

TAYLOR COUNTY LAND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE
Minutes of December 20, 2011 Meeting

The monthly LCC meeting was called to order by Dave Krug at 9:55 a.m. The meeting was held in the UW Extension Meeting Room, County-USDA Service Center, Medford, Wisconsin. Members present were David Krug, Chairman, Scott Mildbrand, JoAnn Smith, and Ray Soper. Tim Peterson was absent. Others present were Lanice Szomi, Pri-Ru-Ta RC&D Program Manager; Deb Esselman, FSA County Executive Director; Bob Plawski, NRCS District Conservationist; Ed Zyzdik, USDA-APHIS; Steve Oberle, County Conservationist; and Cathy Mauer, LCD Conservation Assistant. Szomi, Esselman, Plawski, and Zyzdik were there for only part of the meeting.

MOTION by Mildbrand/Smith to approve the agenda as distributed and posted. **MOTION CARRIED.**

MOTION by Soper/Mildbrand to approve the November 1, 2011 LCC special meeting minutes. **MOTION CARRIED.**

October-December 2011 bills were circulated for review, and the October budget analysis was distributed. **MOTION** by Mildbrand/Soper to approve the bills and budget analysis as presented. **MOTION CARRIED.**

OLD BUSINESS:

WLWCA/WALCE merger and WLWCA conference: Krug and Oberle attended the annual WLWCA conference, which was held December 8-9. Among resolutions presented was a resolution to merge WLWCA and WALCE. The resolution was approved, and the merger proposal will now go before the membership of WALCE at their annual meeting in February. Among other resolutions was one proposing more stringent requirements to control runoff than the current standards used by DATCP. This resolution arose from runoff, especially phosphorus, carried into Green Bay and Lake Michigan by the Fox River, which is the largest contributor of phosphorus and the third largest contributor of sediment of all Lake Michigan tributaries. The proposal, which would apply to those receiving federal farm subsidies or WPDES permits, passed. Enactment of this proposal could have implications for farms and proposed farms in Taylor County. Another resolution proposed that funds for staffing grants be transferred from segregated nutrient management funds rather than applying a proposed additional \$1.1 million in gpr staffing grant cuts. Staffing grants already received a \$1 million dollar cut in the 2011-2013 budget. Krug and Oberle attended a breakout session about manure digesters that focused on a community project that includes two CAFOs and one other farm. Additional farms also contribute manure to the digester. The digester supplies enough electricity to supply 2500 homes. The payback period is expected to be 10-20 years. Oberle discussed a follow-up letter to Governor Walker supporting the staffing grant fund transfer resolution; the letter was signed by many county LCD staff and LCC members. Oberle also expressed concern about continuing cuts and additional conditions that may be placed on uses of state funds, specifically requiring use for agricultural practices rather than priorities as identified in the county land and water resource management plans. Based on the preliminary allocation announced before the proposed additional cut of \$1.1 million, Taylor County would receive approximately \$20,000 less than in the current budget. Oberle said that there was a need for continued support for conservation, especially at the local level, including both towns and the county.

NEW BUSINESS:

Reports

Land Conservation Department – Steve Oberle, County Conservationist, reported: Oberle submitted two cost-share extension requests for Krug's signature. The two contracts are Dave and Dawn Wendell, \$5600 and John and Jane Laub, \$4023.20. Oberle distributed information he gathered from county well records. Also, pump tests were conducted at the proposed North Breeze Dairy site to determine well yields. The data from the tests is not yet available. In response to a question from Mildbrand concerning the setback distances for high-capacity wells, Oberle said that, as far as he knew, the only regulation was that a new high-capacity well could not impact municipal wells or trout streams. Mildbrand noted that it is unfortunate that there is not better regulation of such issues in the county. Oberle mentioned that the Village of Stetsonville now has a wellhead protection plan and is working on a wellhead protection ordinance.

