

BRULE RIVER PRESERVATION, INC.

Highlights of the Annual Meeting

May 30th, 2016

President Bob Banks called the 2016 annual meeting of Brule River Preservation, Inc. to order Monday, May 30th, at 10:00 a. m. in Brule, Wisconsin.

Jane Anklaam of West Wisconsin Land Trust, Dave Schulz of the DNR (Brule River State Forest), Paul Hlina of the University of Wisconsin-Superior, forestry consultant Jeff Groeschl, and Ken Lundberg, representing the Brule River Sportsmen's Club, joined 51 others at the Winneboujou Club clubhouse. In addition to Bob, they included Marna Banks, Larry Caldwell, Mary Caldwell, Duncan Chisholm, Marla Chisholm, Jeff Craig, David DiFrancesco, Will Frost, Stanley Fuelscher, Lynn Hanson, Pegi Harkness, Clague Hodgson, Deborah Holbrook, Mat Holbrook, Rana Holbrook, Will Holbrook, Elizabeth Hurlbert, David Hyde, Andy Joyce, Patricia Lenz, Jim Knoll, Morley Knoll, Caroline Marshall, Paul Marshall, Sarah Marshall, Chris Mason, Carl Meyer, Gordon Mosser, Nina Mosser, Haskell Noyes, Meg Noyes, Bill Parke, Megan Briggs Parke, Will Parke, Shane Peterson, Cindy Raab, Ray Raab, Tom Rasmussen, Bill Rogers, Brent Rogers, Kristen Rogers, Lynne Rogers, Will Rogers, Ann Spencer, Marshall Spencer, Michael Spencer, Gretchen Van Evera, Nancy Weyerhaeuser, Ted Weyerhaeuser, and Dave Zentner.

President's Welcome & Secretary's Report. Following brief introductions of those present, Bob asked Caroline Marshall for highlights of 2015 board activity. She, in turn, outlined goals the board drafted in August, saying they address BRP's core purposes as being: (1) "land stewardship" (preserving and protecting the organization's 381.5 acres and serving as a model in doing so); and (2) "cultural heritage" (transmitting the values, traditions, and practices of the "legacy" fishing clubs). A document listing activities BRP undertakes to carry out the aforementioned purposes is now on the web site.

Treasurer's Report. Bob then turned to Michael Spencer for the Treasurer's Report. Michael distributed a "statement of activities," comparing figures for 2014 and 2015 and noting changes in value. He pointed out that BRP's investments had gone up over that period (from \$303,781 to \$317,106), while the value of its land remained the same, at \$187,354. BRP's total assets as of December 31, 2015 thus totaled \$517,260.

Michael said BRP directors have determined that going forward operations should be financed by the interest and dividends thrown off by these investments, as well as contributions, with the principal and any capital gains serving as an "endowment." In 2015 dividends (and capital gains) provided BRP with \$17,952, while contributions totaled \$14,160 (down slightly from 2014, when they were \$18,225). Expenses, including property taxes of \$5,914, meeting expenses of \$483, consultant fees of \$3,300, communications activity at \$1,779, and legal and accounting services at \$123, came to \$18,748. A grant of \$7,000 from the John C. Bock Foundation was used to engage

Northflow to map conservation easement agreements within the region, as well as describe elements of their various covenants.

Water Temperature Monitoring Project. Bob reported that data are being downloaded twice annually – in June and October – from the 10 gauges that BRP installed in 2014, with the results being reported to the DNR and U. S. Forest Service. Next year Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute personnel and Northland students will take over the gathering duties, distributing the data to other agencies and research organizations who are studying climate change in Lake Superior’s tributary rivers. He said the hope is that the data will help determine whether the Brule’s water is actually getting warmer, as is believed, and if so, whether the change can be traced to increased sedimentation or decreased spring activity (or some combination).

Required BRP Harvest. Bob then introduced Jeff Groeschl, a long-time forester (of 35 years) from Hayward, whom directors have engaged to manage the harvest required of BRP under “Managed Forest Law” (which provides for a lower tax rate). Eight years ago BRP clear cut 40 acres near Wheaton’s, Groeschl reminded those present. This time it was to be 138 acres; however, after examining 160 of BRP’s total 381.5 acreage, Groeschl was able to work out a more nuanced program with the DNR – one that will “do right by the forest” in providing for a longer time-line in which more trees can fully mature. (It generally takes 50 years for aspen to attain full growth, he explained, and some BRP tracts need another five or so to get there; beyond 50 years aspens begin to decline and attract disease, and can no longer regenerate from root stock. Delaying the harvest will also mean that each acre will yield an additional seven cords of wood.) At this point, he said, only 68 BRP acres will be logged – with just 28 in a clear cut. Another 40 acres will undergo a “modified clear cut” to preserve the oak (not “rough and nasty” scrub oak, Groeschl noted, but “nice-looking straight red oak) and pine in the tracts. This will retain a diversity of species that would otherwise be lost since only aspen tends to regenerate in clear-cut areas. Groeschl said he also designed “cut units of veins and patches” in the 40-acre section to preserve “connecting corridors” for wildlife.

