

**Public Comments
on the
Becker County Recreational Plan
and the Park and Recreation Ordinance
6/28/2011 - FINAL**



Appendix A: Meetings with Public, Participants, & Comments

Land Managers mtgs.: held on 12/15/2009 & 3/16/2010

Colleen Adam, MnDNR Wildlife
Del Bergseth, Becker County Parks and Recreation
Tom Bergren, Riceville Township
Barbara Boyle, Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge
David Christianson
Brad Grant, Becker County Soil & Water
Brad Green, City of Detroit Lakes
Guy Haiere
Wesley Hall, Shell Lake Township
Helen Halmer
Dale Hogie, Lake Park-Audubon Schools
Patrick Holzem, Eagle View Township
Dale Huwe, Spruce Grove Township
Earl Johnson, MnDNR Wildlife
Doug Kingsley, MnDNR Fisheries
Justin Klemetson, Walworth Township
Gary Kolsrud, Erie Township
Hank Ludtke, City of Frazee
Willis Mattison, Becker County Citizens for Responsible Recreation
Rob Naplin, MnDNR Wildlife
John Okeson, Lake View Township
Michael Reep, Lake Eunice Township
David Schotzko, MnDNR Trails & Waterways
John Steward, MnDNR Trails & Waterways
Clarence Suvanto
Don Tschudi, Forest Township
Jim Wolters, MnDNR Fisheries
Wilhelm Walther, Riceville Township
Katherine Warren, White Earth Natural Resources
Gerry Wettels, Round Lake Township
Marty Wiley, MnDNR Forestry

Comments from 1st Land Managers' Meeting held on 12/15/2009

1. **Inventory/Website Development**
 - Google maps included; are townships on the map
 - Maps are flexible and expandable
 - Web page is ready for content.
2. **Outreach Meeting/Explore Recreational Issues, Opportunities and Resources/What recreational needs are being met within Becker County?**
 - fishing

- snowmobiles
 - sliding hill; Wolf Lake Recreation area
 - Eagle Lake Park and Lions Park in Frazee
 - Water trail on the Ottertail River
 - Helliksen Prairie, waterfowl protection area
 - Pine to Prairie Birding Trail, yearly bird watch event
 - Horse riding groups
 - Bicycle trail from Park Rapids
 - Walking trails, premier hiking trail
3. **How far are we on the inventory?**
- Where do we start and end?
 - How do we get info back to Becker County?
 - Who do we send the info to?
 - Inventory is crucial
 - Coordination and flow between entities
4. **What recreational needs are unmet?**
- Accessibility for those with special needs
 - Multiple uses of trail possible
 - Need to prioritize projects to work on
 - Camping for multiple uses, consider this also
 - Reservation tie in with Becker County
 - Trails on the Reservation are for snowmobiles now
 - Land use is for resources & harvesting leaches & minnow, etc.
 - No ATV trails established; not a huge impact now but further abuse is a concern with the wet soils in the wetlands that are trails good only for snowmobiles
 - Need to see how it will affect them as a whole
 - Need time to make good plans; need to consider their concerns when making a plan
 - Sustainability is important and the limitations on resources
5. **Do you have resources that are being utilized or could be utilized for recreation?**
- Audubon has a nature trail; need to link cities with Becker County
 - How do we link with the schools; how do we interact and do a better job of linking them together for activities and partner with different groups
 - Break down turf issues; get more done if we all get involved and work together
 - Need communication and involvement from all the groups
 - We will need to deal with ATVs and trial riding
 - Planning and Zoning has a process in place with steps for applications and review
 - We would like to arrive at a process like Planning and Zoning has
 - We have an obligation to have a plan to preserve the land
 - We want a working document that is relatively simple
6. **What role do you see for your organization as it relates to the recreational development of Becker County?**
- Provider of volunteers, community service organizations
 - Get guidance from DNR, State, and Federal

- How do we connect and work together?
 - We are too protective of our resources; balance has to come in.
 - The City of Detroit Lakes has put money into recreation.
- 7. Explore Recreational Issues, Opportunities and Resources/What resources should be tapped to provide better insight and knowledge to an overall County recreational plan?**
- Erie Township has lots of land and resources; haven't expanded their thinking on what we can do with them.
 - State is interested in the ATV portion of the plan. Snowmobiles get funding through the State. Local entities need to be a resource to organize people; get work done by the clubs as they are invested in what they are doing.
 - Harness the energy and manage the change; it's coming.
 - Townships can partner.
 - We have resources from the State; are there others?
 - There are different ownerships in the DNR; they each have their own missions and priorities.
 - Federal has a 15 year recreation plan; they are working on the draft and looking for input. They have a regional planner out of Minneapolis.
 - Identify parameters and work around them.
 - There is a lot of land in Becker County; distribute activities in this land.
- 8. Concerns**
- What's going to happen?
 - Need a working process to start with.
 - A guide for the County where we need to go; conservation and restoration.
 - Will it work? Be positive.
 - How will it work?
 - Will we be taxed?
 - Grants are available but there are lots of people that want the money; competition for funding.
 - **Consistency of rules between entities**
 - Rules in blocks; issues to deal with.
 - Rules and policies similar by entities that are involved.
 - User friendly; what rules to follow.
 - What rules are you violating; takes the fun out of it.

Comments from 2nd Land Managers' Meeting held on 3/16/2010

- The challenge is to develop criteria for activities.
- Sometimes we are chasing the industry to keep up with their inventions which are used for recreation.
- Develop guiding principles so the industry doesn't guide us; define ahead of time and anticipate where the industry is going.
- It's a challenge to keep up with new inventions; how much money can be spent to keep up.
- Separation for activities exists within the groups themselves not only with the different activities.
- Recreation is booming; we still have open spaces for recreational opportunities.
- More signing and enforcement; more controls are needed.
- Use what we have already; example: repair the forest roads.
- A good way to get feedback would be to put surveys in the local motels.
- Link into the State Parks & Trails Council for new information.
- Use the DNR Lake Finder; that is their most popular DNR site.

- Where do you stop on the web site? Keeping information current is a concern. How soon will the information be posted on the web site?
- The controversial issue is not being brought up; ATVs. ATVs can go anywhere and it will continue.
- We are working on GIS mapping for ATV trails; working with other entities to develop a plan.
- We are working on identifying the inventory; connecting with agencies for inventory. The private sector is an issue.
- The inventory for OHV's is missing; what is out there now? We need to deal with what is out there now. Becker County opted out of the DNR designations. We can't ignore the trails; we have an obligation to deal with them now. Look at the example Beltrami County has for trails.
- Other experiences will be negatively impacted by ATV use.
- Becker County is trying to stay away from single activities and address broad issues; get the process developed. After the plan is in place; what are the hot buttons? The master plan is to identify what needs attention. The plan will go to policy; protecting our resources.
- A decision making document is needed; don't see this yet. When will we establish the criteria?
- The implementation page lists these concerns relative to the document.
- Becker County wants a plan for these problem issues; we have large gaps that the plan needs to address.
- How do we segment activities?
- What will drive these activities?
- To come up with a planning process is the process; how to get there instead of actually getting there.
- We are currently struggling with a strategic approach; how do our parts interact?
- We don't want this plan put on the shelf.
- Internal and external scoping is part of the process; outline of the steering committee and how they will go through the plan.
- We have identified weaknesses; how do we deal with these?
- Plan needs strategies on how to get there; how do we get this information; how do we identify? Through public scoping.
- Perhaps professional help would be valuable so we can all get what we want out of the plan..
- The Park Board requested SRF Consulting give a presentation to the steering committee.
- The State is cutting money; where will Becker County's money go?
- Where does the money from land sales go?
- Where does the money from timber sales go?
- What is the next step?
- Implement a plan to communicate back and forth; there is more work to do.

