Minutes of the Brule River Coalition Sub-Committee Meeting

TO: Brule River Preservation Board of Directors, Brule River Coalition Participants, Brule River Coalition Sub-Committee Participants

FROM: Bryanna Johnson
DATE: April 9, 2015

Introductions

- Mike Gardner welcomed and thanked everyone for taking time to attend this Brule River Coalition Sub-Committee Meeting
- Mike also handed out a Steering and Sub-Committee volunteer list

Updates

- Paul Hlina began the update portion of the meeting describing the project he has designed and will be administering this summer. Paul had asked for three years of funding for vegetation survey of the Brule Watershed, but learned his team could only ask for one year at a time. His project received a grant and has begun the study and will receive another grant in July on top of WI Coastal Management funding. His study will repeat the 1942-1944 (Every community of vegetation included) 344 different species.

  Dave Zenter volunteered to accompany on some of the bio blitzes that Paul Hlina will host. There will be 3 bio blitzes. Have great connections with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Brule River State Forest and state Herbarium Society provided an intern to assist in the project.

- Sue O'Halloran and Mike Gardner gave an update on the Douglas County Wetland Assessment project. They finished up the first portion of the wetland functionality assessment and now have a new data set and layer for potentially restorable wetlands. The project received $10,000 from Enbridge and are looking to Douglas County for further funding opportunities. There is high interest and investment with local government. All of this data that was produced is now publicly available on Douglas County's GIS website. If there is any interest please let Sue O'Halloran know and she will tell you how to access that.

- Mike Gardner discussed the news from Brule River Preservation. BRP have been working with West Wisconsin Land Trust to determine various levels of

protection on the Brule River with funds that they earned from the Bock Grant. A mapbook was created to show the various layers of the Brule River from the 2009 Open Lands Assessment. These processes have been used to hunt and gather information.

Jane asked, "Could governing agencies go on line to see the wetland restoration spots and then find the land owners and go to them to discuss the wetland restoration areas?" Sue answered, we have yet to do the onsite evaluations, and that is what the next funding potential should be make sure everything corresponds with the town use plans, someone has to be out and check the sites first.

- Bob Hanson representing the WI DNR NW Sands Ecological Landscape, takes a landscape view on his scope of work. He works with different groups to come up with action plans. He mentioned that he will be interested in what Paul Hlina's study will find. Bob is interested in understanding how can we connect wildlife barrens communities together. Within the barrens there are several species of concern that are a part of that connectedness. Bob said that he is working with silviculutral guidance folks to make sure the practices are beneficial for the whole landscape.

- Ken Lundberg gave an update regarding Brule River Sportsmen's Club. They have been continuing to work on restoration projects such as reestablishing the flow to and from feeder streams. The club had completed work on Beaupre Springs. The Habitat Team will come up with a plan at the end of the month. The club will be looking to focus on warm water discharge and turning into cold water discharge on future projects in the Brule River Watershed. They will be removing beaver impoundments and other impoundments to continue the flow. They host an annual big spring cleanup at the end of the month. The Club also offers a $5000 scholarship.

- Jane Anklam on behalf of West Wisconsin Land Trust is putting together information on Trask Creek. They are getting to know the land ownership and realizing the landscape is more agricultural than previously thought, clay and moraine region. Jane volunteered herself to assist in any way possible with the organization of the sub-committees.

- Dan Kephart was a new participant to Brule River Coalition, he the Assistant Manager of the Brule River State Forest. Dan reported that he focuses on the recreation side of things. There was recently an amendment on the master plan so now DNR would be able to cut 600 acres more. Recreation is always changing on the state lands and the hunting and fishing use has gone down throughout the years, skiing up, camping- stayed the same. Law enforcement is pretty quiet. Due to funding cuts development project- are on hold indefinitely. Which includes a new group campground are on hold. Someone asked, is there any collaboration with the town of Cloverland as far as their

campgrounds go? Dan answered, not much they really just require permits and run it themselves.

- Frank Pratt used the analogy like groundwater infiltration you want a steady stream not a flash flood partnership. Frank then asked, how do we get the mass education rolling? Frank also indicated that climate change is a huge issue.

- Ken Lundberg made a comment that the Lake Nebagamon community as a whole doesn't feel that they are included within the Brule River watershed.

