

Draft  
Buffalo County Minutes

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**Committee:** Land Conservation & Ag and Extension Committee (LCAE)  
**Date of Meeting:** Monday, August 9, 2021

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**Call to Order:** Meeting called to order by Dwight Ruff, Chair, at 6:01pm

**Members Present:** Dwight Ruff, John Sendelbach, Steve Nelson. Terry Sobotta arrived at 6:05 p.m. Brad Schmidtknecht and Bill Bruegger were excused.

**Others Present for All or Part of the Meeting:** Kristin Foehringer, Tim Wucherer, Joe Krumrie, Mary Campbell Wood, and Carl Duley. Present virtually - Sonya Hansen, Nels Anderson, Annie Lisowski, and Pat Malone.

**Public Comment Regarding Agenda Items:** None

**Review/Discussion/Action ~ Minutes of the July 12, 2021, Land Conservation & Ag and Extension Committee Meeting:** Motion by Mr. Sendelbach seconded by Mr. Nelson to approve the July LCAE committee meeting minutes as sent. Motion carried.

**Review/Discussion/Action ~ Division of Extension 2022 Budget Proposal:** Ms. Malone presented the proposed 2022 budget to the committee. The budget includes increases in the cost of professional services for the educators. The 2021 cost was \$42,330 per full time educator. The 2022 cost is \$43,600. The budget also includes the regular salary increases for Ms. Weisenbeck. The decrease was a result of changes in the cost of the program assistant. We were able to decrease the cost of the position to the County. The committee had no questions. Motion by Mr. Nelson seconded by Mr. Sendelbach to accept the 2022 budget as presented. Motion carried.

**Educator Reports:** Ms. Lisowski reported on 4-H Youth Development programming conducted in July and August 2021 including 4-H Camp Kinnissippewa, library partnership health presentations, STEAM Discovery Day, 4-H Afterschool and Mondovi Community Youth Center fall registration efforts, 4-H fundraising success, and the Buffalo County Fair and pre-fair events. Lisowski also discussed the upcoming Wisconsin Restorative Justice Summit and how youth and adults can get registered.

Ms. Campbell Wood reported on her work with CJS and DHHS to write the proposal for a 4-year Department of Justice grant. This funding supports the Community Justice Services program. She also reported on the Buffalo-Pepin MOVING FORWARD Reentry Program, the Veterans and Justice System project, and that she is leading the development of the Parenting Inside Out curriculum, which is adapted to local jail settings and with literacy additions. Participation in the A Better Beginning course for divorcing parents continues to increase. The fair went well from her perspective in the youth building. Mr. Ruff complimented her on patience working with challenging audiences.

Mr. Duley reported on the Farm Technology Days educational display by Extension. Great attendance with positive feedback. Worked with Land Conservation and Town of Montana to write

the Agriculture Enterprise Area grant proposal. He also reported on the small grain plot harvest, the upcoming hemp field days scheduled in August and gave a brief update on the Buffalo County Fair noting the contributions of office staff.

**Review/Discussion ~ LCRMD Revised 2020 Annual Report Financials:** Ms. Foehringer reviewed the missing financial information from the annual report given at the last meeting. She stated that Mr. Ruff will be presenting the annual report to the County Board in August. She indicated that expenses were underspent by \$38,000. Training and travel were reduced due to COVID-19. Grants and non-lapsing funds were reviewed. The Nelson Rod & Gun Club Trout Stream Restoration Fund of \$12,000 has not been utilized since 2016. The club is working on plans to find suitable sites. PL-566 Watershed maintenance has a current balance around \$19,800. Ms. Foehringer indicated that they anticipate needing more funding as many of the structures need to be mowed and one requires additional repairs as discussed at the July meeting. She indicated that Mr. Krumrie is working on getting quotes.

**Municipal Discharge Program ~** DNR requires municipal wastewater treatment centers not up to current standards to pay into a state fund that is then allocate back to counties where the facilities are located. For the year 2019 received in 2020, Buffalo County was awarded \$24,000. In 2021 we received \$15,000 and will receive more funding next year. Ms. Foehringer indicated that these funds would be used for the Collin Thompson poultry stacking pad project. The department may elect to use the funds for the Buffalo White Watershed or the Lower Trempealeau Watershed, or both. Requirements for the program require a written conservation plan demonstrating reduction in phosphorus in surface water both pre and post installation. This program provides opportunity for the Land Conservation Department to obtain more funding for conservation practices pairing it with other funding sources. She indicated that this is a voluntary program that we apply with DNR in December. She stated that staff is trained on this program.