Natural Resources Conservation Service – Bob Plawski, District Conservationist, reported: NRCS is taking applications for EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentive Program) until February 3, to be followed by a ranking and approval period. Applications for CSP (Conservation Stewardship Program) are being taken until January 13. Ranking will be done by January 23 with approvals expected in March. No allocations for practices have yet been announced. Both forest lands and croplands are eligible. There were twenty-seven enrollees last year, including both Taylor and Price Counties. The program rewards those already doing well as far as conservation. There is an annual payment for five years if practices are maintained. Past payments have ranged from \$354 to \$2,000 for forest land and \$1,800-\$40,000 for cropland. Reviews are being done for those who enrolled in past years. Wetland determinations have been done. No federal allocation to the state for programs has yet been announced, though the federal budget for the programs has been set.

Farm Service Agency – Deb Esselman, County Executive Director, reported: DCPs have been delayed until January 23, and no advances are expected due to this being the last year of the current Farm Bill. Sign-ups for the SURE disaster program started December 14. In the recent County Committee elections Don Hoffman was elected to the Price County Committee and Jim Miller to the Taylor County Committee. Esselman expects to have funding for programs and staff but does not know how much. FSA is trying to reduce staff numbers through early retirement and buyouts.

Wildlife Damage Program – Ed Zydzik, USDA-APHIS, reported: Zydzik presented state average crop prices for 2011 crop damage payments: \$6.25/bu for corn, \$103/ton for alfalfa, and \$87/ton for mixed hay. **MOTION** by Mildbrand/Smith to pay \$5.75/bu for corn and the average prices for alfalfa and mixed hay. **MOTION CARRIED.** Zydzik said that delisting of wolves from endangered species status is expected later this month. This would apply to problem wolves, such as those depredateing livestock.

Pri-Ru-Ta RC&D – Lanice Szomi, Program Manager, reported: Bob Brandt and other grazing specialists still have some funding available, though for a limited time period. From March to November Brandt wrote thirteen new grazing plans and led four pasture walks. He does not have much technical assistant money left but does have some educational money, which will enable him to host the annual grazing conference in Stetsonville. There is still GLCI (Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative) money available for about one year. At the next Pri-Ru-Ta meeting, scheduled for January 27, members will consider the future existence of Pri-Ru-Ta. Krug said that Pri-Ru-Ta has done a lot with a little, often taking local efforts and expanding them regionally. Unfortunately, that will be lost if Pri-Ru-Ta becomes defunct. The Northwest Regional Planning Commission is the only other somewhat similar regional organization, and they have not proved especially useful here.

Northwest Land & Water Conservation Association (NWLCA) – Steve Oberle reported: NWLCA presented two resolutions at the WLWCA conference. Paula Carow, County Conservationist in Rusk County, is retiring. It is not yet clear what is next for the department and the position. The proposed iron mine in the Penokee Hills was a topic of discussion.

Land Conservation Committee 2012 Calendar: Due to the spring elections, which will be held in April, and may result in different LCC membership, Mildbrand suggested setting only the date for the next meeting, which was then set for February 21 at 9:30 a.m.

Conservation and Nutrient Management Plans: Oberle said he had worked with Phil Jazdzewski on a nutrient management plan. Oberle said that there are a large group of farmers wanting nutrient management plans in addition to those in the Farmland Preservation Program (FPP). Oberle is still catching up on Farmland Preservation Program participants. According to Oberle, there he is confused about a letter sent out earlier this year that spelled out requirements for compliance with FPP by December 31, 2011 in order to be eligible for credits and whether the farmers were required to have a 2011 plan or a 2012 plan. He is working toward requiring them to have a 2012 plan by March 31, 2012. He added that two other groups of farmers, those with past plans and those working with NRCS, also wanted plans. Committee members recalled that the letter required those in FPP to have a 2011 plan by December 31 to be eligible for tax credits and to have a 2012 plan by March 31 in order to stay eligible. Oberle said things were delayed by Matt Lapinski leaving at the end of July and the position not being refilled. Mildbrand asked who is writing the plans – farmers, contractors, or Oberle? Discussion followed. **MOTION** by Soper/Mildbrand that Oberle create a list of non-compliant Farmland Preservation Program participants to be turned over to DATCP if they have not made a good faith effort to write their nutrient management plan, as indicated by having taken soil samples. **MOTION CARRIED.**

Correspondence: Big Eau Pleine Task Force final minutes; Discovery Farms newsletter

Future meetings/events: **MOTION** by Mildbrand/Soper to approve all meetings below.
MOTION CARRIED.