◆ **Special Interest Group Representatives: Meeting held on 1/19/2010**

Dennis Anderson, Bad Medicine Lake Assoc.
Tracy Bebler, Roamer's 4wd Club
Don Beck, Horse Trails
Dan Berg, Lakecrest Resort
Leonard Bergquist
Ruth Bergquist
Del Bergseth, Parks & Recs
Brennan Borg, Roamers 4wd Club
Les Brennan, Little Toad Lake Assoc.
Dave Bruns, Little Cormorant Lake Assoc.
Doris Crocker, Roamers 4wd Club
Matthew Davis, North County Trail Association
Donna Dustin, Izaak Walton League
Jack Escherich, Campers Cove
Kathy Escherich, Campers Cove
Dale Geritz, Little Toad Lake Campground
Denise Geritz, Little Toad Lake Campground
Barb Halbakken, Lake Detroiters Assoc.
Bill Henke, Izaak Walton League
Alison Heuring, DL 412 BMX
Betty Hochkalter, LGFWS
Dave Hochkalter, Lets Go Fishing
Helen Holmer, Forest Township
Dave LaBarre, ERA Northland Realty
Donald Lawyer, Middle Cormorant Lake Assoc.
Erika Johnson, Natural Innovations
Johnny Johnson, Osage Sportsmans
Linda Johnson, Osage Sportsmans
Dan Josephson, DLHS Ski Team & DL Park Board
Steven Johnson, Roamers 4wd Club
Howard Kluender, Woods & Wheels ATV Club
Bob Link, Turtle Lake Imp. Assoc.
Whitey Mackner, Mounted Posse
Willis Mattison, Becker County Citizens for Responsible Recreation
Carol McCarthy, KDLM
Margaret Metcalf, Middle Cormorant Lake Assoc.
Ken Miosek, Frazee City Council & Parks & Recs Committee
Howard Murrey
Jim Navara, Little Toad Lake Assoc.
Curt Noyes, Long Lake Betterment Assoc.
Peg Olson, Cormorant Lakes Watershed, COLA
Sherwood Olson, Cormorant Lakes Watershed, COLA
Tim Paskey, AmericInn Lodge & Suites
Ellis Peterson, Cormorant Lakes Watershed
Cleone Stewart, DL Chamber
Don Tschudi, Bad Medicine Resort

Scott Tracey, Tracy's RV Park
Jeff Vandestreek, Woods & Wheels ATV Club
Ray Vlasak, North Country Trail & Laurentian Lakes Chapter
Lanny Waalen, Juggler Lake
Jay Weinmann, Roamer's 4wd Club
Dennis Winskowski, DL News
Lorry Zaeske, Cormorant Lakes Sports Club

Comments from Special Interest Group Meeting held on 1/19/2010

- Leonard Bergquist, help the hearing impaired person enjoy recreational activities.
- Dan Berg, LakeCrest Resort, need to identify bike trails; there is a demand for this type of recreation.
- B.C. We have the Heartland Trail in progress but it is years away; needs funding.
- B.C. Volunteers are needed to help with Becker County's recreational ideas.
- Barb Halbakken, Lake Detroiters Assoc., how will web sites connect; cross index; resource management so we don't duplicate efforts.
- B.C. State data reports 67% recreate within 30 minutes of their home.
- Who should we target; preference? Depends upon the activity.
- How do we get these people here?
- Dave Lebarre, ERA Realty, has used our website extensively; wealth of information there. Trails are already cut through the north; minimize cutting up the county for trails.
- Multiple use of trails has been discussed and blocking the county for different types of recreation.
- Woody Olson, Cormorant Lakes Watershed, COLA, private resort organizations need a parallel link; how will we do this?
- B.C. Maybe the Chamber could do the crossing of private and public funds.
- B.C. Need to get it into the plan early on to see if it is possible.
- Ray Vlasak, North Country Trail, would like to add to the bicycle comment; most bicycles are used to get back and forth to somewhere; asphalt trails deteriorate; wide road shoulders are the best; nice to combine trails types and not make new ones.
- Ruth Bergquist, uses her mountain bike on the forest roads; they are not in good shape; need a place to park to use the roads; need a road to get there; improve the roads we already have; the cost would be minimal.
- Willis Mattison, Becker County Citizens For Responsible Recreation; the steering committee has a short time frame to accomplish their goals; will they have enough time to work on this plan?
- B.C. County employees are very good at doing more if it needs to be done; this plan is part of our job and we take it seriously.
- Doris Crocker, Roamers 4 wheel drive club in Fargo, there is a need for off road vehicle recreation close to Fargo; they would use the campgrounds and restaurants in the area; if you manage it well it will help the community.
- B.C. We want to set up a process for groups to request their choice of recreation to be developed.
- Howard Kluender, Wolf Lake ATV Club, need a system to know where to go; need signage; people are asking for maps so they can stay on the trails; needs organization
- Dennis Anderson, Bad Medicine Lake Association, comprehensive maps are needed; don't have any now; riders don't know where they are going; and staging areas for activities are needed.

- Dan Berg, Lakecrest Resort, need to get private and public entities together on one comprehensive site; how do we mix them together on one website; need to keep working towards that goal.
- Matt Davis, North Country Trails, is the outcome of the process to evaluate plans for recreation? There is a conflict between users – motorized and non-motorized; non-motorized recreation users spend more money and we send these people other places.
- B.C. We hope to have that accomplished.
- B.C. We have a process to go through now in Planning and Zoning and it works well; we may assimilate their process for part of this.
- Erica Johnson, Natural Innovations, hiking trails are for our youth; they need a safe place; trails are low maintenance for all to use.
- Bob Shoemaker, he's a tiny component of a big picture; has dog sled teams; uses the snowmobile trails; where is his place to go?
- Lanny Waalen, Juggler Lake, compatibility between groups of recreation users, motorized and non-motorized; doesn't work to combine them; need to be separate; would blocking work?
- Barb Halbakken, Lake Detroiters Association, preservation is a common denominator, promote good use of the land; hard to restore; start before it breaks down; outsiders are not aware of Becker County issues.
- Dave LaBarre, ERA Northland Realty, ATV trails and hunting spots; the trails are already there; no need to make new trails; just make a map and sign them.
- Ray Vlasak, North Country Trail, Laurentian Lakes Chapter, would like to reinforce the separation issue; there are many more non-motorized users; how do you determine the percentage?
- Willis Mattison, Becker County Citizens For Responsible Recreation, we are not the first County to deal with this problem; Wisconsin did an extensive study; ATV's are antagonistic with most activities; special used determine where they should be; isolate them in an area where they don't harm the environment; and separation by proportion should be a high priority.
- B.C. 4 wheel drive vehicles and ATVS are not going away; they need a safe place to go; how do we work together to service our citizens?
- Ruth Bergquist, healthy forests; keep our resources intact or we won't have them for people to use; need low impact recreation on our resources.
- B.C. We have diverse recreational needs.

**Becker County Recreational Plan
Public Informational Meeting Participants: (9/14/2010)**

Aiberman, Don	Nord, Gloria
Anderson, Cyndi	Okeson, Charlie
Anderson, David	Olcott, Todd
Bakker, Art	Peterson, Jerelyn
Berg, Dan	Renner, Todd
Bergquist, Leonard	Ristinen, Carol
Bergquist, Ruth	Ristinen, Les
Bergseth, Del	Savanto, Clarence
Brahmer, Marlys	Schneider, Teresa
Church, Chuck	Schneider, Vince
Davis, Matthew	Scott, Sue
DuBay, Jim	Somdahl, Duane
Erickson, Jamie	Stenseth, Charles
Ferguson, Cathie	Stenseth, Joanne
Gunderson, Judy	Stewart, Cleone
Hoghaug, Randy	Tucker, Rayna
Hopman, Dennis	Veronen, Nancy
Johnson, Deanne	Vlasak, Ray
Johnston, Carrie	Waaen, Lanny
Josephson, Dan	Waaen, Mary
Joy, John	Watson, Tom
Ludtke, Hank	Wiley, Marty
Kluender, Howard	Wilson, Milt
Kovala, Jim	Wisted, Craig
Kunz, Fritz	Wisted, Judy
Leitheiser, Doug	Wohlwend, Joni
Lindstrom, Craig	
Matt, Jed	
Mattison, Willis	
McCarthy, Carol	
Negen, Gary	
Nord, Dick	

Becker County Recreational Plan – Informational Meeting

Synopsis of Oral & Written Comments

(DRAFT) 10/27/2010

Oral comments refer to the Public Information meeting that was held on September 14th. These came in the form of questions seeking clarification during the course of the meeting and comments. The comments from the Public Information meeting have been further pared down to reduce redundancy – since many of the commenter’s provided written comments after the meeting to further clarify their concerns and interests relative to the Recreation Plan/Process.

A summary/list of oral/written comments is available upon request.

27 Letters, 4 oral comments

Note: Each letter may contain multiple comments on different aspects of the Recreational Plan (hereafter referred to as the Plan).

A. Comments on the Inventory (3 respondents):

1. One respondent thought the Plan had an incomplete inventory and provided numerous comments/suggestions/corrections related to the inventory contained within the Plan.
2. DNR comments were specific to the inventory and offered clarification.
3. Another respondent also thought the Plan had an incomplete inventory, in particular as it related to the lack of disclosure of forest roads/trails as part of the inventory.

Steering Committee (SC) comments

The SC has had a discussion on the Inventory contained within the Plan (9/16/10). As the web site amassed more inventory information it supplanted the inventory provided in the Plan - making the inventory in the Plan duplicative/redundant and subject to be outdated rather quickly. The SC has recommended that the inventory detailed in the Plan document along with associated supporting appendixes that detailed inventory information be eliminated from the Plan. Specific changes provided by respondents to the inventory will be cross-referenced with the inventory on the Web site to ensure accuracy and determine if new information should be included.

