

FORESTRY, LAND, & RECREATION COMMITTEE

DATE: April 14, 2026

TIME: 8:00 a.m. County Board Room, 2nd Floor, Court House, Rhinelander, WI

PRESENT: Committee Members: Almekinder, Briggs, Schultz, Sorgel, Ives
Forestry Staff: Nemeč, Rady, Tischendorf
WDNR: Kristina Wells, Curt Rollman

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair Almekinder called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. The meeting has been properly posted in accordance with the procedures set forth by the Wisconsin Open Meeting Law.

APPROVE CURRENT AGENDA WITH THE ORDER OF AGENDA ITEMS AT CHAIR'S DISCRETION

Motion by Sorgel to approve the agenda with the order of agenda items at Chair's discretion. Second by Ives. All aye, motion carried.

APPROVE MINUTES

Motion by Briggs to approve the minutes of the March 10, 2026 meeting. Second by Schultz. All aye, motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None at this time.

FOREST MANAGEMENT

YTD Stumpage Report - Rady reported March stumpage of \$51,543.07 bringing the year-to-date total to \$202,643.43. Rady noted there are three active jobs of timber cutting only until road limits are removed and trucks can begin hauling.

Spring Timber Sale Bid Dates- Rady reported there are 12 timber sales out for bids. Seven new sales and five re-sales with bids due May 7th. Advertised prices have been reduced approximately 15% to account for current markets.

FORESTRY DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Nemeč informed the committee the department is now live with the online service provider Recreogo. Recreational enthusiasts can now purchase trail passes and reserve pavilions and campground sites online.

The department took delivery of a new work truck earlier in April. This replaced a 2016 work truck that was used as trade for the new one.

Nemeč stated the department received three applicants for the LTE Ranger position. Hoping to conduct interviews by the end of the month.

WDNR REPORTS

DNR Liaison – Wells stated fire staffing slowed down a bit with the recent rain and continue to work on county reconnaissance.

DNR Wildlife Biologist – Rollman continues to look for additional funding for the mowing of approximately 30 wildlife openings and approximately five miles of hunter/hiking trails in the Town of Lynne.

Discuss / Approve Application for White Tails Unlimited Funding – Rollman explained this is the same grant that the County applied for last year. He is looking to file an application on behalf of the County again for \$1,500.

Motion by Almekinder to approve WDNR/County to apply for White Tails Unlimited funding. Second by Sorgel. All aye, motion carried.

WCFA SUMMER TOUR – WOOD COUNTY (HELD IN WISCONSIN RAPIDS), JUNE 18-19, 2026

Nemec informed the committee if anyone is interested in attending to let the department know and we can forward an agenda.

DISCUSS / APPROVE SPECIAL EVENTS AGREEMENT – RASTA RALLY

Nemec explained this is the annual special event agreement for the RASTA Rally race at the Washburn Trail system.

Motion by Briggs to approve the RASTA special event agreement. Second by Schultz. All aye, motion carried.

DISCUSS / APPROVE FORESTRY DEPARTMENT REPLACEMENT ATV NOTICE FOR BIDS

Truitt stated we are looking to replace our oldest ATV (2008) with funds budgeted from the Forestry Equipment Account.

Motion by Schultz to approve the notice for bids for the ATV. Second by Briggs. All aye, motion carried.

DISCUSS / APPROVE FUTURE CLASSIFICATION OF ABANDONED TOWN ROADS

Nemec stated the department blocked off the access points for both Kelly Fire Lane and Gobler Lake Road. Unfortunately, people have been going through the blockades, cutting cables, running over barrels, etc.

Due to the abandonment by the town and the lack of department funds for maintenance, Nemec outlined three options: Close the roads to the general public; Turn roads into trails only (snowmobile/ATV); apply to add them to the County Forest Road inventory.

Discussion regarding maintenance needs and funding options, equipment and material limitations, ATV cub involvement, current trail systems, signage, gates, etc.

Jim Kocher, President Little Rice ATV Club, offered limited maintenance help from the ATV Club for the remainder of the year as they have large equipment and dump trailers available.

Kelly Fire Lane – Nemec stated Kelly Fire Lane is a really nice road; however, the biggest concern is right in the middle of the road are three large culverts that have been listed as failing at a replacement cost of \$100,000 (rough guess). This road is important for forest management operations and a main thoroughfare. Maintenance issues are the biggest concern. Recommendation to adopt into County Forest Road inventory to continue to allow public access; however, this will be the most expensive option to maintain.

Discussion regarding blocking road during spring thaw and replacement plan/funding available for culvert replacements.

Larry Hammond, Little Rice ATV Club, discussed gate and culvert replacement and vandalism concerns.

Motion by Ives to adopt the road as a County Forest Road and install gates with the ability to close the road as needed. Discussion as to whether to pursue County Forest Road designation now or in the future. Motion rescinded by Ives.

Motion by Almekinder to install gates with the ability to open/close the road as needed, leave the road open allowing the road to be accessed by hunters, ATV users, etc. and the Little Rice ATV Club will grade it twice this year. The Department and Committee will monitor road conditions and make a decision at a future date. Second by Schultz. The Department will bring back to Committee in July with final recommendation. All aye, motion carried.

Gobler Lake Road – Due to the current width and windiness of the road, the recommendation is to gate this road and utilize it as snowmobile/ATV trail only. The Little Rice ATV club supports this recommendation.

Motion by Briggs to approve turning Gobler Lake Road into a snowmobile/ATV trail. Second by Ives. All aye, motion carried. Discussion regarding the installation of gates, signage and ATV program funding.

INVOICES PAID REPORT

The committee received the list of invoices paid in March 2026.

Vouchers for the month totaled \$3,914.18 including \$754.65 for grant funded and/or reimbursed expenses.

Informational only.

DEPARTMENT BUDGET REVIEW (BUDGET / ACTUAL REPORT)

The committee was provided a copy of the department’s March report. No concerns at this time.

Informational only.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None at this time.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS/MEETINGS

- Next meeting – May 12, 2026
- Award Timber Sale Bids
- 2025 Forestry Department Annual Report
- RASTA 5-year Plan Amendments
- FTLLP Special Events Agreement

CLOSED SESSION

It is anticipated that a motion will be made, seconded, and approved by roll call vote to enter into closed session pursuant to Wisconsin Statutes, Sec. 19.85 (1)(e) Deliberating or negotiating the purchase of public properties, the investing of public funds, or conducting other specified public business whenever competitive bargaining reasons require a closed session and Sec. 19.85 (1)(c) for purposes of considering employment, promotion, compensation or performance evaluation data of any public employee.. A roll call vote will be taken to go into closed session and it is anticipated the Committee will return to open session by roll call vote to consider the remainder of the meeting agenda. . (Topics – Luber Lane Cell Tower Lease, Forestry Director Performance Review and Approve Closed Meeting Minutes from December 9, 2025)

Motion by Briggs to go into closed session at 9:00 a.m. Second by Sorgel. Roll call vote: All aye.

Motion to return to open session at 9:48 a.m. Roll call vote: All aye.

ANNOUNCEMENT: Almekinder announced the committee approved minutes of the December 9, 2025 closed session and gave approval to accept the Vertical Bridge lease agreement as presented.

ADJOURNMENT

With business completed, Chair Almekinder adjourned the meeting at 9:50 a.m.

ROBERT ALMEKINDER
COMMITTEE CHAIR

TANYA TISCHENDORF
COMMITTEE SECRETARY