

Mississippi Headwaters Board (MHB)

August 19th, 2011

Cass County Courthouse, Walker, MN

Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Tom Wenzel (Morrison County), Paul M. Thiede (Crow Wing County), Lyle Robinson (Hubbard County), Dean Newland (Clearwater County), Neal Gaalswyk (Cass County), Jack Frost (Beltrami County) and Pam Kichler (Admin. Asst.)

Members Excused: Brian Napstad (Aitkin County) and Davin Tinquist (Itasca County)

Others Present: Bill Patnaude (Beltrami ESD/TAC Chair), Dan Steward (Board of Water and Soil Resources - BWSR) and Todd Holman (The Nature Conservancy - TNC)

9:02 am – Chair Paul M. Thiede (Crow Wing) called to order the monthly meeting of the Mississippi Headwaters Board at 9:02 am on August 19th, 2011, in Walker, MN. The meeting began with the pledge of allegiance.

9:02 am - Agenda (August 19th '11). Chair Paul M. Thiede (Crow Wing) asked that the agenda be adjusted to accommodate early departure of Commissioner Neal Gaalswyk (Cass). The suggestion was to have the motion state that 3 items (Executive Director position, BWSR Application, Lease Agreement) be moved on the agenda to immediately following the Staff Report. **Motion** was made and seconded by Commissioners Lyle Robinson (Hubbard) / Tom Wenzel (Morrison) to approve the Agenda with the amendment - 6 ayes, 0 nays. Motion carried.

9:03 am – Consent Agenda (July '11 Minutes and July – August '11 Expenses). **Motion** was made and seconded by Commissioners Neal Gaalswyk (Cass) / Dean Newland (Clearwater) to approve the August '11 Consent Agenda and expenses (July - August '11 expenses - \$4,833.87) – 6 ayes, 0 nays. Motion carried.

9:04 am – Staff Report (July – August '11). Pam Kichler (Admin. Asst.) highlighted several items:

- **#5 (P/B)** - Staff advised that the '12 Work Plan and Budget was mailed 7/27/11 to the State/DNR. Three copies of the '12 Agreement should arrive soon for signature
- **#7 (P/B)** – The office has been moved and staff is now working out of the Land Services Bldg. in Brainerd. In addition, all archive boxes from Walker have been moved to Brainerd as well
- **#9 (P/B)** – Staff advised that 88 copies of the '09-'11 Biennial Report have been mailed/delivered
- **#4 (P/C)** – Staff met w/Bob Lessard (DNR Commissioner Ambassador) and Tom Wenzel (Morrison County) to discuss possible future collaboration w/the DNR on area projects. Bob Lessard will work w/Tom Landwehr (DNR Commissioner) and MHB staff to set up another meeting to continue discussion
- Staff informed the board that there is an opportunity to place a Guide Book ad in the upcoming IQ magazine (special Mississippi Edition) as well as an ad in the Lakes County Journal (special Christmas Edition). Staff was asked to contact Chip (RiverPlace Communication Arts) to see what the cost will be. Because of the ad placement deadline, the board asked that the MHB Chair make the decision (based on cost) whether to proceed with the placement of the ads. **Motion** was made and seconded by Commissioners Lyle Robinson (Hubbard) / Tom Wenzel (Clearwater) to ask that the '11 Chair (Paul M. Thiede) use his discretion (after receipt of the cost) on whether to approve the two ads – 6 ayes, 0 nays. Motion carried. UPDATE: costs were too high (\$600-\$700 – IQ ad /\$1375 – LCJ ad).
- Staff advised that a Guide Book copy was offered to the Crow Wing Historical Society for their monthly board meeting review to see if they would like to purchase additional copies for retail. Staff asked the board today whether that single review copy could be kept (at no cost) by the Historical Society as a donation to their Library. The MHB Commissioners would only agree at this time to have a sub-committee meeting pulled together (previous Guide book Committee) to discuss this and other marketing plans for the Guide Book.

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Staff asked the Commissioners to check their calendars for any scheduling conflicts with the September 16th meeting. None were noted. Staff also asked whether the board would like to have a booth (for approx. \$45 space rental) at Sept. 24th/25th "Art in the Park Event (Park Rapids) to sell books. Staff will first find out if Doug Ohman (Guide Book photographer) will also be planning on having a booth there, in which case the Guide Books will be in his booth. Chair Paul M. Thiede (Crow Wing) pointed out that in the Commissioner meeting packet staff had provided as requested, an expense/revenue spreadsheet on board activities/events. He explained that the Sept. 24th/25th event is another example of an area where there is little clear direction on how to proceed (i.e. no real marketing plan for the Guide Book). He suggested that the Guide Book sub-committee be pulled together in Oct. to continue marketing discussion.