The County chose not to include undesigned routes/trails as part of the inventory early on in the Plan process, but have included designated trails as part of the County inventory. Currently the SC, Parks and Recreation, and Natural Resources have begun to explore a review process aimed at assessing forest roads/trails and recreational trails (all are considered undesigned) as to condition/use, and proximity to wetlands (as well as exploring other factors such as management, ecological factors, etc.,) as a first step to begin gauging future recreational use/designation.

B. Comments on Trends Data (4 respondents)

Respondents expressed concerns and provided clarification of trend data related to ATV/OHV use detailed under the Implementation section B. Recreational Activities, 1. ATV/OHV's. One respondent noted that "ongoing collaboration will be necessary to reduce confusion for users of public forest lands" per the different classifications that exist between State and County lands outside of state forest boundaries.

Steering Committee (SC) comments

Updated trend information was provided to the SC by both respondents per inquiries with the author (Kelly) of the original trend data. County staff also spoke to Kelly/DNR of the comments on 9/16 to follow up on the information provided at the informational meeting. Staff had utilized an earlier report (2005) and an excerpt from a peer reviewed article (Snyder, 2008) in which the same source had been questioned about ATV trends two years later (2007 quote). Per the County staff call to Kelly to further clarify, he noted that in addition to flat growth predicted for ATV/OHV's - and in general many types of outdoor recreation had seen participatory declines at the State and Federal levels including National Parks. SC recommends removing OHV trend data from this Section/activity as currently listed. Trend data for OHV's provided by respondents will now be listed under Appendix D. Recreational Trends & Drivers. An additional table provided by a respondent which details outdoor recreation participation in Minnesota (2005) will also be included under Appendix D.

C. Comments on County Forest Classification of County Managed Lands (6 respondents)

The majority of respondents expressed specific concerns with the Counties current classification system as it relates to ATV/OHV's use on County managed lands. The rationale provided for changing the classification (open unless posted closed) included better protection of the environment – in particular wetlands were a concern, regulation/enforcement of ATV use, compatibility issues, fairness/balance of recreational uses, and sustainability. One respondent provided various pictures of ATV activity in relation to wetlands and areas with open water as justification of the unworkability of the County's current classification system.

One respondent recommended following a DNR study in which 12% of public lands should be allocated to ATV riding and snowmobiling and 88% should be allocated to the cluster of non-motorized activities. Referring to another table the same study that doubles allocation by hours of use showed 10% of public lands should be allocated to ATV riding and snowmobiling and 90% should be allocated to non-motorized activities. Respondents sought a change in the focus of the plan from motorized to non-motorized recreation.

One respondent wanted all trails open unless otherwise posted.

Steering Committee (SC) comments

As part of the recreational planning process, the SC has developed a recreational review process that provides a means for the County or the public to develop recreational projects involving County managed land. In turn these proposals and the public deliberations on them will have implications for future designation of trails/lands relative to recreational use. While the SC does not anticipate a change to the current classification of County managed lands at this time, it recognizes that recent deliberations by the RAC, Natural Resources Committee, and the County

Board have begun to explore developing criteria and proposing a timeline for assessing County system roads, forest roads/trails, recreational trails, and that classification/designation and protection issues will continue to be part of the mix of issues that are explored and discussed as part of this process.

D. General ATV/OHV related comments (14 respondents)

Respondents echoed many of the same concerns about ATV/OHV's listed under C. on p. 34. They included: incompatibility with motorized recreation, environmental damage, favoritism, invasive species dispersion, environment protection, balanced recreation, unfettered access, accidents/safety concerns, ATV's need restrictions, and wetland damage.

Steering Committee (SC) comments

Environmental concerns per motorized recreation are duly noted. Per the recreational review process, an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW), or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) would be utilized (if required) to address, mitigate, and manage environmental and social impacts/concerns associated with a proposed recreational project on County managed lands.

E. Assessment of County forest roads, trails, and recreational trails (3 respondents)

Respondents requested that the County conduct an assessment of the condition of County forest roads, trails, and recreational trails as soon as possible.

Steering Committee (SC) comments

See Recreation Review Statement under the Implementation Section, B. Recreational Activities, with specific goals and strategies listed under the same section (B.) under 1. ATV/OHV'. SC anticipates that development of an assessment of County forest roads, trails and recreational trails will be a high priority for the RAC. The current Parks and Recreation Committee and the Natural Resources Committee have had recent next step discussions on this issue.

F. Recreational Review Process (3 respondents)

One respondent noted that appendix E. appears to be tailored to the review of project proposals and applications but does not address the review process for reclassification of existing forest roads and recreational trails and that forest trails seem to be omitted from this process but contain some more sensitive areas for sustainability and should be included in the inventory and review process. This respondent also noted that it is unclear what criteria or process will be used to determine sustainability views for existing roads and trails nor does there appear to be any reference of where a citizen could find that criteria. Additionally the respondent noted that there is very little indication of what process the public needs to follow to request or provide input on getting an area closed to motorized use.

Another respondent wondered if a trail proposal were already undergoing the states EAW process, why would it also have to go through the Counties recreational review process?

A third respondent suggested that the County provide some language in its recreational review process that could act as a mechanism for screening all possible forms of recreation for

conformance with the stated vision of the County's Recreational Vision Statement. The respondent offered the following draft language for consideration:

"Any recreational activity that can or has been shown to have potential for significant adverse impact on natural resource assets such as soils, vegetation, wildlife, habitat, water quality, etc. and/or can or has been shown to be incompatible with or antagonistic to other legitimate recreational uses of county managed lands will be scheduled for priority review by the RAC and Planning Commission. The RAC and Planning Commission will be requested to develop such plans and recommend such measures as are found necessary to minimize the adverse environmental and social impacts from such recreational activities. Such control measures as road and trail closures and broad area (zone) closures may be employed. These specific recreational activities may be restricted to only those special recreational areas found intrinsically suitable, are so designated and are required to be specifically designed and monitored as may be found necessary to minimize or mitigate the adverse impacts from the activity. Any such special recreational area will necessarily be limited to facilities where adequate private or public resources are available for enforcement of reasonable rules of use and conduct. The limited areas designated for this type of recreation shall be only of such size and scale as to be justified by a showing of need. The initial creation, expansion or addition to this special recreational area or areas will necessarily follow the project and appropriate environmental review requirements provided for in this plan and applicable state or federal environmental review requirements before being recommended for approval."

Steering Committee (SC) comments

The assessment process as yet to be developed by the Natural Resource Committee and the Recreational Advisory Committee, will develop criteria for assessing the condition of forest roads/trails and recreational trails. The Recreational Advisory Committee will act as a first stop for the public with questions on the recreational review process. Other County resources which will also provide assistance with the review process will be Natural Resources and Planning and Zoning.

Per the second respondent's question, in addition to the EAW, the County review process is necessary because it manages the tax forfeited land and ultimately decides if it will grant the CUP.

The 3rd respondents request has been duly noted and entered above. As stated in the Plan under Implementation Section B. Recreational Review Process "As recreation facilities, trails, or other projects are proposed on County administered lands, they will be reviewed as part of the County's recreational review process as well as the DNR's environmental review process when applicable. Inherent in project proposal review (for all forms of recreation), the Recreational Review Process will be used to evaluate the current recreation facility or trail system and determine if adjustments (reductions, modification, or additions) are needed. As future recreational projects are proposed, the classification/designation of County administered lands (which various recreational projects will utilize) will be reviewed as part of the County's recreational review process." As indicated under Section 3: Plan Implementation, A.1

Recreational Review Process, Recommendation 3., trail development would utilize the MN Trail Planning, Design, and Development Guidelines (MN DNR, 2006) to base its design, management and maintenance of trails as well as any additional modifications the County deems appropriate.

G. Miscellaneous Comments

1. A respondent suggested that it may be premature to indicate selection of a preferred route for the **Heartland Trail** extension proposal.

Steering Committee (SC) comments

The Map in question (Appendix K.) was developed by the DNR as part of its master planning process. To-date the master plan has not been completed, but the Map description does refer to the Heartland Trail Extension as a proposed corridor.

2. A respondent submitted 3 **resolutions from various townships**; two in various states of completion: Round Lake Township and East and West sugar Bush. Only one is dated and signed - Eagle View Township, which opposes any and all proposals that would create a grant-in-aid off-highway vehicle ATV trail anywhere in this Township.

Steering Committee (SC) comments

Duly noted

3. A respondent submitted numerous **photographs** taken from the Local Woods & Wheels website of ATV related activity on various trails and lands - the concern expressed was the incursion of ATVs into wetlands. Another respondent from the Woods and Wheels Club noted the disclaimer on the Woods and Wheels webpage from which earlier pictures had been used as part of the respondents photograph submittal and believed that the pictures were taken out of context (Woods N Wheels response noted that some pictures were taken in another state, some were taken on private property and some of the trail problems were not started by ATVs but by larger vehicles and once there grew with usage).

