



Partners News

Partners in Forestry Landowner Cooperative Newsletter

January/February 2006

The President's Corner

Joe Hovel, Chair

As 2005 nears its end, it is suitable to reflect on the accomplishments of the past year. This has been a banner year of hard work for PIF.

† Much discussion and energy led up to the June 17th Summit that we convened at Trees for Tomorrow. Although this meeting opened critical dialogue and addressed several vital issues, it is only the beginning. †We must now reorganize in 2006 to possibly host a follow up, as we have a commitment†to the 30 plus high level participants who participated to continue the discussion.

††††† PIF partnered with the Northwoods Land Trust in promoting the "Northwoods †Forest Partners Project". †This application gained No. 1 ranking from the Forest Stewardship Committee for the 2007 budget cycle, competing against two large corporate projects. There is now a very real possibility that several PIF members, in Price, Oneida and Vilas counties, could †have a perpetual "Forest Legacy" easement on their properties, depending on federal appropriations. ††Another member protected her land with a River protection grant from DNR.

†† On Oct. 26 I represented PIF in giving testimony to the Wis. Natural Resource Board (NRB) concerning expansion†of the NHAL State Forest. I stressed the idea of using "easements" requiring sustainable forestry and public access as an acceptable method of †accomplishing this expansion. †On May 5 I had also given testimony to the NHAL promoting the expansion and opposing the planned ATV trail on the forest. The NRB passed the expansion with out the ATV trail. †See page 5.

††† On Nov. 29 I traveled to the capitol and gave testimony to the State Senate Committee on Housing concerning SB 353. Called the Local Lumber Use Law, PIF instigated this Bill about a year ago through Senator Roger Breske's office†and we now await a vote by the full Senate. †This bill is crucial to anyone interested in using their own resource for construction, as it gives the building inspector the discretion to exempt lumber from the official grading rules.

(Continued, next column)

PIF networked with several members in the†central sands region to†achieve a higher price for them for oak release harvests by combining neighboring lands into a contract opportunity.

†††† Our nervous secretary Barb survived her Jack Pine harvest with the support of the balance of the board. †

††††† Finally I wish to welcome the new board members, Fritz Schultz†from Antigo and Ron Parkinson from Rhinelander. †John Schwarzmann from Minocqua has filled in for Rachel (off at school) and Joe LeBouten †subs for Bob Simeone †in his absence.

† For information on any of the above items or to suggest a new issue PIF should tackle,†please contact me. This is your COOP and it only works with your input.

We have several Invasive Species folders for new members. Encourage your neighbor to join PIF.

Membership Renewal

It is the end of 2005, and time to renew your PIF membership for the year 2006. If you joined PIF any time before October, 2005, your membership will expire with the first of the year. Please find the renewal form enclosed, and return the completed form to Partners in Forestry, 6063 Baker Lake Road, Conover, WI 54519. We appreciate your support, and look forward to another year of assisting our members.

New Members

Our newest members are Bill Green of Conover, Joe LeBouten of Land O' Lakes, and Ron Parkinson of Rhinelander. Welcome!

2005 Annual Meeting

By Robert and Linda Dunbar

Partners in Forestry held its 4th annual meeting October 4, 2005 at the Kemp Natural Resources Station near Woodruff, WI. We thank Tom Steele, superintendent at the station, for allowing us to have the meeting there and providing overnight accommodations for those who desired it. The Kemp Station was a great place for a meeting. I believe we have found a setting that has a certain comfortable feel for our members. I won't bore you with the details of the administrative portion of the meeting, they are available in the minutes.

Bryan Pierce was invited to update the members on the status of conservation easements that some members are working on. He gave us encouraging news on the applications that are being considered.

When the meeting was adjourned we had a wonderful supper provided by the board members and their families. As we enjoyed the meal we socialized and welcomed the new faces to our "family."

After supper we walked over to the boat house and sat down to a very interesting discussion led by Tom Steele. Tom started out with a history of the Kemp Station, then he got to the main topic, the relationship of tourist and forest based economies in northern Wisconsin. He showed us results of surveys and polls of forest users and recreational users. Tom has a lot of data supporting the need for both of these economies to be vibrant and co-exist to provide for strong Northern Wisconsin communities. Tom made it easy for the members to question him at anytime during his presentation. We might have kept Tom there all night if it wasn't for the pouring rain and the distance some members had to travel home.

The evening was a success; we welcomed some new members, made some new friends, the food was great, and we had a good time. Tom topped it off with an entertaining and informative discussion.