9:20 am – Zoning Actions – Tabled till the September 16th Agenda

9:20 am – Discussion Items –

► **Executive Director position – the next step** - Chair Paul M. Thiede opened discussion by advising the board of his recent conversation with the Land Services Dept. Director (Mark Liedl) re: the Crow Wing County Water Specialist (Mitch Brinks) possibly stepping into a temporarily contracted (lead role) for CWL grant administration on behalf of the MHB. This is just conceptual in nature at this point and Paul has not yet discussed this with the Crow Wing County board. He is simply asking whether or not there is interest in pursuing it further. The following are some of the highlights of the conversation:

- 1) Paul assured the board that Crow Wing is not attempting to capture the MHB but simply by virtue of office location and proximity to staff for inter-communication, it presents a good fit
- 2) This may also help the board with its immediate need for additional staffing to continue marshaling the CWL grant though
- 3) If the grant is obtained and successfully completed, it could transition to the hiring of the Executive Director position for future grant opportunities
- 4) If there's board interest, Paul would bring back to the board in September, a shared use proposal
- 5) Jack Frost (Bemidji) also offered Karl Samp's (Mississippi River Parkway Commission) name into the conversation for either the temporary contracted position or the Director position. Karl is formerly from the Initiative Foundation (Community Incentives VP) and expressed possible interest. The board asked that Jack contact Karl again and ask whether he would be able to prepare a proposal for the Sept. meeting
- 6) There could also be a meeting pulled together with all three (Karl, Mitch and staff) to further discuss the details prior to the Sept meeting

9:33 am – Action Items –

► **BWSR Application (RFP) – CWL Grant** – Todd Holman (TNC) was offered the floor at this time to cover the specifics of the draft RFP to be submitted to BWSR for the MHB. Some discussion highlights were:

- 1) Todd expressed just a couple concerns and needed some clarification before proceeding:
 - a) He recently received suggestions to 'elevate the profile of the administrative support' aspect of the RFP draft. He is concerned however about salting the language in this way, as it may raise a red flag that the MHB is using these \$ to hire staff
 - b) The ? of 'capacity' came up: Who will do the project work then, if not the Director this board wishes to hire? Suggestion: Possibly channel it through the Project Review Committee for some administration duties and/or hire an outside contracted consultant
 - c) This RFP must also avoid looking as though it mimics what the MPCA may already do

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- 2) There is still work to be done on the 'Budget' portion of the RFP but it will be written for \$100k. This will include 'operational' line items i.e.: travel/meetings/printing etc.
- 3) Todd asked that the MHE take the RFP home to review and if desired, submit comments/suggestions back directly to him or MHB staff before 9/16/11
- 4) Another RFP sub-committee meeting will held to make language adjustments prior to 9/16/11
- 5) Final board approval is desired at the 9/16 meeting, so that the 9/20 submission deadline is met

► **Land Service Bldg. signage for MHB office** – Staff explained that Crow Wing was asking whether the MHB would be interested in having a similar name sign (9" x 9" – green) outside the office near the receptionist area. Style/color and size will mimic the other county signs. The cost will be \$112.45 (plus tax). **Motion** was made and seconded by Commissioners Neal Gaalswyk (Cass) / Tom Wenzel (Morrison) to approve the sign order through Crow Wing at a cost of \$125 or less - 6 ayes, 0 nays. Motion carried.

► **Crow Wing County Office Space Lease Agreement** – Staff is seeking final approval and Chair signature of an office space lease agreement w/Crow Wing County. Monthly rental free is similar to the old Backus office and will also be considered as county in-kind. **Motion** was made and seconded by Commissioners Lyle Robinson (Hubbard) / Neal Gaalswyk (Cass) to approve the annual lease agreement for office space from Crow Wing as an in-kind value of \$425 - 6 ayes, 0 nays. Motion carried.

The board resumed discussion on the '12/'13 Biennial funding. Staff updated the board that the state funding was approved for '12/'13 at \$53k/year. That figure is the same dollar amount as the previous annual budget for '11

Todd Holman (TNC) asked for the floor again to discuss an upcoming land acquisition. A fact sheet was also distributed. This Mississippi Northwoods project land is north of the Brainerd/Crow Wing airport (see att. 1) and does contain some land w/in the corridor. Todd is here to help explain the 'grant for acquisition of land' and to ask the MHB for a possible Letter of Support (LOS). The Crow Wing County board has yet to give their support. Each MHB County Commissioner present shared their thoughts and collectively decided that they would first like to hear Crow Wing County's position on this before making their determination. The board will revisited this at the Sept. 16th MHB meeting.

Todd continued this discussion by adding a final point. Going forward, 'this board may want to become clear on what the process is for bringing forward (for support/endorsement) corridor affecting projects'. Is there a position in the process for the Project Review Committee? The board agreed that they should articulate that distinction/process for the future.

There was no further business of the MHB to discuss, **motion** was made and seconded by Commissioners Tom Wenzel (Morrison) / Jack Frost (Beltrami) to adjourn the meeting at 10:40 am - 5 ayes, 0 nays, Motion carried.