Steering Committee (SC) comments

Photographs and concerns have been submitted into the record per the respondents' request and are duly noted.

4. Two respondents spoke to the issue of **ATV noise**. One respondent seeks to mitigate the decibel level of ATVs "by not using loud pipes". Another respondent seeks to increase buffer zones to protect non motorized uses from ATV noise. The respondent suggested when feasible that a 1/2 mile buffer between the North Country Trail and any new ATV trails should be considered. The respondent also suggests a one-mile buffer for ATV trails in relation to the wilderness area of Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge.

Steering Committee (SC) comments

The only place in the State that tests the decibel levels for ATV's (which must be tested prior to using the park) is at the DNR's Gilbert facility. State law sets restrictions on ATV noise/decibel levels. Local law enforcement does have the means of testing for decibel level violations. The

second respondent's request would be considered as part of the recreational review process and utilization of the DNR's trail planning, design, and development guidelines as well as applicable County Planning and Zoning ordinances and GIS (buffer issue). New Mexico's Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Study (2008) mentions a 500 meter buffer to mitigate noise impact for humans and wildlife (conservative estimate). Snyder's Ecological Criteria etc., A GIS approach toward ATV Planning, 2008, (p. 2) notes that surprisingly little research has been done to estimate the distance at which ATVs can be heard or the impact of such noise." One study noted in the Snyder paper (Preisler, 2006) had looked at responses of Elk to ATV noise and found increased probability of flight at distances of up to 1000 meters. The Snyder paper also mentioned that a study by Heath (1974) had noted that it is difficult to accurately quantify the sound effects of off-road vehicles because decibel levels from vehicles vary with temperature, wind, ground conditions, and vegetation.

5. Two respondents spoke to **Bird Watching**. One recommendation was to help promote the Pine to Palm birding Trail and other initiatives like the Detroit Lakes birding hotspots map. This respondent also wondered if the County was going to consider managing some of the tax forfeited lands specifically for non-game bird habitat projects. Another respondent liked the fact that the recreation plan had a goal for protecting bird habitat and encouraged that associated activities for this goal include roads, drainage ditches, and recreational projects. This respondent further suggested a variety of different partners to help.

Steering Committee (SC) comments

The Recreational Advisory Committee will continue to explore goals/strategies as part of their review and prioritization of recreational activities/opportunities in the County. The County's website provides linkages to the Chamber per its Pine to Palm birding efforts.

8. One respondent wanted additional strategies and for there to be support for existing efforts by interest groups to develop more **hiking trails** - explore matching funding from County timber sales proceeds and/or the recreational account. Another respondent thought there could be an opportunity to develop additional spur trails off the North Country Trail and that other local trails should be considered as mixed use trails for hiking, walking, and biking.

Steering Committee (SC) comments

The Recreational Advisory Committee will explore goals/strategies as part of their review and prioritization of recreational activities/opportunities in the County. There is a goal in the plan to explore the use of existing trails for recreational opportunities.

9. **Petition** requesting Commissioners change 05-09-2A removing the provision that allows ATVs to be ridden on all County managed lands and allow the recreation planning process be used to establish suitable areas or trails for ATV recreation.

Steering Committee (SC) comments

Duly noted – Commissioners have received the petition.

10. One respondent wondered how the recreational advisory committee was going to evaluate and recommend recreational projects without knowing what the **recreational needs** are.

Steering Committee (SC) comments

The assessment process will help determine existing trail conditions and future use. The County's Recreational Review process will also explore recreational needs in relation to the proposals brought forward.

11. One respondent noted the **narrow strip of high ground** that runs through **North and South round Lake Township** would expect that only **compatible** recreation be planned for this area.

Steering Committee (SC) comments

The assessment process will help determine existing trail conditions and future use. The County's Recreational Review process will help explore compatibility issues related to recreational use.

12. Per the **inventory** - one respondent sought the inclusion of **tribal areas** and **cultural attractions** as part of the inventory.

Steering Committee (SC) comments

Under Sec. 3 Plan Implementation, A. County Capacity Initiatives, 6. Coordination & Promotion of Regional Recreational Assets, White Earth cultural tourism is mentioned and is also listed under Resources. The inventory will be updated as additional recreational information is forthcoming.

13. One respondent wanted more public parking provided near the County 29 crossing of the **Otter Tail River** as well as at the Wannager Bridge Road for **canoeing**.

Steering Committee (SC) comments

Duly noted. All comments provided herein, will be provided to the RAC for consideration as it revisits the Recreational Activities section of the Plan.

14. A respondent expressed impatience – the lack of implementing a plan for all outdoor activities has been going on to long, mentioned the multitude of different uses that public land is being used in winter and summer and sought better signage for all seasons and maps for Becker County non winter trails.

Steering Committee (SC) comments

Duly noted. Signage/maps will be explored relative to the Trails Assessment process. See Steering Committee Comments under E. p. 12.

**Public Comments, Q & A from the Becker County Park & Recreation Ordinance
Public Hearing (6:30 P.M. May 19, 2011)**

1	Barb Halbakken-Fishburg	Q:	Are there any lakes attached to our county parks?
		A:	Yes (Dunton Locks, Long Lake, Bass Lake, for example)
2	Lanny Waalen	Q:	You said you repealed the Motor Vehicle Ordinance; what and why was it repealed? And how do I find a copy of them?
		A:	The new ordinance would replace the previous Motor Vehicle one. It is currently not repealed, but would be if this ordinance, as
		A:	proposed, is motioned and carried. We have copies we can get you of the ordinance
3	Lanny Waalen	Q:	What is considered a Motor Vehicle
		A:	(definition was read from the ordinance) "Any self-propelled vehicle including, but not limited to, automobiles, trucks, dune buggies, minibikes, motorcycles, trail bikes, and all terrain vehicles, pursuant to Minnesota Rules 6100.0500, Subpart 7, but not including snowmobiles.
4	Kay Grignon	Q:	Do you have a map that shows all these trails and what defines a trail
		A:	The term 'trail' is not currently defined, so we will recommend that the committee goes back and looks at clearly defining that.
		A:	A map of the designated trails is available on our website.
		Q:	I have a problem with the so-called 'trails' that people go out and make themselves.
		A:	Guy will be discussing this later in the presentation
5	Tim Holzkamm	Q:	I have a copy of the ordinance form 10/10 that has more information in it, with this new one, is this be all that is going into the ordinance?
		A:	The new one is a more condensed version.
6	Tim Holzkamm	Q:	In regards to vehicles, any problem with handicap accessibility?
		A:	We are looking at making it ADA and the current plan doesn't cover that.
7	Barb Halbakken-Fishburg	Q:	Any objection to instead using the wording 'boat/watercraft' as that is what is used by state statute; I didn't know what the intent was as regards to what equipment was being mentioned. Also apply to the aquatic invasive species law.
		A:	We can look into that further.
8	Kay Grignon	Q:	There is nothing about aquatic invasive species in the ordinance, shouldn't there be?
		A:	(asked the crowd to raise their hands if this was a concern and about 12 people raised their hands) We can look into that further
9	Barb Halbakken-	Q:	I am wondering if indication or signage of aquatic invasive species at the public accesses would be good.

	Fishburg	A:	We can look into that further.
10	Deanna Johnston	Q:	Is there currently no signage? (for aquatic invasive species)
		A:	There is some, for example out at Dunton Locks.
11	Tim Holzkamm	Q:	Depending on the reading of the ordinance (in regards to wild mushroom picking) I am concerned that this would prohibit this activity.
		A:	We can look into that further.
12	Kay Grignon	Q:	What is a County Recreation Area?
		A:	(definition was read from the plan) "Any land and/or water area designated and posted by the County Board where the main purpose is outdoor recreation."
13	Barb Halbakken-Fishburg	Q:	For Item C (peace officer) area, would that include managed county public water access?
		A:	(reviewed the different definitions in the ordinance) It appears they would be included
		Q:	If that were the case, any designated county employee would be able to enforce aquatic invasive species law?
		A:	Would need to refer to the County Attorney but would appear so long as they are a 'designated county employee'. Not every county employee would be designated with this responsibility.
14	Lanny Waalen	Q:	Is the ordinance not a portion/part of the rec plan?
		A:	It does fall under Appendix H of the Recreation Plan. The ordinance is one leg, the legal portion. The other leg is the Recreation Plan.
	Larry Knutson		What Barb talked about, for the employee duties – only pertains to the ordinance. Aquatic invasive species is not currently in the ordinance so as it is now, could not enforce unless it was added to the final ordinance.