Sub-Committees

Frank suggested to empower each committee to create and objective statement and a few problems and what we would like to accomplish in the near term. Bring it to the Roundtable and have people "green sheet" it. Each committee needs a chair and a co-chair and to come up with an issue.

- It was decided that each sub-committee will create:
  - Problem statement
  - Objectives
  - Action items
  - Appoint a chair(s) and co-chair(s)

1.) Forest Health / Landscape Ecology

- Paul Hlina and Dave Schulz suggested as co-chairs

Paul Hlina's study will hopefully provide the answer to how much can we get back to "native" healthy forest? His study will look at forest health through the lens of climate change.

2.) Recreation

- Bob to rename and appoint a chair (User and Landowner Impacts) "Carrying Capacity" – add to this list of recreational users, County person, Brule Area business committee, BR Sportsmen's Club, Public Servant who enforces on the river, Service Club, CRD Agent UWEX. Others suggested, "Use issues", "Outreach", "Human watershed" as a title for this sub-committee.

Dave Zentner stated, the public has the right to use the river but we need to find out how many should be out there and at what time. It was at this time that someone made the comment of who isn't involved at this point that should be?

- Outfitters
- Ski Club

- fishing guides
- canoe and kayaking rentals

The recreational sub-committee is especially important because recreation on the Brule brings in significant regional economic impact. Outfitters to recreational users could get behind water quality and healthy quality watershed. Mike mentioned there is a forestry impact on the economy, the North Country Trail.

It is important to have a stakeholder group to provide a collaborative funding approach. Those groups are how we identify the needs and who needs to know what and how we take the information from there. It can't be reactionary participation.

3.) Run-Off (Sedimentation / Hydrology / Land Use):

- Jane Anklam volunteered to co-chair this sub-committee and start contacting individuals to be involved

Participants discussed if the title of "Sedimentation" for a sub-committee is too specific. Someone suggested "Run-Off", which would tie very closely into Land Use and Hydrology.

Dave Zentner stated we should be focusing on the science and studies first and foremost prior to any funding sources. This will truly allow us to identify the Brule Watershed's needs first.

Sue O'Halloran added, land owners on the Brule have made observations of changes or issues on the River, but they are just that observations. We need scientific documentation to prove that an issue such as sedimentation is actually happening. Is the observation part of the natural riverine process or is it apart of the how we are managing the land. Scientifically, we need to use hard facts.

Mike Gardner introduced the group to work conducted by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (ACE), The Siskuit River Sediment Study. Mike suggested that a similar study could be conducted on the Upper portion of the Brule River. There is no need reinvent the wheel per say, just gather all the information they can take it to the professionals in that field. The issue of funding came up again. Several participants said a funding source needs to be there prior to any studies take place. Dave Zentner suggested that perhaps retired individuals would volunteer to do some field work or gather of information.

It is key to know how all of us are impacting the watershed. The Open Lands Assessment done in 2009- defined by the age of the trees on the landscape and would be trying to keep the open lands age 16 of trees or less at 40% or

less, provides significant information. There are historical complex and climate change impacts to consider.

Concerns

- Dave Zentner said the personal connection with the public and private property owners is one of the weakest things in the natural resources in our culture. TMDL process are endless with very little real progress and require BMP. This process requires lots of work with very little money spent with the land owner. We won't change the world but really need to find a way to convene land owners to educate them.

  Dave also expressed concern as to what direction Brule River Coalition is going especially in regards to the progress of the sub-committees. There is a lack of definition to who, what, when, where, why. I think we can do better than what we've done and we need a very good check on reality. Someone articulated after seeing the volunteers who signed up for the sub-committees at the last roundtable, the sub-committees are very robustly populated. Sedimentation along with temperature was BRP's main concern. Dave went over his outline of how things should be done. Having that conversation about these groups.

- John Carr reiterated several of Dave's comments. He wanted to see Outcomes: Firm up the names of these sub-committees, is there a way of having leadership from these sub-committees, and what is it that these sub-committees have as an agenda. To get some things accomplished.

- It was decided by the majority of the participants that the Brule River Watershed Roundtable should be at a later date in the summer or fall. This would allow all sub-committees to meet and develop problem statements, issues, and opportunities.

Sub-Committee Participants

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