Recreational Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, November 1, 2011

Committee Members Present: Del Bergseth, Arthur Bakker, Hank Ludtke, Dennis Hopman, Karen Mulari, Larry Knutson, Gerry Schram

Staff Present: Ryan Tangen, Brad Wentz, Guy Fischer, Tim Gordon

Open Forum Sign-In: Willis Mattison

Audience/Guest Participation Per Agenda: Neal Powers, Willis Mattison, Katherine Warren, Matthew Davis, Howard Kluender

1. **Introductions:**
   - **Approval of Agenda:** There was a motion and a second to approve the agenda as submitted. Motion carried.

   - **Approval of September October 4, 2011 meeting minutes:** There was a motion and second to approve the minutes as submitted. Motion carried.

3. **Open Forum:**

   Willis Mattison: Concerns with ATV Needs Assessment – how do we know if we need more designated ATV trail development beyond what currently exists within the Two Inlets and Smoky Hills State Forest – how did the RAC determine this – how was that decision made?

Old Business

4. **Draft ATV Needs Assessment: Parameters Discussion – RAC Recommendations Discussion**
   Staff first began discussion of the parameters section with RAC members by reading the Recheck Wants/Needs discussion on p. 5 of the ATV Needs Assessment document (10-26-2011) and the decision that the RAC motion/recommendation had made on 9/6/2011 - that per review of the ATV needs assessment to-date, the RAC found "that there is a need for a designated ATV trail" and that the RAC also sought to have a discussion on what parameters should be considered to mitigate ATV related impacts on County managed lands. Staff walked through each section of the parameters discussion within the Draft ATV Needs Assessment document (p. 6-10):

   - Definition of Parameter(s)
   - Current Forest Classification Parameters (per County Board Resolution)
   - Beltrami Forest Classification Comparison
   - Beltrami Trail Classification Definitions
   - Hubbard County/DNR Limited Classification Comparison

- Round Lake Wild Forest Recreation (RLWFRA) Proposal
- MN Biological Survey (MCBS): Becker County
- MCBS Definitions (Outstanding, High etc.,)
- GIS Toolkit Exercise
- Questions to Consider and Make Recommendations on per Parameters Discussion

Per review of the parameters section, RAC members were then directed to a section (p.11-12) within the ATV Needs Assessment entitled "Questions to Consider and Make Recommendations on per Parameters Discussion". Then staff asked the first question to RAC members from this section: *Q1. With the aforementioned policies/guidelines and concerns in mind, what additional policies*[1] *should be considered to protect sites with varying levels of biodiversity significance on County-managed lands to inform the designated ATV trail development process (GIA)?* RAC members provided the following recommendations below.

A. For areas of Outstanding Biodiversity Significance (DNR definition quoted):

RAC Recommendation: motorized use is *Off Limits* within areas designated as having Outstanding Biodiversity Significance on County Managed Lands.

B. For areas of High Biodiversity Significance (DNR definition quoted):

RAC Recommendation: *Very Limited* motorized use within areas designated as having High Biodiversity Significance on County Managed Lands.

C. For areas of Moderate Biodiversity Significance (DNR definition quoted):

RAC Recommendation: *Somewhat Limited* motorized use with special consideration being given for obvious wildlife corridors and plant communities.

D. For areas Below Minimum Threshold for Biodiversity Significance (DNR definition quoted):

RAC Recommendation: *Use Best Judgment* for motorized use within areas below the Minimum Threshold for Biodiversity significance.

A running discussion occurred between the RAC and members of the audience relative to looking at the development of parameters in conjunction with the various areas of biodiversity significance:

"We don't know all of what's out there, but we do know alot more about what's out there now." (Knutson)

[1] Policy: Thesaurus – rule, strategy, plan, guiding principle, course of action, guidelines, procedure (Encarta Dictionary).

"Evaluate merits of each recommended use relative to each location", "areas of influence" "area of impact" (Neal Powers)

"Buffer zones around areas of influence", "avoid fragmentation" (Mattison)

"Review slopes or other criteria or weighting that would impact (these areas)" (Bakker) – "also isn't there some redundancy here with the DNR's GIA process" – "wouldn't this be covered by them?". This latter remark questioned the rationale of making parameter recommendations to the DNR. Staff responded that David Schotzko had expressed the same observation (per recent conversation with staff) "that they had not dealt with a County that wanted to make its own requirements relative to the DNR's GIA program – that the DNR's Ecological Services Unit exerts a very strong influence over trail development and location, and that proposals that come into the process will not look the same after going through the process." RAC members still felt it was important to provide some upfront guidance to the DNR's GIA process even though they agreed that there might be some redundancy between County parameters and DNR's own decision making process.

Staff also referenced the Round Lake Wild Forest Recreation Area (RLWFRA) Proposal and their interest in further informing the parameters/land use discussion and that perhaps in December they would have a proposal for the Natural Resource Management Committee to review and that RAC members should also consider being in attendance.

E. Trail Length – RAC members felt that developing parameters for various biological diversity areas (would determine trail length as well as utilizing to the full extent possible the use of existing forest roads and recreational trails for developing a designated ATV trail. No specific recommendation needed.

F. Establish Set Asides for Silent Sport Users – RAC discussion found that this becomes implicit by establishing parameters that prevent or limit motorized recreation on areas of outstanding, high and moderate areas of biological diversity. No specific recommendation needed.

<u>Forest Classification</u>
Staff asked the following question from the Parameters Section of the ATV Needs Assessment. *Q2. Based upon your review of the Parameters section and subsequent discussion, is a change in forest classification for County managed lands necessary?*

RAC and audience discussion:

"Classification could change prior to the creation of an ATV Trail" (Knutson)

"Limiting Tribal members not going to happen - Tribe would be open to look at an ATV trail, but a 70 mile ATV trail may be unrealistic." (Warren)

A question was brought up about trail length and the Woods N Wheels club has a 60-70 miles ATV trail concept (Schram). Kluender (Woods N Wheels) mentioned that this trail proposal has not been recognized nor been brought forward for serious consideration by the RAC, NRM or County Board per the current process underway (Mulari also confirmed this).

"Do we need a classification change or is it that we simply need to have the ability to close trails if we need to" (Mulari). Staff referenced current County resolution language (BC Resolution #O5-09-2A) that allows for trail closure if needed:

> "That the Natural Resources Department be granted the authority to close any forest road or trail on county-administered land, either temporarily or permanently, when such action is necessary for the protection of the forest, the road or trail, or the general public."

Discussion also focused briefly on enforcement which was made more difficult and could not utilize other enforcement options (DNR) because "without a designated trail there was nothing to enforce." (Mulari)

"Comment on status quo (open unless posted closed classification) and the longer it remains the more damage that can be done – also question about timeline once an ATV GIA process is started – how long does it take?" (Davis)

Staff response – estimated 2 + years to develop an ATV GIA trail (if not longer).

<u>RAC Recommendation</u>: No Change in Forest Classification at this time.

The RAC then took up question *Q3. Are there other parameters/policies that should be considered for governing ATV use on County managed lands and/or roads/ditches?* Discussion ensued about concerns about multi-use trails and if forest roads could be used for a designated ATV trail (Bergseth). Also clarification was sought about ATV trail riding on County Roads and township roads. The RAC started to delve into some of these questions, but decided that this was a good place to stop until the next meeting.

5. **Grants Update:** North Country Trail Legacy grant request passed the County Board and Ultra Legacy grant requests o.k.'d by the County Board.

6. **Next Months Agenda – ATV Discussion Continued**

7. **Meeting Adjourned**