Public Comments Submitted in Writing for the Informational Meeting for the Recreation Plan held after the Public Hearing for the Park and Recreation Ordinance - 5/19/2011

**Becker County Recreational Plan Information Meeting
7:30 P.M. May 19, 2011**

Comments submitted in writing that were read aloud by Tom:

1	Barb Halbakken-Fishburg	Q:	Thanks to everyone who has worked on the website, it is inviting. Was wondering if it makes sense to add fishing to the front page? Have a lot of anglers coming to the area.
		A:	Was on there but was removed. It was left out except boat access points. We can look at it again.
2	Barb Halbakken-Fishburg	Q:	On the review process flow chart, it may be helpful to include outside water inductions like DNR, Watershed, etc?
		A:	We are required by law to notify them.
		Q:	There may be things related to DNR that should be communicated to them.
		A:	There is currently a process in place. Guy will cover this more.
3	Barb Halbakken-Fishburg	Q:	May be beneficial to work with DNR to evaluate the need for public accesses, do we need more?
		Q:	Would also be beneficial to have a list of the lakes over 100 acres and were the access are to these lakes.
		A:	The website does have public accesses listed.
		A:	Can look into evaluating the public accesses more.
4	Tim Gordon		In regards to the aquatic invasive species, there are very specific state laws that are on the books. An ordinance would not be more restrictive than a state law. So, since there are laws already in regards to this, the ordinance does not need to focus on this area. Law enforcement has the authority to enforce the state aquatic invasive species laws.
5	Lanny Waalen		Because of the numbers here tonight, I only can assume that means most of us agree that the prime motivator of this proposed Rec Plan was to deal with the ATV issue. I have the belief that the issue should have been addressed on its own, as it is completely different and foreign to all other forms of recreation. I wish to clarify a few misconceptions: I do not object to anyone using an ATV because of physical limitations, I do not object for anyone getting the mail, visiting a neighbor, or for that matter getting a beer. But there is an issue. It became increasingly obvious from the objection of the 70 mile proposal by so many factions of the population, and continued through the Skid Steer fiasco used to promote this activity, and to the destruction to ditches, trails, wetlands and private property.

			<p>There is an issue. We all will probably agree that there are too many laws and regulations. We tend to blame the lawyers, the politicians, and yes the environmentalist and tree huggers. However, we are the cause, because we generally are either completely unaware or just don't care about our responsibility to others, our surroundings or our environment. I once again have read the 85 or so pages of this plan and still cannot see any evidence of it addressing the ATV issue with any meaningful, enforceable ordinances. Except for a vague Needs Assessment requirement. I only hope that you as County decision makers will not fall into the same trap that most State and Federal politicians do and realize there is a drastic difference between a 'need' and a 'want'; especially from a small portion of the population whose 'needs' have disproportionate negative impact on the majority, its visitors, its natural resources and it's future.</p>
6	Kay Grignon	Q:	In regards to Patty's presentation about the review process; did the ATV clubs do that too? It appears their needs are being met. Do you close all trails while you assess the trails?
		A:	The Park Board did have conversations with the ATV clubs. Classification was put in place. The ATV needs assessment allows them to look at the different factors. We are still in discussion.
		Q:	How long is the discussion going to be?
		A:	We want to get a draft out soon, we are talking months not years.
7	Rayna Tucher	Q:	Out at Ice Cracking Lodge and we get a lot of cross country bicyclists looking for camping options and there are not many in the county. It is frustrating that we do not have much camping for these individuals; we need more. Also, in regards to the ATV issue, I am for ATV's and it is great that there is a needs assessment going on. There are federal grants available to help with this that the county should take a look at. Snowmobile trails are important too; we need to come together and find a happy medium.
	Larry Knutson		In regards to Lanny's comments, ATV was a catalyst for the Recreational Plan which does set up a process to deal with these issues.
	Gerry Schram		The plan is not the bible but a living document that will change.

Public Written Comments sent via letter or email provided to County staff prior to and after the Public Hearing on the Parks and Recreation Ordinance and the Informational Meeting for the Recreation Plan - 5/19/2011

May 18, 2011

Becker County Commissioners and Becker County Administrators,

What community values and standards do we want to support for the future of our children and grandchildren? How and when do we make a commitment to teach and to model sustaining the natural resources? How and when do we support and teach responsible recreation as stewardship of the natural resources for the future of all recreation users?

We need to have a plan that will use the science that is available to protect, preserve, enhance, and restore the incredible natural resources in the Becker County public lands, address the destruction problems that exist on the public owned and managed lands, and generate a master plan for the next five years of recreational use in Becker County based upon unbiased data. In my opinion, to accomplish this we need to:

1. **rescind the unfair Becky County resolution** that gives preferential unlimited recreational use of the public lands to motorized recreation - this is no longer safe, responsible, or respectful and is costing the taxpayers more than they can afford.
2. **base the recreational planning on a unbiased formal survey-based needs assessment** - it may cost up front but in the long run you save money because you are investing limited resources in what input you are receiving from the public. You will save money because you will be using public input from an unbiased formal survey-based needs assessment that will guide the county leaders in prioritizing activities. It helps leaders prepare a Becker County Recreational Master Plan. A five-year master plan that can pass the test of fiscal and environmental responsibility based upon public input. Are we **moving forward** or are we choosing **being far removed**?

We cannot afford to keep repairing the damages and funding the costs of recreational activities that are not healthy for the environment, wildlife, flora, and especially not healthy for the people.

There are many public and private entities that use unbiased needs assessments to help guide them. The NRPA (National Recreation and Parks Association) website has an incredible amount of information and resources to help get things started.

I visited with a Parks and Recreation administrator from a large community in the region that just finished a needs assessment. The results will be published in May. They hired a consultant who has assisted over one hundred entities in the needs assessment process. He is nationally known and respected for his work.

As I read about his work, another important and crucial fact became apparent. Formal, unbiased, needs assessment data collection and the responsible use of this data helps the county, non-profits, and private groups have the kind of data they need to solicit grant monies and other funding sources.

Why and what are we waiting for? Goggle [Collecting Citizen Input by Dr. Ananda Mitra](#) and see.

Sincerely, Cathie Ferguson, Round Lake, May 18, 2011

From: Howard Hansen [mailto:howardh@howardhansenconsulting.com]

Sent: Wednesday, May 18, 2011 10:03 AM

To: Tom C. Mortenson

Cc: Barb Halbakken; Curtis D. Jundt; Dick Hecock; Julie Herman ; Mike Metelak ; Olson, Laurie ; Rene'e Alsop

Subject: Comment to Becker County Parks and Recreation Ordinance

Dear Mr. Mortenson

As President of Lake Detroiters Association representing property owners and other interested stakeholders on and around Detroit Lakes, I offer the following observations regarding the proposed Becker County recreation plan and draft ordinance.

- (1) Tourism and recreation are essential to the economic health of our community. With our lakes and rivers a primary source of recreational source of activity, we believe the plan must include a goal of protecting and improving public waters.
- (2) The recreational plan includes a number of recreational activities but does not specifically include/address some key reasons many come to recreate in Becker County. (Page 2/Section 2).

For example:

- (a) Recreational boating
- (b) Open Water Fishing
- (c) Ice Fishing
- (d) Sport Fishing Tournaments

Special events like:

- (a) Water Carnival - which includes "Quake the Lake"
 - (b) Fourth of July - Fireworks on the lake
- (3) A recreation plan which promotes Becker County Public waters must certainly address Aquatic Invasive Species with emphasis on personal responsibility for management and control. This should specifically emphasize public awareness, prevention, enforcement and decontamination components.
 - (4) We recommend that Section 13, entitled, Public Water Access, expand its goal component to include focus on prevention and management of the spread of aquatic invasive species
 - (4) Enforcement of the ordinance does not appear to include providing additional resources for to meet the objectives of the ordinance.

Although we did not see mention of Lake Associations or Becker County COLA, we would like to be included in the plan as resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft plan and ordinance. We are open to any opportunity to meet and discuss how these components can be incorporated into a more complete Recreational Plan and Ordinance.

Respectfully

Howard Hansen

Lake Detroiters Association

P.O. Box 1310

Detroit Lakes, MN 56502

From: Tera Guetter [mailto:tera.guetter@arvig.net]
Sent: Thursday, May 19, 2011 9:25 AM
To: Tom C. Mortenson
Cc: Patty L. Swenson
Subject: PRWD - Draft Becker County Recreation Plan - Public Comments

May 19, 2011

Tom Mortenson
Becker County Administrator

Sent Via Email

Re: Becker County Recreation Plan

Dear Tom:

On behalf of all the Pelican River Watershed District, I'd like to comment on the draft Recreation Plan dated April 11, 2011.

There is much to celebrate in this plan, and we appreciate the staff and citizen time and energy that went into creating it. We are concerned that in a County which is heavily dependent upon lake-based activities for its economic well-being, the plan gives insufficient attention to lake recreation, including recreational boating (including sailing and water skiing), diving, ice-fishing, fishing tournaments, and so on. And there is little attention given to the threats to our lakes' water quality, from nutrient runoff, shoreline erosion, destruction of shoreline habitat, and aquatic invasive species.