NWLCA (Oberle)..... (Hayward) February 3, 2012
Next LCC Meeting9:30 a.m., February 21, 2012

MOTION by Soper/Smith to adjourn at 12:30 p.m.

**TAYLOR COUNTY LAND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE
Minutes of November 1, 2011, Meeting**

The monthly LCC meeting was called to order by Dave Krug at 9:45 a.m. The meeting was held in the UW Extension Meeting Room, County-USDA Service Center, Medford, Wisconsin. Members present were David Krug, Chairman, Scott Mildbrand, Tim Peterson, JoAnn Smith, and Ray Soper. Others present were Steve Oberle, County Conservationist, and Cathy Mauer, LCD Conservation Assistant. Also present were Jim Metz, Taylor County Board Chairman; Nick Nice, DNR Conservation Warden covering Taylor County; Mike Riggle, Taylor County Sportsman's Club; Kim Christofoli, Indianhead Community Action Agency; and Shawna Kestler, Indianhead Community Action Agency.

MOTION by Peterson/Mildbrand to approve the agenda as distributed and posted and the minutes of the October 18, 2011, LCC meeting. **MOTION CARRIED.**

OLD BUSINESS:

Taylor County Participation in the 2011 Venison Donation Program: **MOTION** by Mildbrand/Soper to reconsider participation in the venison donation program. Discussion concerning the funding for the program: The money comes from antlerless deer tag income, which can only be spent on crop damage payments or the venison donation program. Unspent funds roll over into the next year, and the funds have never been spent completely. It is a statewide pool of money. Originally, sportsman's groups funded the program; in some more recent years, they supplemented the state funds. The food pantry sponsored by the Indianhead Community Action Agency in Medford gave away 500 pounds of venison in 2010 and 1500 pounds in 2009. They have never had venison go to waste. Mildbrand noted that the program is good for the image of hunters. Riggle commented that there haven't been huge numbers of deer donated, with nineteen last year, though previous years had sometimes been higher. Nice said that there seems to be a relationship to the number of antlerless tags available. Taylor County is included in three units with \$2 tags this year and four with \$12 tags this year. **MOTION amended** by Mildbrand/Soper to move that Taylor County participate in the venison donation program, replacing the action at the August 16th LCC meeting to not participate. **MOTION CARRIED.**

Next LCC Meeting9:30 a.m., December 20, 2011

MOTION by Mildbrand/Peterson to adjourn at 10:00 a.m.

TAYLOR COUNTY LAND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE
Minutes of October 18, 2011 Meeting

The monthly LCC meeting was called to order by Dave Krug at 9:30 a.m. The meeting was held in the UW Extension Meeting Room, County-USDA Service Center, Medford, Wisconsin. Members present were David Krug, Chairman, Scott Mildbrand, and Ray Soper. Tim Peterson and JoAnn Smith were absent with excuse. Others present were Deb Esselman, FSA County Executive Director; Bob Plawski, NRCS District Conservationist; Steve Oberle, County Conservationist; and Cathy Mauer, LCD Conservation Assistant.

MOTION by Soper/Mildbrand to approve the agenda as distributed and posted. **MOTION CARRIED.**

MOTION by Mildbrand/Soper to approve the August 30, 2011 LCC meeting minutes. **MOTION CARRIED.**

August-October 2011 bills were circulated for review, and the August budget analysis was distributed. **MOTION** by Mildbrand/Soper to approve the bills and budget analysis as presented. **MOTION CARRIED.**

