

# January 15, 2026, 4:00 pm, WIDL Board Rm

## 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, Rich Sloat, Maggie Scheffer, Doug Felger, Jim Fogarty, Dorien Howe, Dave Martwick, Aerran Riley, Ria Riley.

Approval of December meeting minutes: Jim moved; Dave 2nd and motion passed.

Approval of Treasurer’s report: Jim moved; Rich 2nd and motion passed.

Approval of Agenda: Jim moved; Rich 2nd and motion passed.

### Old Business:

- Review of Cooks Run status, with report of ICBC meeting, Jan. 13, 2026

Maggie used public comment time before the meeting to read the letter that was sent to Trevor Huhka, the Ottawa Forest Ranger, requesting an Environmental Impact Statement.

At the end of the meeting in public comment, Rich pitched the environmental science and recreational possibilities if the island was not harvested. After his comment, Patty Peretto asked if Brock had sent a letter to the commissioners regarding the best management practices and riparian zone. Rich told that he had ribbon marked the island unit and discovered that Brock’s tree marks had violated the recommended riparian zone recommendations. No further comment from the board.

Discussion of requesting a FOIA of all communications of county trustees, forester, and members of the public. Timespan to be determined.

Aerran commented at the meeting on the definition of Old Growth forests. Biden adm. signed into executive order a definition of old growth and mature growth. Old growth definition covers northern hardwoods that are 120 years or more. Aerran cited the popularity of Sylvania Wilderness based on the size and age of trees; and the beneficial impact this can have on the local economy.

Ria focused on the economic and environmental impacts of a timber harvest, causing soil compaction and rutting, as well as degradation of the water. Winter conditions such as we are having this year do not guarantee that the ground will be frozen for a winter harvest next year. Additionally any cut will allow the sun to warm the water temperature, and impact the oxygenation of Cooks Run.

Going ahead:

- Conduct an inventory of endangered species in the spring, to be filed with the state. Contact should be made with the LVD tribe for the expertise. (see attached proposal for EIS)
- Request a petition to put the issue on the ballot as a referendum for the public to vote in August. 1,500 petition signatures are needed to get it on the ballot; collect 2,000-2,500 on petition. Referendum language is needed by April 28th (language finalized by end of March) for printing petitions and County approval. Signatures have to be cleared by July, so must be submitted in June.
- Raise public awareness through events and media: Annual May membership meeting with Cooks Run as topic. (with petitions)
- Focus group: stage an event at the library to gauge public awareness on the issue. (with petitions)
- June 13-14 is free fishing weekend. Collaborate with Trout Unlimited and Dark Waters (Seth Waters) to hold a public event for public awareness. (with petitions).
- Members of the coalition to meet with ICECA to discuss long term economic impacts, including stakeholders such as Seth Waters and Benjamin Garcia.
- Potentially, consider filing a Lawsuit requesting injunction on the planned harvest, requesting that the judge put it on hold until all issues are resolved. (MI Sierra Club, MI Nature Conservancy, Keweenaw Land Trust to pro-bono counsel or if interested in filing Amicus briefs.)
- Request a five year moratorium on planned harvest for Cooks Run. Ria and Aerran will draft a memo to the coalition with the full pitch

of using the idea for local H.S.- higher education students to perform data collection for an EIS, overseen by USFS, MDNR and LVD. In order to involve MI Tech students in the collection of EIS data, David Flaspohlar, Dean of Forest Resources at MI Tech will need to approve. Gogebic Community College, NMU and Iron County and Watersmeet public High Schools would also need to be contacted.

## New Business:

- Doug reported that the weekly mobile app will be removed. Marla Bradley at North Country Website Design will take it over. Jim moved to allow Doug to take care of this with Marla. Dave supports. Motion passed.
- Doug has contacted Forest Park regarding the scholarship and will see this through to the award. Applications will be shown to us in March.

Meeting adjourned at 6:15. Jim moved and Doug supported. Motion passed.