**Non-Metallic Mining ~** Ms. Foehringer indicated that this program is self-sustaining from annual fees paid for by active and in-actives mine owners in the County. The County pays a portion of the fees to the DNR. She stated that we anticipate more reclamation activity in 2022 and more staff time will be budgeted to this program.

**Review/Discussion/Action ~ 2022 Preliminary Proposed Budget – Land Conservation:**

Ms. Foehringer presented the 2022 budget. She indicated the major changes from 2021 were an increase in training and lodging to allow all staff to attend the Land and Water Conference as well as committee members to attend additional training. Ms. Foehringer indicated that the preliminary 2022 DATCP reimbursement for staffing and support is \$133,164, \$57,000 for erosion control and \$20,000 SEG funds to support nutrient management practices.

Ms. Hansen stated that the annual budget via resolution authorizes \$4,000 of tax levy each year to be placed into an account for PL-566 watershed structure maintenance as the County is responsible for such upkeep. She indicated that the Committee of the Board made a recommendation to reallocate the unspent CAPX2020 funding from the Garden Valley project and the dam repairs projects to the PL-566 fund so that we don't need additional tax levy for repairs and maintenance on these structures. She stated that she was attending a webinar in September regarding NRCS no longer inspecting these structures and that it would be the responsibility of the County in the future. She indicated that she wanted to listen to this prior to drafting any resolutions for committee action.

Mr. Nelson made a motion seconded by Mr. Sendelbach to approve the 2022 Land Conservation budget as presented. Motion carried.

**Review/Discussion/Action ~ 2022 Preliminary Proposed Budget – Non-Metallic Mining:**

Ms. Foehringer indicated that the budget is comparable to 2021 with a small increase in staffing time. She indicated that they may be requesting a budget amendment to purchase a drone along with the necessary training and licensure to operate the equipment. This program can fund this unbudgeted purchase and would require a resolution at that time. She indicated that there is a Non-Metallic Mining fund account with a balance of \$46,516.26.

A motion was made by Mr. Sendelbach second by Mr. Sobotta to approve the 2022 Non-Metallic Mining budget. Motion carried.

**Review/Discussion/Action ~ A Resolution to Support Town of Montana to Establish an**

**Agricultural Enterprise Area (AE):** Mr. Wucherer informed the committee that the petition was sent to DATCP and has support from many landowners and outside organizations. He stated that he would be presenting this to the full County Board for final approval. He invited Wednesday Jordan to the meeting to answer any questions the Board may have. He indicated that the Committee of the Board approved to support the AEA in the Town of Montana subject to County Board approval in August.

A motion was made by Mr. Sobotta seconded by Mr. Sendelbach to approve the resolution to support the Town of Montana to establish an Agricultural Enterprise Area with adding the clarification to the resolution that this excludes the Buffalo County Zoning Ordinance. Motion carried.

**Review/Discussion ~ Buffalo White Sands Update:** Chair Dwight Ruff reported that he attended a meeting with the appropriate parties on the Milestone site approximately two (2) weeks ago. He stated that the bond has been reinstated effective August 29th and discussions are being held between Buffalo White Sands and Milestone as to how they want to structure that site. He indicated that their sites overlap and DNR is asking them to put a distinct boundary between the sites or have one of the entities oversee the entire footprint and the other work under their permit.

Mr. Wucherer indicated that Candy Anderson from Milestone Materials would be submitting their reclamation plan this week. Landowner Segerstrom and Milestone are willing to work on clean up issues He stated that they are working with a DNR Waste Specialist.

Buffalo White Sands leases the property from Segerstrom. Mr. Segerstrom does not want anyone on the site without him or his attorney present. All parties are attempting to respect this request. However, DNR and Buffalo County staff are jointly the regulatory authority and have every right to go on property as required.

Updates will be forthcoming within the next 30 days. Right now, Buffalo White Sands are not mining in this area that needs to be reclaimed. Milestone is taking limestone off the top of it. There are some high walls that need to be stabilized. The parties are working together to develop a plan.

**Review/Discussion ~ Conservation Tour Update:** Land Conservationist Ms. Foehringer and Mr. Krumrie hosted the Conservation Practice Tour in conjunction with NRCS and DATCP engineering staff. This was a Western Central/Northwest event that has not been hosted in years. They took more than 40 technical staff around to county structures in the Rose Valley Watershed and stopped at 11 sites. Suncrest Gardens hosted the lunch and provided an overview of their operation.

The County can host additional events in the future by writing for a scholarship. Comments received by attendees were that it was the most informative and organized tour that has been sponsored in a while and was a great success. Buffalo County and the driftless area are ecological and topographically unique to see. Attendees were able to see some of our challenges and the need to support conservation in the rural Wisconsin. Joe Kraemer also participated in the tour. Ms. Foehringer stated that Alma Area Schools donated the bus and fuel. Buffalo County only had to pay for the driver which expenses were covered by the scholarship. The school supports our programs, and we partner with them on conservation outreach and education.