Thank you again Tom. We appreciate the help and support you have given us since the very beginning of Partners in Forestry.

Local Lumber Use Bill

As this newsletter is being published, Senate Bill 353, the Local Lumber Use Bill, has easily passed through the Senate on a voice vote, but is currently being held up in the State Assembly. Please call your State Representative, and urge him or her to pass Senate Bill 353 through the assembly and into law.

Newsletter Editor Wanted

PIF is still looking for volunteers to fill the position of editor for our bimonthly newsletter. Would you like to become more involved in your cooperative in a way that will reach out to other members? If you do not have the time to dedicate to editing the newsletter but would still like to contribute, we encourage you to submit any articles or editorials you have to share. Please see below for deadlines for the next newsletter.

Please contact PIF if you are interested in contributing to the newsletter in any way.

Submissions to the Newsletter

All members are encouraged to send any articles, announcements, opinion pieces, or items of interest for inclusion in the Partners News. For items to be included in the March-April issue, they must be received by February 28th. Submissions may be emailed, faxed, or mailed to PIF.

If you know of anyone who might be interested in PIF, or who might find helpful PIF's mission to assist landowners in sustainable management of their woodlands, please contact us. We would be happy to send them information on PIF, a copy of the newsletter, or any other information that could assist them.

You may also request additional electronic copies of the newsletter. Please email PIF if you would like the latest issue, or any back issues, in this format.

PIF Contact Information:

Partners in Forestry

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Meeting Minutes

September 6, 2005

The Financial Committee approved the audit report, completed by member Ned Loar.

The Board is seeking a new newsletter editor, and considered several options.

The old business items of lumber grading status, workshop plans, and Forestry Summit follow-up were discussed.

Barb Loar and Roland Rueckert updated the Board on their timber harvest status. Barb's harvest has been completed, and Roland's will be postponed until 2006.

The Board proposed and passed a by-law change that would increase the size of the board of directors to nine members. This by-law change will be voted on at the annual meeting.

Annual Meeting, October 4, 2005

Last year's minutes were approved, and June Jones presented the treasurer's report.

The by-law change regarding the size of the board was passed by a margin of 18-0.

Four board members were selected for three year terms. Bob Simeone and Barb Loar were re-elected, and Ron Parkinson and Fritz Schultz were elected for their first terms. Member John Schwarzmann was appointed by Chair Joe Hovel to fill Rachel Hovel's vacant position.

In review of the year's activities, Bob Simeone described the proceedings of the June Forestry Summit; Joe Hovel explained the status of Senate Bill 353, referred to the local lumber use law; and Brian Pierce presented on the Northwoods Partners Forest Project (NPFP), a northwoods initiative for permanent conservation easements through the Forest Legacy Program. Several PIF members own

NHAL Expansion Approved

The following news release is from early November, after the meeting of the Natural Resources Board at TreeHaven in Tomahawk.

Natural Resource Board Addresses Forest Fragmentation

The board of directors of Partners in Forestry (PIF) applauds the Wisconsin State Natural Resource Board for its unanimous approval of the master plan of the Northern Highland American Legion State Forest (NHAL).

The highlight of the plan, according to PIF board member Bob Simeone, is the expansion of the Forest boundary. Simeone stated that he was pleased to see the DNR board recognize the negative impacts that fragmentation of the northern forests has had on the forest products economy and take steps to address it in this critical area. "The Border Lakes area holds very diverse forest communities that are of significant value to the people of this state and beyond. The 60,000 acre expansion area has the potential to link the existing NHAL to the Ottawa National Forest in Michigan."

"We have a responsibility to maintain working forest," emphasized Joe Hovel, Chair of PIF, in testimony to the DNR board. "History has proven that the public forests were conceived, for the most part, because the private sector failed to be responsible stewards. A recent demonstration of poor management is the liquidation of large blocks of industrial forest land, and their subsequent path to development."

††††††††

Hovel, who has tracked this issue for almost three years, pointed out that this expansion does nothing to infringe on other land use within the boundary. "The expansion merely provides an opportunity for the NHAL to negotiate with willing sellers for purchase, or protection with a conservation easement. The expansion proposal had overwhelming public support. The little opposition expressed was based primarily on misconception."

PIF member, forester, and economic development advocate Joseph LeBouton stated that, "the Master Plan in general, and the boundary expansion in particular, benefit the tourism economy as much as the sustainable forest economy."