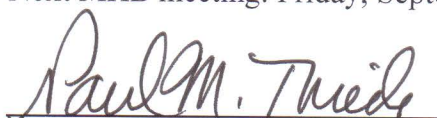
Meeting Adjourned


10:40 am – Misc –

☀ **Legislature Update** – none

☀ **County Updates** - none

Next MHB meeting: Friday, September 16th, 2011 – Walker, MN


Chair Approval


Submitted by (Admin Asst)

Mississippi River Northwoods Habitat Complex

PROJECT NAME:

MISSISSIPPI RIVER NORTHWOODS
HABITAT COMPLEX

ACRES:

+/-1,988

OUTDOOR HERITAGE FUND REQUEST:

\$14.M (LAND ACQUISITION)
\$ 500K (INITIAL SITE
DEVELOPMENT, RESTORATION)

NATURAL RESOURCES:

2.5+ MILES MISSISSIPPI
RIVER FRONTAGE

FISHERIES

WETLANDS

FORESTS

WILD RICE

TROUT STREAM

BLANDING'S TURTLE (THREATENED)

RED SHOULDERED HAWK (CONCERN)

CUYUNA -PAUL BUNYAN STATE

TRAIL CONNECTION

PROGRAMMATIC

SIGNIFICANCE:

HUNTING

FISHING

WILDLIFE VIEWING

SNOWMOBILE & TRAIL USE

WATERFOWL MIGRATION HABITAT

MISSISSIPPI RIVER SHORELAND

WILD RICE BAY

CRITICAL HABITAT CORRIDOR

SPAWNING AREA

LARGE-SCALE HABITAT COMPLEX

PREVENTS FOREST FRAGMENTATION

COMPLEMENTS EXISTING PUBLIC

LANDS

CLEAN WATER



Beginning at Lake Itasca in northwestern Minnesota, the Mississippi River is the one of the longest rivers in North America, a major route for migratory waterfowl, and a significant source of drinking water for many Minnesota residents. In Minnesota, the river meanders through a diversity of different forest communities and by many growing towns and communities including Brainerd in Crow Wing County. One of the most rapidly growing areas in Minnesota, Brainerd is also a popular recreation spot for tourists and visitors from the Twin Cities, which are only two and a half hours to the southeast, and elsewhere. Recreational opportunities around the region include hunting, fishing, cross-country skiing, wildlife viewing, hiking, biking, horseback riding, snowmobiling, canoeing, and camping.

As forested regions of Minnesota experience pressures from growth, efforts are underway to protect forests and open spaces from fragmentation and development in order to provide recreational, natural resource, and economic benefits to the community. In FY 2013 there is an opportunity to protect nearly 2,000 acres through fee title purchase with help from the Outdoor Heritage Fund. This project builds on a nearly ten-year collaborative effort among the State of Minnesota, the Potlatch Corporation, The Nature Conservancy, The Trust for Public Land, and local community supporters.

Located several miles northeast of the town, the 1,988-acre property would serve as a significant addition to protected spaces around Brainerd. With 2.7 miles of direct frontage on the southern bank of the Mississippi River, this project would link other adjacent public properties to create a 9 mile stretch of protected natural river shoreline. It would also provide connectivity within an area containing 6,200 contiguous acres of protected lands, including Crow Wing County Memorial Forest, the Loerch State Wildlife Management Area, State of Minnesota School Trust Lands, and Crow Wing County tax-forfeited lands that are managed for timber.

A paper mill dam downstream has contributed to the formation of Stump Bay, a lake-like basin along the property's river front. This basin serves as critical habitat, including spawning, brooding, and rearing areas for fisheries. Sand Creek, which runs through the property for one mile provides habitat for brook trout, brown trout, and slimy sculpins. As 60% of migrating birds in North America use the Mississippi River Flyway, the property provides crucial riparian habitat and approximately 240 acres of wetlands for migrating and resident waterfowl. These wetlands also play a critical role in upholding the area's water quality. Blanding's turtle, a state listed threatened species, have been documented on the property, and the area also supports bald eagle and red-shouldered hawk, a state listed species of special concern.

Several sites on the property that have been noted for their cultural and archeological value would be protected through this project. As windows into prehistoric and pre-Columbian settlements, these sites may qualify for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

By providing public access to the property for recreation and ensuring that sustainable forestry practices are employed, the Mississippi River Northwoods Habitat Complex project will benefit the Brainerd Lakes area economically. Visitors from Minnesota and elsewhere come to the region throughout the year to experience the outdoors. By providing an alternative to development and fragmentation of the forestlands, by protecting a popular snowmobile trail, and by ensuring that the public can hunt, hike and mountain bike on these lands, this project will also protect the opportunities that draw tourists and residents here to begin with. Once the property is acquired, sustainable timber management on the property will help ensure the long term availability of timber, which feeds the local economy through logging, transport, processing and product manufacturing and sale.

In order to protect this property and its highly valued natural resources from fragmentation and development, \$14.5 million is needed for the effort in fiscal year 2013.

Supporters include: Anglers for Habitat, Brainerd Lakes Regional Airport Commission, Delta Waterfowl (Brainerd Chapter), Brainerd Lakes Area Community Foundation, Cuyuna Lakes Trail Association, International Mountain Bike Association, Muskies Inc (Brainerd Lakes Chapter), the Nature Conservancy, The Trust for Public Land, and the Whitefish Resource Coalition