While several agencies are mentioned as important by name, the Pelican River Watershed is not mentioned as a "player" or as a member of the Recreational Advisory Committee. Indeed, PRWD has major statutory responsibilities and management tools for understanding, preserving and managing water quality, including AIS, for more than twenty of the County's important recreational lakes.

We see this plan draft as a good start. We would be pleased to participate in its improvement as we head towards adoption of both the plan itself, and the ordinances which will implement it.

Sincerely,

Tera L. Guetter
Administrator

May 19, 2011

Tom Mortenson
Becker County Administrator

Sent Via Email

Re: Becker County Recreation Plan

Dear Tom:

On behalf of all the members of the Becker County Coalition of Lake Associations, I'd like to personally thank you for attending our meeting last month and for graciously addressing the members at the conclusion of the meeting. We look forward to working closely with you on issues affecting Becker County's waters in the future. You and the commissioners are always welcome at our meetings.

Thank you too for the opportunity to comment on the draft Recreation Plan dated April 11, 2011. As president of the Becker County Coalition of Lake Associations (COLA) and as senior advisor to the Pelican River Watershed District, my comments focus primarily on areas affecting how the public uses Minnesota's lakes and waters.

Though tourism and recreation historically have been and will continue to be critical to the County's economic well-being, the Rec plan as drafted fails to consider the very large threats posed by aquatic invasive species (AIS). Moreover, the plan does not acknowledge some of the important players in managing the County's recreational resources – Becker County COLA, Pelican River Watershed District and the many individual lake associations across Becker County. Furthermore, the plan gives insufficient and incomplete attention to water-related recreation activities. Finally, the Ordinance growing from the plan fails to include specific provisions for protecting the County's waters from AIS. This letter addresses each of these points in greater detail.

1. The plan does not contain a goal or any strategies focused on tourism and recreation as being the single most important driving force in Becker County and Minnesota. Lakes and other waters are what people primarily come to Becker County to enjoy. Therefore, COLA recommends that the County add a goal of ensuring our economic health by doing everything possible to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS) into Becker County waters. As supporting evidence of the need for this goal we offer:
 - The Vision Statement (pg 4) expresses a desire for “recreational sustainability of county-administered lands by protecting natural resources and balancing recreational activities among all user groups.”
 - The county's comprehensive plan also cited (pg 4) states “recreational pursuits define and improve our area's quality of life and make it a desirable place to live, work and play. Recreation and tourism provide important economic activity within the county.”
 - Becker County's website capture (pg 6) says, “Recreation... a very popular word here in Becker County. With abundant lakes, streams, forests... Becker County offers some of the best outdoor recreational opportunities you can find.”
 - The County's Comp Plan makes numerous references to protecting, enhancing and restoring habitat to support fish, protect watersheds and enforcement of rules and ordinances that “protect habitat, fish and wildlife...” (see pg 45)
 - The Comp Plan also prioritizes economic development goals (pg. 46) of “promoting tourist and recreational assets” and “investment in infrastructure to support industries and diversity in its economy, with concern for environmental quality.” Specifically, that strategy includes “maintaining a balanced set of economic development priorities” including tourism and recreation, management of natural resources.

The specific strategies COLA recommends for inclusion in this goal are:

- Educating Becker County property owners and visitors on the spread of AIS.
- Promotion of Becker County as taking strong steps to prevent the spread of AIS by implementing solutions to prevent the spread of AIS.
- Forming a partnership with Becker County COLA, the Pelican River Watershed District, and individual lake associations to develop and implement AIS-related plans, strategies and activities for enforcement, education, decontamination. The need for AIS education is great and Becker County's economic health and the future of our lakes is at stake.

2. The Rec Plan includes many references to specific recreation groups, government agencies, and special-interest groups all primarily aimed at land usage and very few that focus on water usage. The plan does not cite Becker County Coalition of Lake Associations (COLA), individual lake associations such as Lake Detroiters or the Melissa/Sally Association, or any watershed districts, in particular the Pelican River Watershed District. It is COLA's recommendation that the plan be amended to include all of these resources as they relate to any water use activities. Our support for this recommendation is:

- Initiative 1 - The Recreational Review Process proposed (pg 7) and flow chart on (pg 54) do not include any representation by outside water-related organizations such as the DNR, Pelican River Watershed District, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, COLA or individual lake associations.
- Initiative 2 - The Recreational Advisory Committee proposed (pg 9) also does not include any reference to water-usage organizations being involved.
- Initiative 5 - The Land Managers Meetings (pg 12) omit water-related agencies as part of the group but yet cite cooperation, coordination and protecting natural resources as rationale.
- Initiative 6 - Coordination and Promotion of Regional Recreation Assets (pg 13) notes many different community organizations from M-State to the Chamber and White Earth as important players in this effort and yet our lakes and waters are completely left out of the initiative. Any initiative that leaves out the primary reason people come to Becker County -- to enjoy our lakes -- is downplaying the vital role of our public waters winter and summer.

The specific strategies that COLA recommends are:

- Each of these initiatives should be re-evaluated with a specific focus on how water-related activities and organizations such as those mentioned above can be incorporated into the plan. The leadership of COLA and our individual lake associations would welcome the opportunity to provide input in this area. I suspect the Pelican River Watershed District and the Soil & Water Conservation District would welcome the opportunity as well.
- Section B (pg 14) in particular the Land Management and Recreation Review Statements) should be amended to include water resource agencies and organizations.

3. The plan contains a long list of various specific recreational options, most of which are land activities. It is COLA's recommendation that this list be expanded to include both summer and winter water-related activities including recreational boating, ice fishing, tournament fishing, water-skiing, personal watercraft, sailing, and diving. Our support for this recommendation is:

- The County's website promotes "abundant lakes, streams..." (pg 6)
- Appendix D (pg 48) cites both kayaking and visiting water as some of the fastest-growing outdoor recreation activities.
- Among the activities increasing in participation are motor boating (pg 49).
- After walking/hiking, water-related activities are four of the top six activities Minnesotans participate in (pg 50).

The specific strategies COLA recommends are:

- Immediately expand the County's website to include boating and other water-based recreational activities.
- Expand the draft Rec Plan "Recreational Activities" (pgs 15-25) to include these specific items listed above as part of the inventory.

- Each water-based activity listed should include as resources these particular agencies and organizations, just as the County included bicycling clubs, special interest groups and sportsman's clubs as resources under other activities.
 - Item 5 (pg 18) seems to limit opportunities for canoeing/kayaking and tubing to the Otter Tail River when all of these activities are regularly done on all Minnesota waters.
 - Item 9 - Fishing (pg 20) presents the County with an opportunity to incorporate aquatic invasive species education and prevention as a specific strategy to protect this activity for our future.
 - Item 13 - Public Water Access (pg 22) should be retitled Boating so that the County is referring to the activity and not the means of getting to the activity. Every other recreational activity on this list is identified as what the activity is -- bicycling, bird-watching and hunting. A person can not go "public water access". They go boating.
 - Item 13 also should include as an important goal prevention of the spread of aquatic invasive species. There are numerous strategies to include in this section including self-contained/portable decontamination stations, bait disposal receptacles, education and inspections.
 - Item 13 should also be expanded to include all water agencies and organizations as mentioned above.
4. The County Parks and Recreation Ordinance makes specific references to conduct in various areas, including public waters (pg. 76). It is COLA's recommendation that the ordinance be amended to include specific Minnesota laws regarding aquatic invasive species. These laws pertain to inspection, bait disposal, removing drain plugs, draining live wells and other provisions to prevent the spread. Our support for this recommendation is:
- The ordinance includes very specific references to all manner of prohibited behaviors ranging from the need to wear clothing when swimming (pg 75) to prohibiting the removal of flowers (pg 75). It therefore seems logical to cite all applicable laws regarding the one thing that has the potential to devastate our waters -- aquatic invasive species.
 - Inclusion of AIS in the Ordinance also provides the Sheriff's department with the capability to educate and enforce these laws (pg 77).

When I reviewed Appendix A citing all those who participated in public meetings, I couldn't help but be impressed by the many individuals representing lake associations who attended. In offering these comments, I believe I have accurately captured the concerns and recommendations of all members of the Becker County Coalition of Lake Associations.

In closing, I'd like to thank the County Commission and all Becker County Staff who contributed to the development of the Recreation Plan. COLA and our individual lake associations look forward to working closely with you to move both the Recreation Plan and Ordinance closer to being approved and to playing a vital role in its implementation in the years to come.

