President Bob Banks called the 2015 annual meeting of Brule River Preservation, Inc. to order Monday, May 25th, at 10:00 a.m. in Brule, Wisconsin.


President’s Welcome & Secretary’s Report. After introductions and welcoming remarks, Bob asked Caroline Marshall for highlights of the 2014 annual meeting in lieu of minutes. She, in turn, described reports that had been made at the meeting on a survey taken in late 2013 with the help of Freshwater Future; it found BRP members eager to have the organization become more active in becoming “a voice for the river.”

Treasurer’s Report. Bob then turned to Michael Spencer for the Treasurer’s Report. Michael distributed spreadsheets comparing BRP’s financial position as of December 31, 2014 with the previous five years (its “Profit and Loss” from 2010 on), along with a Balance Sheet/Statement of Financial Position for the same period.

Michael noted that contributions for 2014, at $18,225, were 48% over the $12,358 figure for 2013, thanks in part to the effort to raise funds for monitoring the river’s water temperature at various sites. These contributions, combined with a grant of $15,000 from the John C. Bock Foundation of Milwaukee, and dividends and interest of $16,900, brought total revenue to $58,738. Michael cited expenses of $4000 for 10 water temperature monitoring gauges; $15,000 (from the Bock grant) to develop a “Conservation Registry;” $15,000 for the further development of the Brule River Coalition; $1,778 for meeting expenses; $103 for legal and accounting; and $6,250 for Northflow consulting services – or a total of $42,711. (No taxes were listed among the foregoing because, as Michael reported, they came due when he was in Antarctica; he paid them in early 2015, along with a penalty of $85.)

As of December 31, 2014 Brule Preservation’s assets (held in marketable securities valued at $303,782 and land - 381.5 acres - appraised at $187,354) totaled
$503,354. This was $16,027 more than the $487,866 figure for 2013. In answer to a query, Michael said that the expense of $54,000 BRP incurred for “Projects – other” in 2013 was to hire Mike Gardner and Northflow to launch the Brule River Coalition; establish a website for BRP; conduct communications and mailings; and assist with other “back office” work. He noted that income from new grants and a mandated harvest on portions of BRP land should help offset or cover such expenses in the future.

Several people questioned the advisability of pooling memorial funds, which Michael had reported he’d begun doing because they were contributed without restrictions. Ted Weyerhaeuser said BRP should still consult with family members on their preferences for use of the funds, and Deborah Holbrook suggested that a “donor wall” be created on BRP’s website. “We should keep a list of people in whose name money is given so we don’t forget them,” she pointed out; “that’s the purpose of gifts.”

**Highway 27 Wrap-up.** Noting how often previous Brule Preservation meetings had focused on the reconstruction of Highway 27 that finally took place in 2014, Bob asked Caroline Marshall to summarize impacts the road work had had on Saunders’ Pond, as well as the Winneboujou Club’s response.

Caroline went on to describe the inundations of silt that turned the pond into a latte-colored mud hole just before the club’s Labor Day meeting (producing a turbidity rating of 132), and efforts Brian Tucci and Chip Lindeke had made to document and mitigate the deteriorating situation in working with the construction crew. She also described work Cecily Ott Parseghian, a lawyer specializing in environmental law, compliance, and litigation with the Boston firm Foley Hoag (and the daughter of a club member), had done in reviewing relevant planning and permitting documents with DOT’s Matt Dickenson and the DNR’s liaison Amy Cronk.

The Minneapolis firm that later tested the pond’s water and bottom soil found it likely the silt had been borne out into the river, where it dispersed. Nevertheless, Caroline said she wrote DOT and the DNR to express the club’s dismay regarding the long-term impacts that could result from their inadequate planning. DOT failed to account for the kind of weather events (continuous downpours of several days’ duration) that should have been expected in late August, and soil testing erroneously anticipated sandy soil rather than the fine clay that entered the pond, either from runoff or disrupted springs. Moreover, erosion control was inadequate: silt barriers were improperly installed and there were too few settling basins to accommodate the deluge of rainwater.

Conditions are never as ideal (or as minimally disruptive) as imagined in planning, Caroline concluded. She said she had thus asked Mat and Amy to forward her letter to their superiors in the hope that in the future they would take note of that reality. DNR’s approval of the project was expressly conditioned on construction being in conformance with the agency’s initial review letter, which noted the sensitivity of the project area and repeatedly emphasized that it was “extremely critical to incorporate
effective erosion control measures into this project to protect the Brule River and its sensitive resources.” That clearly had not happened.