Natural Resources Conservation Service Report (moved up on agenda by request) – Bob Plawski, District Conservationist reported: NRCS is operating on a continuing budget resolution through November 18, with budget after that date uncertain. Applications for EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program) are now being taken, but it will probably be January or February by the time the ranking is finished and allocations are finalized. CSP (Conservation Stewardship Program) payments will probably not be made until at least November. There were thirty-three participants from last year and thirty-five from the year before. Participants need to have been in the program for a year and to have done specified activities. They can also do additional activities. Payments can be taken either before or after January 1. The Local Work Group for EQIP met at the end of August to decide on guidelines for the upcoming year. Cropland and pasture land practices are the only practices under local control. There are fifteen national practices related to grazing; flat rates for these will be decided on a regional (Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin) level. Overall there is not as much local control as in previous years. NRCS is getting caught up on HEL (highly erodible land) determinations and making sure that there is a conservation plan or approved operations on such lands. They are now taking applications for CSP. There are some changes to approved activities, with some previously approved activities being dropped and some new activities added. There are two categories: crop/pasture land and forest land. Payments for the former are about \$18/acre and for the latter, \$4-6/acre; payments are for five years. Landowners may participate in both. Last year there were twelve initial approvals but when funds became available all applicants were approved. It is likely that all applications for forest land will be approved this year.

OLD BUSINESS:

WLWCA/WALCE proposed merger: The draft by-laws for the merged organization were included in the LCC packet. The proposal will first be voted on at the annual WLWCA meeting in December, where it needs a 2/3 majority for approval. If it passes, it will then be voted on at the WALCE conference in February. Following discussion on some of the pros and cons of the merger, a **MOTION** was made by Mildbrand/Soper to give Krug the authority to vote yes or no at the annual WLWCA meeting, using his discretion depending on any additional information presented. Krug said that while he is in favor of the merger, he will consider any additional information that is available at the meeting before making his final decision as to how to vote. **MOTION CARRIED.**

NEW BUSINESS:

Reports

Land Conservation Department – Steve Oberle, County Conservationist, reported: Oberle circulated several publications that he thought might interest the committee, including “Glaciation of Wisconsin” from the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey, “Future Friendly Farming” from the National Wildlife Federation. He also distributed a summary of wells in Taylor County broken down by town and including average depth and average flow rates.

Farm Service Agency – Deb Esselman, County Executive Director, reported: Esselman distributed a notice to Hispanic and women concerning possible compensation for past discrimination. The FSA staff is finishing processing DCPs. November 18 is the final date for signing up for the 2010 SURE disaster program. Esselman does not expect much participation in this area because crops here were pretty good and many farmers did not have all their crops insured as required by the program. DCP sign-up will end January 23. Like NRCS, FSA is operating under a continuing resolution. FSA is offering an employee buyout in Wisconsin and there may be some office closings, though probably not Taylor County.

Pri-Ru-Ta RC&D – Steve Oberle reported on behalf of Lanice Szomi, Program Manager : Bob Brandt, grazing specialist, has a \$12,761 Education and Demonstration Grant that runs through 2012. The Pri-Ru-Ta Council will meet Monday, October 31, at 10:00 a.m. via teleconference. Brant is in the LCD office part-time and in the field part-time. Over one hundred people from seven states attended the regional RC&D that was held in Stevens Point in September. Pri-Ru-Ta is still looking for technical assistance money.

Taylor County Wildlife Damage and Abatement and Claims Program (WDACP) 2012 budget: MOTION by Mildbrand/Soper to approve the budget as presented. There is not county levy money involved. **MOTION CARRIED.**

LCD Vehicle: The Forestry and Recreation Department will be replacing one of their trucks. **MOTION** by Soper/Mildbrand that the LCD acquire Forestry’s old truck and give the LCD truck to Maintenance, Buildings, and Grounds. **MOTION CARRIED.**

Possible resolutions at the annual WLWCA meeting: The only resolution submitted so far is the proposal for the merger with WALCE.

Correspondence: *Thursday Note*; Mining Legislation; Big Eau Pleine Task Force

Future meetings/events: **MOTION** by Mildbrand/Soper to approve all meetings below. **MOTION CARRIED.**

NWLCA (Oberle).....(Hayward) October 28, 2011
WCA, Mining in Wisconsin: Issues facing County Government (Oberle)(Stevens Point) November 14, 2011
2011 Annual WLWCA Meeting (Krug/Oberle) (Wisconsin Dells) December 8-9, 2011
Next LCC Meeting9:30 a.m., December 20, 2011

MOTION by Mildbrand/Soper to adjourn at 11:38 a.m.