Sincerely,

Dick Hecock
 President
 Becker County COLA

From: Terry Kalil
Date: May 19, 2011 1:40:14 AM CDT
To: Terry Kalil
Subject: Becker County Draft Recreation Plan and Ordinance

To the Commissioners:

Due to out-of-town commitments, I am unable to be present at the public hearing on the draft Recreation Plan and Ordinance. I appreciate the opportunity to provide the written comments which follow.

1. Tourism and recreation are central to Becker County's economic health. A goal of the Rec Plan should explicitly state the vital role of recreational opportunities to Becker County's economy and acknowledge the businesses dependent on recreation. (p 4)
2. Becker County is the "412 lakes area" yet the Rec Plan throughout is very light on water-related recreational activities. Perhaps an assumption was made that because the waters belong to all of Minnesota they shouldn't be included in a county plan, but it is my opinion that Becker County does not have the luxury of relying on the state to promote us. Our greatest asset is our lakes, they are the reason most people first come here, and Becker County should do everything possible to incorporate every water-based recreation in the Rec Plan. (p 6 and throughout)
3. The "Plan Implementation" section says it addresses "internal capacity issues" but fails to even mention the human resources needed to implement and enforce this plan. Throughout the plan a County Parks and Recreation Department is referenced and yet, to my knowledge, no such department exists today. The plan does not include references to creating this department. At present Becker County does not even have a Natural Resources Manager, another vacancy not addressed by the plan. To adopt this plan and ordinance without providing dedicated human resources whose sole responsibility is parks and recreation is to make this entire exercise futile. Without a professional Parks & Recreation manager and staff, this plan can not possibly be implement -- especially when duties are split between 3 managers who have other full-time responsibilities and who don't have excess capacity either personally or in their department to execute this plan.
4. The Recreational Review Process (p 7) does not include any outside agencies including Watershed Districts, Soil & Water Conservation Districts. Other organizations including Becker County Coalition of Lake Associations or individual lake associations are also not included. The process outlined is complex, detailed and will require great scrutiny. What resources does our current Zoning Department have to assess these plans? Do they currently have excess capacity that is available for this additional work?
5. The Recreational Advisory Committee (p9) does not include a single representative of a water-resource agency or organization, yet, water recreation activities make up the vast majority of recreational activities in Becker County. Boating, fishing and other water activities are among our most popular recreation activities (see pg 50) and should be afforded a role in this committee.
6. The Land Managers Meeting (p 12) does not mention a single water-resource manager yet professes a desire to protect natural resources.
7. The Plan proposes a recreation ordinance (p 12) that does not incorporate regulations regarding aquatic invasive species yet it specifies that swimwear must be worn. Zebra mussels alone will cost Becker County millions, these regulations can not be omitted. While not in favor of nude swimming, the potential harm to our economy of a nude swimmer is negligible.
8. An ordinance without providing resources for enforcement is just a piece of paper. Does the Sheriff's Department have resources to enforce these proposed ordinances?

9. While "Regional Recreational Assets" lists the Holmes Center and M-State as part of the infrastructure, it does not include those specific organizations as resources (p 13-14). It seems redundant to state that Becker County Coalition of Lake Associations (COLA) and individual lake associations should also be included if we are to realize our true potential as a recreational destination.

10. The Rec Plan professes that canoeing, kayaking and tubing are primarily confined to the Otter Tail River when, in fact, those activities occur on every single lake. (p 18)

11. The Rec Plan does not mention snowshoeing as a winter recreation activity (p 19) yet it is enjoyed by nearly the same number of Minnesotans as horseback riding (p 50). As an avid snow shoe enthusiast, I recommend that this activity be included with cross country skiing although the two can not share the same trails.

12. The fishing data (p 20) makes a point of fewer licenses being issued but fails to acknowledge that total expenditures and average expenditures/angler have increased. This fact may outweigh the need to invest in promoting fishing awareness locally as a strategy.

13. "Public Water Access" (p 22) is not a recreational activity -- boating, swimming, fishing, tubing, scuba diving, sailing are. More important, any discussion of public water access should include strong language relating to aquatic invasive species education, containment and other aggressive action to prevent the spread of AIS. Will Becker County invest in decontamination stations, bait disposal stations, boat inspections, conservation officers or public awareness/education campaigns? Before Becker County invest in more public accesses, I strongly urge the Commission to invest in protecting the public waters we have that are at risk today. Whether we like it or not, flowering rush is here and zebra mussels are knocking at our door from nearby Pelican Lake. The Pelican River Watershed District is one of Minnesota's leading agencies in this area yet they are not mentioned even once in the entire Rec Plan. Becker County can not afford to rely on the DNR -- we have to protect ourselves.

14. Scenic Byways (p 23) should include partnerships with other areas such as Hubbard County which are also part of the Scenic Byway system.

15. Wildlife & Natural Areas (p 24) does not mention Sucker Creek Preserve located right in Detroit Lakes or Hubble Pond near Tamarac Refuge. In addition, the Frazee School District's School Forest is a unique resource.

16. Given how prominent the discussion of snowmobile and ATV trails is in Becker County, I was shocked to learn that roughly 10% of Minnesotans participate in these activities. (p 50) Many, many other recreational activities are enjoyed by far larger segments of the population yet they aren't even mentioned in this plan -- where is discussion of tennis courts, ball fields, golf courses, hockey and ice skating arenas, or swimming pools?

17. After reviewing the draft rec project application (p 55 - 66), I would recommend that this document be tested with an actual proposal and willing organization that hopes to execute a rec project in Becker County. My hope would be that the goal is to encourage recreational project applications, not discourage them by making the application so complex and unfriendly that it sends a message that Becker County isn't interested in hearing new ideas for recreation. Were the applications of other government units evaluated before this document was created? Has any feedback been obtained on it? I encourage the County Commission to review this document thoroughly before adopting it -- or do as I did, I tried to complete it for a snowshoe trail in Shell Lake Township near my home. You won't be receiving it anytime soon as the application overwhelmed and discouraged me from investing time, energy or money in the project.

18. Appendix F is a survey of recreational activities (p 68). What will be done with this information? What resources are being dedicated to incorporating information gathered into the county's website? Will a cover letter be sent with it? Is there a deadline for responding? How often will it be updated? It asked for driving directions from nearest town. Perhaps all directions should begin at a central point so they are consistent. For example, if a destination is in northeast Becker County and the directions begin in Park Rapids, does a visitor have to first travel to Park Rapids to then understand where to go next? Sounds silly but not everyone has GPS or understands how Becker County roads are laid out. I suggest that all directions begin in the county seat. This survey could generate a mountain of data that, if not promptly incorporated into the website, will create a negative perception in the minds of those who completed the survey.

19. The proposed ordinance (p 75) makes it illegal to "kill, trap or disturb any species of wildlife" in a designated park, recreation area or limited use area. Is it Becker County's intention to ban fishing? Will trapping by licensed trappers now be illegal? Is this provision in harmony with applicable state law?

20. Enforcement of this ordinance (p 78) includes conservation officers (DNR employees) as having the ability to enforce local ordinances. Does the DNR permit these officers to do this activity? I ask because I'd like to know now if our DNR conservation officers who are few and too far between will be further stretched by this provision. Has the DNR signed-off on expanding their duties?

21. Finally, two years after attending the public meeting on proposed ATV trails in northeast Becker County that was the genesis for this Rec Plan, I am discouraged by the plan's failure to deal with the issue. Using the plan's data (p 50), ATVs are used by 10% of the population yet Becker County has devoted far more resources to not addressing this issue than it has to other recreational activities that are enjoyed by many more Minnesotans. When will Becker County finally deal with this issue? I ask because I'm tired of the damage, the noise and the trash they leave behind.

In closing, I'd like to thank the many staff members who stepped outside their normal responsibilities to undertake a monumental job. I urge the County Commission to not adopt the plan or the ordinance until public comments can be processed and incorporated into a document that addresses the issues raised by the public.

Sincerely,

Terry Kalil

May 19th

The recreation plan does not adequately address the biggest issue with outdoor recreation in Becker County - damage to our public lands resulting from unmanaged OHV use. This issue was the impetus for the County embarking on the plan and, yet, the plan only proposes to address ATVs at some point in the near future through the RAC. There are very few details about how this citizen-led group will deal with this issue when the County staff couldn't make headway on it in repeated attempts. Meanwhile, ATVs continue to negatively impact the resources and other users of the County lands thanks to the Co. Board resolution that gave them unfettered access.

This situation is an embarrassment to Becker County residents. Becker County needs to go back to the drawing board and adequately address OHV impacts through a revised Recreation Plan developed with a professional consultant who is knowledgeable and experienced in recreation planning. The motto "You get what you pay for" played out in this case...Becker County was too cheap to hire a consultant and they ended up with a plan that does not adequately address the single biggest issue facing it.

