership
 - Be open to the public for use
 - preserve/restore the historic cabin
 - Provide long term financial support for the property
- First meeting of Steering Committe was on Sept. 29th. Agenda item include the county's recreation plan, condition of cabin, goals of the steering committee.
- Oct 2nd: County commissioners stage a "Forest Exploration Day" at Cooks Run with public attendance. Brock Van Oss described the types of cuts that would occur on two parcels near the cabin then took the group to the bridge. He did not specify where, type, or amount of acres to be cut across the bridge, but reference was made to that information in questions by people in attendance. He indicated the proposed timber harvest is a "done deal". The Whitewater study recommendations for that area were referenced by someone from the public, to which his comment was, "that's just one opinion". Questions were allowed prior to closing the meeting. Don Litner explained the steering committee and its 'role' in future Cooks Run activities. Mark Stauber remarked that he would be reaching out to various groups in the county to determine interest in their involvement with the commissioners.
- Oct. 13th; 2nd Steering Committee meeting. Don and Becky, Jerry Weeks, Maggie Scheffer, Laurie and Charlie Jackson, KL, and Mark Stauber attended. Discussion resulted in modifications to the first draft of the proposal to the Board, to include:

"Ensure protection of the watershed by monitoring activities for minimal impact on the land and water quality of the stream".

- Oct. 21st email from Don provided a reworked draft of the role of the committee, to read:
 1. Ownership of the property will remain solely with the county
 2. Form a tax exempt group of volunteers dedicated to supporting Cooks Run and working with the county to preserve the historic cabin and create a desirable destination for public recreation.

The group will have 4 main goals:

- create an endowment fund to provide long term financial support for the property
- seek donations of money, materials and time to restore the historic cabin
- enhance and maintain the property for public use with better public visibility and access
- maintain/improve site for water quality and wildlife habitat (not as proposed, to specify "will monitor activities for minimal impact ...).

October 22nd: Brock Van Oss attends WIC school board meeting to propose a collaborative agreement between both school districts to, " take ownership of the 122 acres, 50/50. Use it for off site biology classes, environmental studies, etc. and benefit from future timber harvests as well as the property tax exemption. He said Jen Toivunen would be willing to come out there to teach environmental classes. No decision was made by the board, but Brock will be back to discuss it further.

The discussion continued along the lines of what should be done to address the recent actions of the stakeholders in the Cooks Run property use. Maggie will inform Don Litner of Brock's proposal to the WIC school board prior to the Steering Committee meeting scheduled for the coming Monday.

If the two school districts submit a RFP to the county in January indicating their willingness to assume ownership and responsibility of Cooks Run, the Steering Committee/Friends of Cooks Run might be able to establish a working relationship with the districts to meet its goals as well. Future timber harvests could perhaps be negotiated with them more easily than with the county if there is sufficient interest in turning Cooks Run into a model of biodiversity for educational purposes.

Dave recognized the need for public support and advocacy for Cooks Run through local news media and increasing public awareness.

Date of Next Meeting

4:00, Nov 19th.

Adjournment at 6:20 PM

Moved by Dodi, 2nd by Doug.

Submitted by Secretary, Maggie Scheffer