Chair Date

TAYLOR COUNTY LAND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE Minutes of August 30, 2011 Meeting

The monthly LCC meeting was called to order by Dave Krug at 10:00 a.m. The meeting was held in the UW Extension Meeting Room, County-USDA Service Center, Medford, Wisconsin. Members present were David Krug, Chairman, Scott Mildbrand, JoAnn Smith, and Ray Soper. Tim Peterson was absent. Others present were Steve Oberle, County Conservationist, and Cathy Mauer, LCD Conservation Assistant.

MOTION by Soper/Mildbrand to approve the agenda as revised and posted on August 29, 2011 to add "Discuss/take action on Taylor County participation in 2011 Venison Donation Program". **MOTION CARRIED.**

MOTION by Mildbrand/Soper to approve the August 16, 2011 LCC meeting minutes as revised to read Stanley Webster rather than Charlie Webster in connection with Hannibal wells. **MOTION CARRIED.**

OLD BUSINESS:

2012 LCD Budget: Oberle distributed a revised budget showing the budget with and without the Resource Conservationist position included. The subtotal for the staffing and benefits budget without the position is \$207, 658 [with the position it is \$257,100]. Oberle referred to an article in the *Country Today* that said the final allocations from DATCP for the staffing and support grants would not be made until September or October. Mildbrand talked to Oberle by phone last week and indicated he would support keeping the \$10,000 for the drinking water program in the budget at least until it was known if additional cuts were needed per the Budget Review. He still thinks [participants] need to pay more for the program. He doesn't think the Resource Conservationist position is needed. Krug asked if the grant would be affected if there is not a fourth position, to which Oberle replied that he couldn't say, especially when considering both the short term and long term. Smith asked how the department was managing now [with the position vacant for a month]. Oberle said it made him think twice about taking on new programs and that there may be less service in the future. As part of a discussion of the impact of loss of the position, Oberle referred to the Taylor County Land and Water Resource Management Plan, which is the guiding document for the department. Krug asked if Lapinski had only been working on nutrient management plans and the Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) and asked about the effect on the department of not having a certified crop advisor on the staff. Oberle said NRCS requires a CCA because the federal government does not recognize his credentials. He said there is no one else in the building who is certified, though sometimes Bob Plawski (NRCS District Conservationist) was able to accept his (Oberle's) signature. He said this may have been affected by the change from nitrogen-based NMPs to phosphorus-based NMPs. Krug noted the limited term status of the position enabled people to use the position as a training opportunity and then leave, especially if they found a position with benefits, two years being typical. Soper noted it is a fact of life that stair step careers to move into better jobs. Oberle said he had tried to offer a higher salary and that there was now some vacation and sick leave associated with the position. Smith commented that benefits are going down in many jobs. Smith wondered if hiring a local person would help; Oberle added that if a spouse had benefits it might also help. Smith asked if the position were to be filled, would it be at \$49,442 (the amount given by the County's accountant as the current cost)? Oberle said no, it would probably be \$40,000 or less. He also said that if there were other funds available from outside the department, full-time funds would not be needed from the county. Oberle also brought up the possibility of a half-time position. Soper asked about the potential for sharing a position with another county, but Oberle said he had looked at that before the last meeting was now thinking of federal funds or other funds, similar to how Bob Brandt, Pri-Ru-Ta Grazing Specialist is funded. Soper said he would be interested in exploring the possibility of working with other counties. He said it seemed unlikely to get someone half-time without other money. Oberle said Lanice Szomi, Pri-Ru-Ta Project