He went on to describe how he advertised the logging opportunity and got “lots of bids,” noting that rain has depressed the market so such significant bidding is “fantastic.” A family-run logging operation signed a contract this spring. BRP will get \$80,000 for 1500 cords. The loggers have a two-year window within which to complete the work, and will likely wait for the market to improve, as the mills are still full at this point. The three-person operation will man a mechanized harvester, plus a truck, and would welcome visitors to witness the process (if they’re wearing blaze orange or something equally as bright that they can see). Groeschl said he will let BRP officers know when logging gets underway so that a group tour might be arranged.

In the Q & A session that followed, Groeschl said no new roads will be built; the loggers will instead use an existing one that comes in from DNR land. They will also rehab it when they are done so that it sheds water, and block it to vehicular traffic with rocks and tree-top debris (under Managed Forest Law foot access must be allowed).

While best management practices call for a buffer of 100 feet between cut areas and the river's ordinary high water mark, the BRP cut will be 200 feet from the riverbank (he snowshoed in to do reconnaissance this winter and found black ash in the "seeps" up the hill, which should be preserved). The cuts won't be visible from the water, Groeschl said, but you *will* be able to see "voids in the canopy" from the other side of the river. Currently there is nothing to identify the boundaries of BRP land, he reported, so he had had to consult survey work going back to the 1900's. He suggested BRP may wish to post "identifiers." In response to concerns about disrupting nesting season, Groeschl said he would ask the loggers to delay work until after mid-July (when tree bark is also tighter). In closing he noted that in 10 years it will be possible to see what would be a "really healthy impact" of the cut – that is, an increase in the number of oaks.

Forestry & Fisheries Report. Bob then turned to Dave Schulz, BRSF Superintendent, who characterized the past year as one of the busiest he's seen, with record attendance at the campground likely flowing from the fact that one can now make campground reservations online up to eleven months in advance. Revenue earned from recreation fees came to \$76,000, but it was timber earnings, at \$1.4 million, that were the big yield – "way more than we need for operations," he noted. Only 28% of the BRSF's land is currently harvested to generate such sums (even though a 75% cut is mandated for all state forests). Large tracts are categorized as "native community management" areas but could fit into "forest product" zones; it is thus likely that BRSF will harvest more acres in the future (most are in the recently purchased land near Lake Superior).

Schulz reported that BRSF personnel now include Matt Miranda and Phil Brown as deputies (rangers); Dan Kephart as manager of property maintenance; Mark Braasch as forester; and Edwin Koepp as the "front desk person" (visitor service associate in charge of the weekly newsletter and other communications activities). He also suggested the DNR would like to reinstate the Landing Host Program in 2017 (the one at Stone's Bridge that oriented canoers to regulations and wildlife they might look for en route down river). With BRP financial support the program proved immensely useful in curbing "bad behavior" over four to five years, Schulz noted; indeed, its success (with 98% of canoers following regulations) allowed the DNR to let it lapse for a time. If anyone is interested in the job, Schulz said, they should let him know.

Standing in for Paul Piszczek, DNR Senior Fisheries Biologist, Schulz then described results of fish surveys that nine to 10 people had conducted last year. At Winnebougou Landing they counted 4200 brook trout per mile and 4300 browns – all one-to-two year olds, one-to-four inches in length. At the lamprey barrier, they found 5600 steelhead, 4000 browns, and 1700 coho salmon. He said the fish run had been spread out last fall, instead of coming in one big run of a week, and that 25% consisted of older, larger fish (four-to-five year olds at 26 inches for steelheads and browns, and 20 to 22 inches for cohos of the same age). There were 8000 one-to-two year olds per mile. In answer to a query about why there are so few larger fish, Schulz said that while they can grow faster in the lake fish experience a significant amount of "predation" over time.