Recognizing the partnership between public and private ownership, Partners in Forestry is collaborating with other agencies and groups such as the North Woods Land Trust to maintain a forest landscape that is capable of sustaining the traditional forest economy in this region.

For more information on Partners in Forestry contact Hovel at 715-479-8528

UPPCo Land Sale Spells Further Fragmentation

We have recently learned of plans by the Upper Peninsula Power Company, a subsidiary of Wisconsin Public Service, to sell thousands of acres of land holding surrounding six flowages in the U.P. This sale will result in extensive forest fragmentation, represents out-of-state corporate profit from local natural resources and loss of local control, and will take over 2500 acres out of timber production at the Bond Falls site alone. We encourage members to send letters to WPS and FERC at the following addresses, urging against this tremendous loss of forestland to subdivision and development.

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), 888 First St. NE, Washington, DC 20426.
Wisconsin Public Service Corporation, Box 19002, Green Bay, WI 54307-9002.

The Upper Peninsula Power Company (UPPCo) and its parent company, Wisconsin Public Service Corporation (WPS), have plans to liquidate the land surrounding the six flowages in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan of Bond Falls, Victoria, Prickett, Boney Falls, AuTrain, and Cataract. Negotiations for the sale are taking place with Naterra Land Company of Minnesota for plans of extensive residential development.

This land sale and development is proposed to take place on the UPPCo land outside of the average 400-500 foot wide region along the shoreline of the flowages referred to as the hydroelectric project area. This project area, and the included buffer zone, the land within an average of 200 feet of the shoreline, lies under jurisdiction of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Project lands are restricted to uses that best serve the public and protect natural resources by FERC licenses.

Naterra's development proposal would subdivide all nonproject purchased lands into individual lots for residential sale, and includes a number of activities that would impact the project area and buffer zone. Access corridors and electric service, installment of docks with up to ten slips, new and improved roads, stairs, access for adjacent lots, and overhead power lines would all take place on or directly affect the project area or buffer zone. In addition, some projects would include view corridors across project lands, and the Prickett project would allow for removal of aquatic woody debris up to depths of eight feet, threatening valuable fish habitat. In all cases, dock owners would be able to restrict public access, for uses such as fishing and water access, on UPPCo project lands within 100 feet of the dock.

A number of these proposed activities directly conflict with established FERC license. At Bond and Victoria flowages, in particular, the 2003 license calls for management for old-growth forest characteristics within the buffer zone; a natural, undeveloped shoreline; protection for sensitive wildlife species—particularly the loon, osprey, bald eagle, and gray wolf—and their habitats, including limitation of human activity along portions of shoreline; and unrestricted public access to and on the project area for uses such as fishing, hunting, sightseeing, birdwatching, and water access. Extensive development would restrict public uses such as hunting and fishing, and would impact protected areas for non-game species such as loons, eagles and osprey, violating the land use as prescribed by FERC.

WPS, UPPCo, and Naterra appear eager to complete the transaction without allowing time for FERC review. According to John Estep, head of compliance at FERC, he had no knowledge as of December 20, 2005 of the planned development at Bond Falls, but had been contacted for a meeting in early January, 2006. Members of the Bond Falls Implementation Team, a party involved in the licensing process, stated that they had been told by UPPCo and WPS that FERC approval is not required for the development project, as the development would not adversely impact the project area.

Conflicting information was given to Joe Pietila, supervisor of Haight Township, when WPS approached the Haight Board and informed them that FERC has already approved the proposal. Pietila also confirmed that the Township of Haight has not taken a position of support for the development of the Bond Flowage, and said that he as township supervisor opposes the plan, citing numerous concerns.

The proposed activities within the Project Boundary appear to be in conflict with the terms and conditions of the FERC licenses, and would breach the goals of resource protection and public use on project lands. For this reason, many individuals who were involved with the licensing process believe that another public comment period should be implemented before any development activity takes place. During the recent licensing procedure, there was no mention of extensive development on any UPPCo land holdings surrounding these flowages, and no public comment on this proposal.

It is reported that Naterra is in the process of purchasing lands on the north and west shores of Bond as well as lands around Boney Falls and Cataract in the last week of December, 2005. The rest of the land sale would take place over the next one to two years.

For more information on this story, contact Joe Hovel (Chair, Partners in Forestry Cooperative) at logcabin@nnex.net or (715) 479-8528, or Rachel Hovel (Environmental Science, Northern Michigan University) at rhovel@nmu.edu.