### **Review/Discussion ~ Lower Trempealeau Watershed Grant – MSU Update:**

This is a mini grant in the amount of \$4,000 from the Mississippi State University. Funds were used to work with a farmer-led group to demonstrate economic benefits, soil health improvements, and reduced runoff from croplands through the implementation of conservation cropping and nutrient management planning. As part of the grant, the farmer-led group will host a field day to engage diverse stakeholders, including agricultural producers, agency professionals, and private industry. Results from cover crop demonstration plots, lessons learned, and economics of conservation farming were discussed. The in-field practices included cover crops, contour strips, field boarders and grassed waterways. NRCS was planning to have a rainfall simulator to demonstrate the effects of conservation farming on soil health and the water cycle.

### **Agency Reports: No additional reports**

**Chairperson Report:** Chair Mr. Dwight Ruff stated that applications for the Land Conservationist are due on the 19<sup>th</sup> so he would like to set up an interview panel. He indicated that he along with a representative from NRCS, another County Land Conservationist, and Administration would be part of the panel. He invited any member of the committee to attend as well. Administration will schedule the interviews and send out notice to the members.

Chair Dwight Ruff informed the members that he was attending the Monday morning staff meetings to offer support. He stated that it was not his intentions to run the department. Mr. Nels Anderson is the Interim Land Conservationist to handle the administrative duties of the department so that the technicians can continue to complete their projects.

Chair Dwight Ruff indicated that the Administrative Coordinator introduced a proposal to the Committee of the Board on restructuring the department having a coordinator over Land Conservation, Zoning, and GIS. This proposal is in the discussion stages only.

### **Conservationist Report:**

Conservationist Ms. Foehringer applied with DATCP for a Hazel Nut Grant. The state has unspent SEG funding and started a new SEG Integration Grant Program. We applied in 2021 and were told that it was very innovative but did not receive the funding. The State has now reached back out to the County to see if we still wanted to receive the funds. This is a \$57,000 grant for one year with the ability to extend for an additional year. The project would allow producers to consider alternative cash crops in Buffalo County. The grant originally identified a 10-acre plot owned by the City of Alma and if we accept the funding, we will need to work with the City of Alma to make sure they are still interested or modify the grant application. Ms. Foehringer stated that once we receive the final award, the LCAE would need to accept the grant and the County will need to immediately start the planning process.

Ms. Foehringer stated they are still working on the design for the Orlyn Hoksch CCC repair and the final estimate for the Mike Greenheck PL 566 Structure. Technician Mr. Krumrie is working on obtaining contractor estimates for the 13 structures that need mowing and/or repairs. She stated that it is in the best interest for the County to repair the Orlyn Hoksch CCC as to build a new structure would be over \$225,000. The State engineer highly recommends repairing the structure so that it functions properly in the event of another flood reducing loss to the County. The Committee will need to decide as to how the County can cost share, which required landowner buy-in, or use existing CAPX2020 funding for these projects. She stated that the Mike Greenheck PL 566 structures is 100% maintenance. We are trying to find the recorded easement on the property.

Committee member Mr. Nelson inquired into the ground water sampling project that involves the Land Conservation Department and Public Health and was brought up by the Zoning Administrator at a Land Use Committee. He stated that it appears that no one wishes to take the lead, and this appears that this should be a joint effort of all the departments. Ms. Foehringer stated that she has facilitated meetings and met with the other departments, but they need the well identification list. She stated that Land Conservation with limited staffing and time will not be able to take the lead, especially with her leaving her position. She had delegated tasks to Zoning and DHHS and had contacted UW Stevens Point and set up protocol. She stated that sampling should include wells that have a WI Well ID, as it will standardize the wells and allow for inferences to be made with respect to cause of contamination rather than due to construction of the well. She stated that a stratified random sampling approach using parameters such as land use/land cover, soils, and geology is a better approach. DHHS is looking for a list of wells that have been sampled.

Land Conservationist Ms. Foehringer stated all that needs to be done is to obtain the list of wells and then coordinate the project with UW Stevens Point.

The Committee requested that the County Administrative Coordinator contact DHHS and request the list of wells to keep this project moving forward.

Chair Dwight Ruff expressed his appreciation for the work that Ms. Foehringer has done serving in the role of the Land Conservationist for Buffalo County and wishes her well in her new endeavor.

**Next Meeting Date and Time:** September 1, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. if needed.

Public Comments: None.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned upon motion by Mr. Sendelbach seconded by Mr. Nelson.

Submitted By:

Sonya J. Hansen, Recording Secretary