Habitat is crucial to extending the period when they can grow, he pointed out. “Stream-edge” areas are particularly important, especially in flood events when small fish simply can’t manage and are swept out into the lake; given the opportunity, they can hide in the branches of fallen trees. Red pine logs purchased by BRP (and stored in Duck Pond near Highway 13) will be placed in the river this year, near Rainbow Bend and Doodlebug Rapids (upriver from the Ranger Station), to provide more such hiding places. Schulz said the DNR also plans to work with fishermen in checking out culverts; they want to make sure smaller fish can traverse road crossings during spawning season. (An attendee later urged Schulz to press Piszczek on addressing a culvert problem near Lake Nebagamon – one the Sportsmen’s Club has deemed urgent.) In closing Schulz reported the DNR is about to launch a new master planning cycle – this one to be more “stream-lined” through use of electronic delivery systems. The first step will be to review the plan conceived in 2000 and its recommendations on recreation amenities, motorized access to forest roads, and the like. He urged everyone to register for updates by visiting the “e.gov” site and clicking on mailing lists.

Brule River Sportsmen’s Club. Ken Lundberg then stepped forward to describe a few of the small projects BRSC has undertaken that “in the aggregate add up.” The BRSC web site, for example, now offers videos Dennis Pratt (the new BRSC president) has filmed at habitat sites. They suggest an increased presence of brook and brown trout and cohos (the most recent BRSC project being Beaupre Springs, from which volunteers removed beaver dams). Lundberg reported that while there is now very little litter on the river it can be found on access roads, like Highways 13 and FF, and that BRSC members are now working to clean them up. BRSC is also publishing new fishermen’s maps – including a larger one, currently at the printer – that will be available from local vendors.

Research Projects.

- **Forest Fire History.** Bob Banks and Jane Anklam provided an overview of research to be undertaken by a couple of forensic dendrologists from UW-Platteville. White pines burn in forest fires, they reported, but red pines do not (their resin protecting them). Scientists are thus able to take core samples of red pines and determine what conflagrations they may have survived (because char remains in their growth rings). Showing the cross-cut of a red pine from the Boundary Waters Canoe Area that dates from the 17th Century as an example of what can be studied, Jane suggested the UW team will be able to take what they learn and integrate it with other data to gain a greater understanding of the forces at work in climate change.

The scientists plan to take core and stump samples from Saunders Pond to Cedar Island, Bob said, and will need landowners’ permission. He also urged people to contribute to the research effort, which has a budget of \$6,600. He noted that the scientists will make a formal presentation, hosted by BRP, when they finish up.

- **Vegetation Survey.** Introducing botanist Paul Hlina of UW-Superior, Bob suggested both the “burn study” and Hlina’s work in carrying forward a documentation of

species begun in 1852 will flow into greater understanding of the hydrology that undergirds “stream changes.”

Hlina began by saying he wants future generations to “understand what we once had” and traced his own work in conducting “bio blitz” surveys to the work Don Davidson did in the 60’s to bring the 19th Century work up-to-date. For example, he said he and his fellow researchers have discovered that white birch has been a staple of the landscape for 10,000 years but it is fast disappearing; 50 years ago white birch comprised 17% of the forest, whereas now the figure is just 3%. On the other hand, the numbers of red and white pine are increasing. In the boreal area from Highway 2 to the mouth there are stands that range from 113 to 117 years old (with 120-year old stands considered “old growth.”) Hlina said the BRSF has contributed funding (in lieu of technical assistance) to the effort to document 650 to 700 species that is now underway. (BRP will also host a presentation on the findings of this research.)

The Nature Conservancy-West Wisconsin Land Trust. Jane Anklam offered a brief update on the easement program, saying she and Stephanie Judge (of the Nature Conservancy) will split visits to properties this year, and that the two would be grateful to know if people see blue lupin or yellow iris, both of which are invasive species, and therefore, of concern. She said the Conservancy and West Wisconsin Land Trust are also working on programs to educate the younger generation about the easement program, its history, rationale, and benefits.

Announcements. As the meeting wound up, Bob described several presentations BRP will offer this summer, while Pegi Harness noted the Winneboujou Club will again host its annual July 4th celebration.

- **August 11th Bats & Wolves Program.** The U. S. Forest Service’s pre-eminent expert on bats will join Adrian Wydeven, the DNR’s “wolf man,” in a program set to begin at 4:30 p. m., followed by a reception at the Winneboujou Club clubhouse.
- **August 18th Lake Superior Tributary Streams Project.** Dr. Randy Lehr of the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute (and Burke Center for Freshwater Innovation) will facilitate a discussion of this program beginning at 10 a. m. in the clubhouse.
- **July 4th Short Ships Parade.** Pegi Harkness invited everyone to attend this annual event, which will launch from Weyerhaeuser’s dock at 4:30 p. m., as usual, and conclude with potluck refreshments. Pegi urged everyone to bring something to share at the Winneboujou Club clubhouse.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:30 a. m.

Caroline Marshall, *Secretary*