

WISCONSIN POINT COMMITTEE
Tuesday, February 9, 2021

Due to the current COVID-19 restrictions, the Wisconsin Point Committee meeting was held via Zoom.

Members Present: Jenny Van Sickle (City Council), Tom Bridge (Superior Citizen Rep), Kevin Feind (WI DNR), Karina Heim (Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve - LSNERR), Nick Danz (UWS), Thomas Howes (Fond du Lac), Mike Raunio (Douglas County-alt)

Members Excused: Keith Allen (Douglas County), Ruth Ludwig (City Council-alt)

Also Present: Linda Cadotte (Director, Parks, Recreation & Forestry), Jodi Saylor (Administrative Assistant, Parks, Recreation & Forestry), Shelley Nelson (Superior Telegram), Evan Larson (UW Platteville), Gini Breidenbach (MN Land Trust)

Meeting called to order by Chair Bridge at 5:01pm.

1. Approval of minutes from July 22, 2020

Motion by Van Sickle, second by Howes and carried to approve the minutes from the July 22, 2020 meeting.

2. *Evan Larson (UW Platteville):* Restoring Cultural Fire to Pine Woodlands on Wisconsin Point

Title of Pre-Proposal: “Nimaawañki’idimin Giiwitaashkodeng: Reconnecting People, Land and Forest to Promote Traditional Land use Practices, Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency and Indigenous Food Sovereignty”

Evan presented on the pre-proposal that was submitted for a Sea Grant. He is requesting support from the Wisconsin Point Committee. The idea was born from a book written by Robin Kimmerrer called “Braiding Sweetgrass” and the idea that sweet grass is a plant that thrives best through reciprocal relationships with human interaction. Through this project, he believes that Red Pine shares that same relationship. This project started with Tree Ring research in the Boundary Waters and stretched to Quetico. Fire scarred tree stumps were found in the area and so a proposal was made to do tree ring based reconstructions of fire up on Lac LeCroix. From that, the project was expanded out and tree ring data was collected. This shows the fires that the trees were near and scarred by, but not killed. The finding was that if you restrict human interaction in these areas, you will lose the areas. Intentional burns can restore things such as harvestable berries and healthy flora. Sea Grant asks for a pre-proposal, which was submitted. He will find out if he is invited to submit a full proposal sometime in February.

What he is proposing:

1. Working with native communities throughout the region who have connections to MN Point. They would bring together stories about the place and about fire stewardship,

blueberries, poison ivy, etc. to bring the memories to bare on this place.

2. Work on an illustrated, dual-language children's book highlighting this history.
3. Participatory workshops on site and in the communities they would like to work with to bring together stories people have to share as well as do some additional sampling on MN Point and WI Point. With that, they would recruit students from area universities and tribal colleges to help develop the tree ring data set.
4. Co-production of a Fire Stewardship Memorandum of Understanding (rather than a fire management plan) that would outline steps to return fire to this landscape in a good way. This project would not conduct burning, but rather set up the research in the vent the property owners decided to move forward.
5. Outreach through the LSNERR

What they are asking the Committee for:

1. Letter of support
2. Time and engagement
3. Whole hearted participation
4. Open minds
5. Advice on who to engage

Mike Raunio left call at 5:29

Per a request from Councilor Van Sickle, Evan summarized the activity and the goal as this: To work with communities to bring together a traditional knowledge, tree ring data, and current human experience to understand long term patterns and to understand how fire affected the way of life. This project is a way to see how we are connected to these places. Tree rings are honest brokers of history and provide a mean fire return interval.

The group should find out sometime in February if they are invited for the full proposal which is then due April 22nd.

Motion by Danz, second by Howes and carried to hold this in committee until the next meeting in March.

Evan left the meeting at 5:40 p.m.

3. *Gini Breidenbach (Minnesota Land Trust): Allouez Bay Restoration Concept Plan*

Gini is a Restoration Program Manager focused on the St. Louis River Estuary. They have been doing conservation planning and restoration work for about eight or nine years in the Estuary. They are working on a restoration concept plan for Allouez Bay. They have an opportunity to do this work through a larger project called the Lower St. Louis River Landscape Conservation Design Project. Ultimately, the effort that they just started is about coming up with a vision for restoring Allouez Bay in terms of natural resources, coastal wetlands, fish, birds, and other creatures, as well as overlaying the cultural and community interest with that restoration project.

The MN Land Trust is facilitating bringing together all the natural resources people who have data and information about current and historical conditions in Allouez Bay. They

brought them together in a large group meeting to develop a draft concept plan. There were around 35 people at the initial meeting. They started to look at conditions that exist currently and then what they want to see in the future. That group will continue to meet over the next few months. In the summer, the LSNERR will be hosting onsite community input sessions with the intent of hearing from people in the community about historic and ecologic conditions around fishing, hunting, birding, trapping and cultural uses of plants. They will be looking at how this area was used in the past, what the current uses are and how to restore the bay in ways that support future recreational subsistence activities. They hope to finalize a concept plan by the end of August or early September.

Kevin Feind left the meeting at 5:45 pm.

Motion by Van Sickle, second by Danz and carried to hold this in committee until the next meeting in March.

4. Allouez Bay March Breeding Bird Habitat Restoration Project

Included in the agenda was a 2 page summary from Cherie Hagen from the DNR. She will come to the next meeting in March to present more about this.

5. Trail Segment Update- Wisconsin Point Road to Lot #1

Funding was from the CDBG to help construct the next segment of the trail. This segment would connect the Wisconsin Point Road to Lot 1. There would be some boardwalk/floating boardwalk through wetland areas. We are currently in the permitting process. The DNR is requesting that we show that we are not able to go a different route with the boardwalk segments. They want to make sure we have deemed that we have completed the Application to Alternative Analysis. This crosses a segment of County Land for which we did receive a formal easement from them. The hope is to continue the work in the spring. There should not be any winter implications for the floating boardwalk. The actual dock can shift and so in areas without a lot of extreme wave action, they should hold out fairly well. Through research and other references, this has been determined to be the best option for that location.

Councilor Van Sickle requested data from the trail counters at the Makwa Ziibiins Miikana – Bear Creek Trail and Director Cadotte will bring that to the next meeting.

6. Director's Update

- a. Howard Bay Project – dredge materials on the old landfill lot 1 will begin as early as Mid-April. This project includes purchasing a pavilion as well as several benches. As part of connecting trail, the City crew will create a trail from the parking lot up and around to connect the trail sections. The project did pay in advance for presumed damages to Moccasin Mike Road which helped with expediting that resurfacing. The crew will be watching for any damages that may potentially happen to WI Point Road and will be tracking those.
- b. DNR Trail down by the bird sanctuary - when John B was here (he has since retired), he helped identify a variety of points for that trail. Steve LaValley would

like to hand that project off for the City to complete. This is not currently a high ranking project and so will be put on hold for now.

- c. After several years of not having WI Point formally adopted, we secured a partner with Friends of the Lake Superior Reserve who has adopted all of the parking lots and the lake side beach. This is an incredible feat to take on. They are excited to host birding events and plan to work with the City in helping students with doing different projects out there. There will be adoption signs put up this spring.
- d. Would like to have a meeting on March 9th to discuss some of the items above as well as geese management in Allouez Bay. All members present indicated this date and time would work.
- e. Decided to keep one restroom open in both the Lot 1 and the Lighthouse locations over the winter.

7. Next meeting May 11, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.

MOTION by Howes second by Heim and carried to adjourn the meeting at 6:06 p.m.

The next Wisconsin Point Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 9, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.

Minutes submitted to the Council Meeting of March 2, 2021.