**Brule River Watershed Coalition.** “It’s my firm belief that if the Brule River Coalition had existed 20 years ago we would not have had the situation we encountered with the construction,” Bob said, pivoting to an update on the initiative. He reminded those present that years of observing changes in the river, such as infills of sediment rapidly becoming islands of cattails, had prompted the effort to bring people together to identify apparent or potential problems and support research on their dimensions and underlying causes.¹

He recalled that the first Roundtable, held in late August 2013, outlined issues with which people are concerned, and knowledge that is needed. A second, held in October 2014, brought 22 people together to establish committees to address the ultimate goal of crafting a comprehensive watershed plan. (They also identified other agencies and organizations to include, such as businesses and recreational groups). “We want people to talk to each other, to share information and plans, and undertake research,” Bob said. Coalition members have already observed two situations in urgent need of attention – an eroding bank near Highway 2, and a deteriorating railroad trestle over Nebagamon Creek on the Link farm, which threatens to collapse and collect sediment. Turning to Mike Gardner for further news of progress, Bob noted that Brule Preservation has been the sole underwriter of Coalition activity to date but the hope is that it will soon become more self-sustaining. Mike then touched on the following topics:

- **Research projects.** There is a lot of research activity in the western Lake Superior basin, Mike reported, and the Brule is part of it, indicating “how the power of constituency really pays off; the squeaky wheel gets the grease.” He cited money Douglas County has obtained from NOAA to document current wetland functions – where they exist and the age and class of forest they support, as well as EPA funds The Nature Conservancy has been granted to underwrite research in three watersheds – Amnicon, Brule, and Poplar – by TNC and Wisconsin state scientists. Moreover, more groups are becoming involved, including farm unions, Douglas County towns, and businesses like Enbridge.

- **Invasive Species.** The Brule is lucky in that it doesn’t have the aquatic invasive species that many lakes have, Mike said; however, it *does* have a hybrid cattail problem (hybrids being a mix of native and non-native species). He described the workshop held in August of 2014 in which 30 participated, learning how to identify and report potential invasive culprits, as well as efforts being undertaken in eastern parts of the state to replace cattails with wild rice.

¹ Apropos of this discussion Bill Rogers wondered whether it would be possible to obtain a survey of endangered species done by the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.
• **Water temp monitoring.** It seems likely increased sedimentation (and the weed beds and vegetation, like cattails, that flourish as a result) can be linked to a warming of the river’s water; but, as Mike pointed out, data is needed to track that hypothesis. He and his Northflow associates thus installed gauges at 10 sites, including Stone’s Bridge, Cedar Island, Wildcat, Castle’s Bridge, the Winnебoujou Bridge, and Nebagamon Creek, in the summer of 2014. More sites are likely, thanks to interest on the part of the Brule Sportsmen’s Club. (Funds that went to the Nature Conservancy from DOT purchases of land for Highway 27 have also been earmarked for this activity.) The first annual downloading of data from the gauges will be undertaken this summer and provided to the DNR.

• **BRSF Master Planning.** “We don’t know when the state forest master planning will start,” he went on to report, “but it will be soon.” This remark generated lively discussion about Governor Scott Walker’s budget and plan to make state forests “more productive.” Jane Anklam explained that the forests vary a lot in terms of productivity, and where the money they generate goes is a contentious matter. Walker wants to have 66 to 75% of a state forest’s land committed to forest crop activity, and has identified the Brule River State Forest as one of six that should produce more (currently only 20 to 30% of its land is harvested). Mat Dalman of The Nature Conservancy has termed more logging on the Brule “short sighted,” Jane said. Mike Gardner indicated that this is the view the Coalition will promote when master planning begins. (For further insight, the *Milwaukee Sentinel Journal* was said to be doing a good job of covering the debacle.)

**BRP Organizational Development.** How Brule River Preservation should proceed in stewarding the health of its own 381.5 acres is just one of the areas the BRP board will consider in working with Freshwater Future this summer on strategic planning, Bob reported. Under terms of the forest crop law that currently provides BRP with a reduced tax rate, the organization must soon harvest 124 acres (in parcels along Sucker, Lucius, and Big Lake). But a consultant hired to assess the situation suggests some of the regeneration from the last cut won’t reach “marketable maturity” for another 10 years. BRP is contractually obligated to carry out the harvest, Mike Gardner explained, so the situation demands some kind of action. “We’re looking to figure that out, as well as spell out goals and a plan for the organization, including a fundraising campaign, for the next five years in continuing work we began with Julie O’Leary in 2013,” Bob concluded.

**Forestry Report.** Bob then introduced Phil Brown, who in 2014 replaced Kevin Feind as Ranger with the Brule River State Forest. Phil said variances to the current BRSF master plan have been approved, expanding the number of acres to be harvested this year from 600-700 to 1,100, which should bring in $1.2 million. Bids are now being sought so the harvest will happen within the next year.