Thanks,
Matthew Davis
DL

May 19, 2011

Tom Mortenson
Becker County Administrator

Sent to tcmorte@co.becker.mn.us

Re: Becker County Recreation Plan

I have several concerns about the draft Recreation Plan dated April 11, 2011.

- According to statistics compiled from the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association 2009-2010 National Pet Owners Survey, 39% of U.S. households own at least one dog. Many people like to exercise with their pets. I would like to see an area where swimming is permitted for dogs and a designated dog park. I did not see this addressed at all in the draft.
- Invasive species are a real threat to our recreation in Becker County. Under Parks & Recreation Goals (adopted by Board) you list
 - The Parks Dept. will upgrade its public accesses
 - The Parks Dept. will fully evaluate its equipment needsThis should specifically include equipment to wash boats coming from contaminated lakes and include signs to alert boaters to the threat of aquatic invasive species.
- I am opposed to the use of OHV use in damp areas and wooded sites. Off-highway vehicles cause "undue damage" to the environment as a consequence of the pollution and soil compaction. Read the University of Minnesota publication BU-07400 on soil

compaction and you will find what farmers have known for years... that “deep compaction is difficult to eliminate and may permanently change the soil structure”. Soil compaction impedes plant growth by not allowing soil to conduct water, nutrients and air that is necessary for root activity. It will kill native plants while inviting tough invasive weeds to take their place. As a Becker County Master Gardener, I would like to see trails only in areas where they will not affect our beautiful woodland areas.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Recreation Plan.

Sincerely,

Marietta Keenan
Rochert, MN

CITIZEN COMMENTS
ON
BECKER COUNTY RECREATION PLAN AND PLANNING PROCESS
And DRAFT ORDINANCE
by
WILLIS MATTISON
Osage, Minnesota
May 27, 2011

Have reviewed the latest draft of Becker Counties Recreation Plan I have the following comments:

1. The plan lacks sophistication, professionalism, detail, is poorly organized, is difficult to read and understand;
2. The plan fails to clearly identify the issues the County or citizens have identified with motorized recreation, the sector that has driven the process from the beginning;
3. The planning process lacked sufficient expertise in recreational planning and was inexplicably underfunded contributing to the poor quality of the plan;
4. The planning process was highly exclusive to the general public. Rather than make special provisions for participation in the planning process, only two public meetings and two public hearings were held in a period of two years. There were no citizens represented on the planning committee, citizen input was only allowed only at the very end of each committee meeting which was ineffective because discussions and decisions by that point had already been made.
5. The planning process was unresponsive to the limited public participation that was provided in the process making only cosmetic changes but no substantial changes to the plan in response to this citizen input. The primary citizen input, at every juncture from the very first public meeting through comments at each of the monthly steering committee meetings up to the final public hearing has adamantly requested that effective measures be developed and incorporated into the plan to reduce the scope and degree of damage to county managed lands, road and highway rights of way, the natural resources on these lands and the interference with other recreational users by motorized recreation and more specifically, all terrain vehicles, (ATV's).

6. Numerous research documents and technical reports were submitted to county staff and the steering committee throughout the planning process either providing details about issues with motorized recreation, options the county could choose from in addressing motorized recreation problems, or examples of methods and tools used by other counties, states or federal government land management agencies. Rather than take advantage of the experience and expertise of others, the Becker County planning process largely ignored these information sources and the quality of the plan suffered as a result.

7. The scope of the plan was very poorly defined, especially the geographic scope. While it was clear this was a county based plan, the plan fails to include even a map of the planning area. The plan fails to include a description of size, location, nor distribution of the various parcels of county managed lands. No map was provided showing the parcels of land the plan was targeting. No general description of the physical properties, current uses, physical, natural or other characteristics of the land parcels is developed that might have revealed recreational opportunities or identified obstacles or barriers to certain other recreational options. Current uses of the land are omitted, uses that might otherwise present opportunities or barriers to recreational activities.

8. No historical or cultural description of the land parcels is provided that might either add to the public interest and invite recreational uses or on the other hand, may have presented barriers or obstacles to certain recreational uses.

9. No information is developed in the plan in regard to general location of the planning units relative to various local or regional population centers is provided or how access by road or other means from population centers might effect recreational popularity, attractiveness, or convenience to the recreating public

10. Because the planning committee either lacked or failed to use their public planning expertise, especially in the area of recreation, the plan proceeded awkwardly and precisely backward from what any guidance or recommendation found in recreation planning textbooks, manuals or professional articles. The unfortunate and tragic result is that rather than performing the “recreational needs assessments” at the beginning of the planning process the master recreation plan was produced first, purposely postponing the “needs assessment” to the end and even extending beyond the end of the planning process. This was especially detrimental to the plan in the area of highest public interest and concern, motorized recreation.

11. Failing to develop needs assessments, especially for motorized recreation meant that the plan is devoid of any early identification of the issues, problems, needs or opportunities for motorized recreation much to the frustration of both the motorized recreation enthusiasts as well as the conservation minded public concerned for the problems associated with motorized recreation.

12. Without an ATV needs assessment being prepared early in the process, a complete inventory of existing recreational opportunities was not included in the plan. In fact, the plan seems to purposely and inexplicably limit the scope of what existing ATV facilities will be considered to those ATV trails and facilities have some official “designation”. The result is that the plan contains a gross underrepresentation of current recreational and ATV riding opportunities in Becker County by leaving out two major categories. First, hundreds of miles of statutorily designated state and county highway ditches and township roads (ditches and road surface) are open to ATV use. (More about this road and ditch issue is developed later in these comments. See comment 14.) Secondly, the plan lists over 100 miles of designated ATV trails in the three State Forests in Becker County but fails to acknowledge that

in addition to the “designated” routes, the three state forests include many miles of state forest roads and minimum maintenance roads that are also open for various forms of motorized recreation including ATV’s. Third, the plan fails to acknowledge that by County Board Resolution, several hundred miles (possibly well in excess of 300 miles) of forest service roads, logging roads, skid trails and user created trails are made specifically available to all motorized uses, including recreational ATV riding.

13. GIS data were developed through many hours of county staff effort in the field recording the detailed and precise routes of the known forest roads and trails on county managed lands yet in spite of repeated requests by the public, these data have not been made available for review nor have the maps of these roads and trails been included in the recreation plan. At this late date, as the ATV needs assessment process begins, these maps are not being made available to the public, nor are they even being made available to the Park and Recreation Board (soon to be the Recreation Advisory Committee). It is difficult to understand how the interested citizen let alone the citizen members of county committees can have a meaningful discussion of recreational ATV needs or issues without access to these critical data on existing routes, deliberately made available for ATV use by County Board resolution. Failure to disclose, display or even take into consideration these critical maps of ATV opportunities in any part of the recreation planning process is dumbfounding to the outside observer. The failure on the part of county staff to allow disclosure, review and consideration of these vital data threatens the very credibility of and public confidence in the county’s recreation planning process.

14. Several of the issues described by citizens at the public meetings and the public hearings and in written comments pointed to problems relating to use of road and highway ditch and township road surfaces by recreational ATV riders. Damage to approaches and driveways were described and destruction of vegetative ground cover on steep slopes leading to soil erosion and sedimentation deposits in wetlands, streams and lakes were pointed out. Townships officials testified to the extra government expense incurred having to provide extra road surface maintenance after abuse by ATV riders. Nothing in the final recreation plan or ordinance provides any acknowledgment of these issues nor does the plan offer any options for addressing these problems. For the record, I have developed a brief photo log of typical ATV road ditch damage to approaches and driveways and a number of locations where erosion in various degrees of severity is polluting public water bodies (wetland, lakes and streams, including a trout stream) with sediment and nutrients and contaminants associated with transportation known to accompany these sediments. This photo log will be submitted as a part of these comments but in a separate electronic document file. It is requested that the photo log be made a part of the record of public comments received on the plan and ordinance.

15. During the recreational planning process many photographs were presented to the committee documenting wanton and reckless damage to wetlands on public property and county managed lands by ATV riders. Evidence was also provided to the planners that existing county policy declaring all forest roads and trails on county managed lands as open to all motorized uses presented an insurmountable barrier to effective enforcement of state law intended to protect wetlands from this very type of damage. The Becker County Sheriff clearly stated his opinion that he could not successfully enforce the state law protecting these wetlands because the county policy would provide any offender with a reasonable defense by simply saying they were complying with county policy by restricting their riding to existing county forest roads and trails. Nothing in the recreation plan or proposed ordinance was changed to address this issue and as a result ATV riders are allowed to continue violating state law and damage Becker County wetlands with impunity. I request that be appropriate changes to the county policy and ordinance be made expeditiously to remove this enforcement barrier allowing these wetlands to be protected.

Please accept the attached photos as pictorial testimony regarding ATV damage to roads and highway rights of way and pollution of public waters in Becker County that should have been identified and addressed in the County Recreation Plan.





