Lincoln County Forestry, Land and Parks Committee
Minutes of Monday, February 9, 2026 @ 8:00 A.M.
Lincoln County Service Center, Room 156
801 N. Sales St., Suite 106, Merrill, WI 54452 **715-539-1034**

Members Present: Nobert Ashbeck, William Bialecki, Greg Hartwig, Ken Wickham, Andy Zelinski
Absent:
Members Excused:
Visitors: Luke Williams, Lee Rahlf, Amy Krueger, Bill Groth, Jeff Weber, Brent Loka, Fred Heider, Renee Krueger (virtual), Christine Vorpagel (virtual)

1. Call meeting to order. The Lincoln County Forestry, Land and Parks Committee met on Monday, February 9, 2026, in Conference Room 156, Lincoln County Service Center. The meeting was called to order by Chair Hartwig at 8:00 a.m.

2. Approve minutes of January 12, 2026. Motion by Wickham, second by Zelinski to approve minutes of January 12, 2026 meeting as printed in the packet. All Ayes. Motion Carried.

3. Review year to date budget report. The Committee reviewed year to date budget report and placed on file.

4. Comments from members of the public or invited guests. Christine Vorpagel asked where Papoose Creek is located and for that to be addressed on agenda item 8.

5. Discussion of the update process for Lincoln County's Five-Year Outdoor Recreation Plan with Fred Heider, North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. Heider attended the meeting to discuss the process of updating the five-year outdoor recreation plan. He explained that the plan is updated every five years and serves two primary purposes: it makes listed projects eligible for 50% grant funding and provides guidance for budgeting. He outlined the three grant programs involved—Stewardship (50% funding for nature-based projects), the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, and the Recreational Trails Program. The process begins with a public survey, scheduled for April, which will evaluate the public's current satisfaction with recreational opportunities and identify areas for improvement. Heider noted that Lincoln County has lagged behind other counties in survey response rates during previous planning cycles. To help increase participation, a sweepstakes was suggested in which every 25 respondents would be entered to win either a free Underdown season pass or a night of camping. Goals and objectives for the plan will be developed based on the survey results. Heider expects to have a draft plan ready sometime this summer. A copy of the survey was provided, and discussion followed on distribution methods, desired response levels, and the potential giveaway. Motion by Wickham to approve giveways of trail passes and camping overnight stays, second by Ashbeck. All ayes. Motion carried.

6. Loka land exchange update and approval to proceed with hiring Kyle Zastrow to conduct the appraisal. Williams reported on the proposed land swap and noted that, per consultation with corporation counsel, the next step is obtaining appraisals for both properties. Williams and Loka agreed that each party will pay for its own appraisal and both will use Kyle Zastrow at a cost of $500 per appraisal. Motion by Zelinski, second by Wickham to proceed with hiring Kyle Zastrow. All ayes. Motion carried.

7. Approve Forestry Department 2025 Annual Report. Williams asked if there were any questions. Discussion followed, and the committee noted it was a well-written report. Motion by Wickham, second by Zelinski to approve. All ayes. Motion carried.

8. Present Papoose Creek Replacement Project Culvert bid results and consider awarding the culvert contract. Williams reported that five bids were received. After checking references on

the lowest bidder he recommended awarding the bid to Central Culvert & Supply LLC. Motion by Ashbeck, second by Bialecki. All ayes. Motion carried.

9. Approve Organized Event Permit – IRONBULL Special permit – Snowbound in the Underdown, February 21, 2026. Williams stated that this is an annual fat-tire bike and snowshoe race, with an expected 40 bikers and 30 snowshoers, and that a hold-harmless clause and proof of insurance are on file. Motion by Ashbeck, second by Bialecki. All ayes. Motion carried.

10. Discussion and possible approval to direct sell tract 6-23 to Hesston Meier. Williams reported that this sale was first established in 2023 and has been advertised four times, even with reductions in the minimum bid price, but no bids were received. The stand is overstocked pine, and delaying this first thinning could hinder future stand development. Hesston Meier expressed interest, as he has a sale in the area and agreed to pay the most recently advertised price. Williams recommended proceeding with a direct sale. Motion by Wickham, second by Zelinski. All ayes. Motion carried.

11. Approval to seek bids for engineering services related to stormwater permitting, design, and associated work for Crane Foot ATV Trail Rehabilitation Grant Project. Williams noted that the department received an ATV grant in August 2025 for $68,499 to relocate a steep, dangerous, and erosion-prone section of trail to a more suitable location. An engineer is required to complete the storm-water runoff permit and trail design, both of which were included in the grant cost estimate worksheet. Motion by Wickham, second by Zelinski. All ayes. Motion carried.

12. WDNR Report. Bill Groth said they are on snowshoes working on recon and forest inventory.

13. Review Administrator's written report. Williams asked if there were any questions. Discussion followed, and the report was placed on file. He noted that he was asked to attend the next Highway Committee meeting to discuss the Forestry Department moving into the highway facility and to review the pros and cons of all options.

14. Close Timber Sales.

Schreiner Forestry	T003-25	Close and return Letter of Credit.
Smola Enterprises	T025-24	Close and return Letter of Credit.

Williams recommended closing and refunding bonds. Motion by Zelinski, second by Ashbeck to close sales per Dean's recommendation. All ayes. Motion carried.

15. Set next meeting date. The next Forestry, Land & Parks Committee meeting was set for Monday, March 9, 2026 at 8:00 a.m., LCSC Conference Room 156

16. Adjourn. Motion to adjourn meeting by Ashbeck, second by Bialecki at 8:48 a.m. All Ayes. Motion Carried.

Minutes prepared by Amy Krueger and Luke Williams