Phil also described DNR plans to continue upgrading angler trails at such popular spots as May’s Ledges, and to plant shrubs where banks have become fragile. He said the canoe rental had launched 70 canoes on the previous Saturday (of Memorial Day
weekend). Happily, he said, that kind of traffic is producing less litter each year –
indicated by the DNR having to issue fewer tickets for glass bottles and more generally,
there being “less stuff in the river.”

**Brule River Sportsmen’s Club.** Ken Lundberg then stepped forward to offer
updates on a variety of BRSC activities. Among them:

- **DNR fishery.** The BRSC meets annually with DNR personnel, Ken reported,
  and he and others were encouraged to learn the agency is bringing in people
to assist Senior Biologist Paul Piszczech, who has had “no support.” Aaron
  Nelson will take over for Bill Blutz and, in addition, Kirk Olson has been
  hired. He and others also learned that new software should lower costs of
counting fish at the weir, which is expensive, and that steelhead counts are
down, probably the result of flood events washing out fingerlings. Ken
  professed himself “happy to see progress with the DNR fishery,” and
  suggested BRP members visit the DNR web site to track activity.

- **BRSC habitat projects.** What had been a warm water discharge at Beaupre
  Springs is now cold, Ken said, thanks to BRSC members’ efforts to remove
beaver dams and tag alder the past several years. Pointing out that it would
have dried up had “these impoundments” not been removed, he said he
wished Don Simons could see the free flow of cold water, as its loss greatly
concerned him. (Bill Rogers asked whether the DNR might employ drones
to monitor such situations; Ken replied that it is likely a “future technique.”)

  Ken went on to report that BRSC plans to revisit work done years ago on
spawning beds to see if they can be improved; if not, they will likely focus
their efforts on another small tributary after consulting with Paul P. He said
Dennis Pratt had filmed spawning activity in beds that were installed in the
early 90’s near Highway P so improvements may not be necessary.

- **Brule Hatchery.** Ken reminded BRP members that a “big state study” had
recommended closure of the Brule State Fishery Hatchery several years ago
because its work could be done elsewhere. While it got a temporary
repiere, the issue is likely to surface again soon, and “it will be time to rally
again,” as he put it. He noted how interested BRSC is in the Coalition in this
regard, as “it’s just good to have a larger voice and network when you need
to solve something, or get something done.”

- **Litter pickup.** Noting that BRP members have been picking up litter all their
lives, Ken said intermittent users are now doing it, too, making the annual
cleanup BRSC undertakes with Cub and Boy Scouts at fishermen’s parking
lots and along the river itself a lot easier. Hack Noyes reported that he and
others had found only 20 cans coming downriver several days before - a big
contrast to the “canoes full” they routinely got as teenagers.
• **BRSC Scholarship Award.** Thanks to an anonymous donation of $2500, which was matched by the Sportsmen’s Club, BRSC was able to award $5000 to a local student interested in pursuing a career in natural resources/conservation. Ken said Edwin Gepp, a prior winner, is now working at the Brule Ranger Station.

• **Fisherman’s map.** He reported BRSC plans to update the map of the upper river it provides to fishermen, using a new format. In this new iteration it will delete all references to private property.

The Nature Conservancy-West Wisconsin Land Trust. Thanking Ken for the thoroughness of his report, Bob asked Jane Anklam to provide an update on the easement program, as well as WWLT projects. Jane said the two organizations are in the second year of a three-year transition during which the Conservancy will hand over day-to-day operations and monitoring to WWLT. A year ago she “shadowed” Stephanie Judge as Stephanie conducted the annual audit of properties; this year they will split the task, and next year Jane will assume full responsibility.

Jane reported that WWLT continues to increase its local activity, having gotten funds from the Fish and Wildlife Service to work on “south shore” trout and bird habitats. WWLT is also fully engaged in Coalition activities, thanks to funds from the Mott Foundation and the Land Trust Alliance. She is chairing a subcommittee on hydrology and sedimentation (while other such committees are looking at recreation and usage and forest health). She urged those present to join WWLT, in part to keep her focus on the Brule, as the Mott/LTA support is about to lapse.

Announcements. As the meeting wound up, Bob asked for announcements.

• **July 4th Short Ships Parade & the Winneboujou Club’s 125th Anniversary.** Pegi Harkness invited everyone to attend this annual event, which this year will be hosted by the Harkness-Hannaford clan. As usual, the parade will launch from Weyerhaeuser’s dock at 4:30 p.m. and conclude with refreshments, provided by the Harkness family, at the Winneboujou Club clubhouse.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12 noon.

Caroline Marshall, Secretary