Manager, was looking for additional money for Brandt's position and that might fit position might fit with the Resource Conservationist position. He also said the Resource Conservationist position description included grazing and shoreland zoning issues and that he was looking at sharing the position with other Taylor County departments. Smith asked if someone just out of college would be able to walk right into the job; Oberle said no, he would be looking for someone with experience in another LCD or similar. Krug there was a question if there is still a need for Taylor County to have the position. Soper said he was not convinced there was not some need but questioned a need for full time. He also noted that if Pri-Ru-Ta disappears there may be a need for a grazing specialist. Oberle said other counties were working with UW-Extension, which is not the case here, having only a half-time Agricultural Agent. Krug asked if Oberle had a list of farmers waiting to get help, saying as far as he knew there was no waiting list though most farmers know they are required to have a plan. He also said few are getting plans unless they are in the FPP. Oberle said he did have a list and a letter had been sent out. Mildbrand reminded the committee and Oberle that the gist of the letter was that participants in FPP would lose their benefits if they did not comply. Oberle he said he would have to follow up on that. Soper said there were no teeth in compliance with NMP regulations for FPP participants anymore because the state seems to be letting the FPP die. Mildbrand said the Agriculture Committee had said no to an increase in the Ag agent hours and other departments were also not being allowed to refill positions. **MOTION** by Mildbrand/Krug to approve the LCD budget with the \$10,000 for the Drinking Water Education and Testing Program intact but without funding for the Resource Conservationist position. There was a discussion about the Tree Sale program, and Mauer explained that there was usually a small profit made and that unsold trees were given out through the Future Farmers of America or other school-related activities. Soper noted that if the Resource Conservationist position was not included in the budget, there would not need to be a discussion about it at the January meeting since there would be no funds. Such a discussion had been planned at the August 16th meeting. **MOTION CARRIED**, with committee members saying that it was a difficult decision.

NEW BUSINESS:

Taylor County participation in 2011 Venison Donation Program: Following discussion, **MOTION** by Soper/Mildbrand that Taylor County not participate in the program. Krug said he was against the motion, thinking that the donation program was a good way to utilize otherwise unused venison and that it would supply food to those in need. **MOTION CARRIED.**

Nutrient Management Plans: The committee reviewed NMPs for Camby and Ginger Berry, Richard Halopka, Jeremy Goebel, Tom Goebel, and Gary Weber. Krug asked if the plans had been approved by Lapinski (former LCD Resource Conservationist), but Oberle said either he (Oberle) or Halopka had approved them. Soper reminded the committee that they had previously decided that NMPs did not need committee approval. Mildbrand asked for clarification that landowners could write their own plans if they had taken a class. Oberle said there was a need to recertify every year and that a CCA needed to sign off on their plans the first year.

Correspondence: Pri-Ru-Ta Agenda and Minutes; *Country Today* article about proposed DATCP/SWRM grant allocations to counties.

Letter from DNR concerning North Breeze Dairy (NBD): Oberle reviewed a letter from Gretchen Wheat, DNR, which had been included in the August 16th LCC packet. Mildbrand questioned if there was no digester, would there be no construction of NBD. He also questioned the size of the footprint of the storage pit. Smith noted that due to citizen concern, there was more scrutiny of the proposed operation. Soper said that apparently NBD had been assuming they could sell manure nutrients but that such may not be the case. Oberle expressed concern about a possible negative effect on the local economy if the facility were to be built.

LCD Budget Review Session (Oberle) (Courthouse), 11:45 a.m., September 22, 2011
Next LCC Meeting 9:30 a.m., October 18, 2011

MOTION by Smith/Mildbrand to adjourn at 11:25 a.m.

TAYLOR COUNTY LAND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE Minutes of August 16, 2011 Meeting

The monthly LCC meeting was called to order by Dave Krug at 10:10 a.m. The meeting was held in the UW Extension Meeting Room, County-USDA Service Center, Medford, Wisconsin. Members present were David Krug, Chairman, Scott Mildbrand, Tim Peterson, JoAnn Smith, and Ray Soper. Others present were Chris Borden, NRCS; Lanice Szomi, Pri-Ru-Ta RC&D Program Manager; Ed Zyzik, USDA-APHIS; Steve Oberle, County Conservationist; and Cathy Mauer, LCD Conservation Assistant.

MOTION by Soper/Mildbrand to approve the agenda as distributed and posted. **MOTION CARRIED.**

MOTION by Mildbrand/Soper to approve the June 21, 2011 LCC meeting minutes. **MOTION CARRIED.**

June-August 2011 bills were circulated for review, and the June budget analysis was distributed. **MOTION** by Peterson/Smith to approve the bills and budget analysis as presented. **MOTION CARRIED.**

OLD BUSINESS:

2011 Drinking Water Education/Testing Program update: Oberle revised his state of Taylor County groundwater report. Soper noted that the Drinking Water Program summary sheet did not include mention of phosphorus. Oberle said he was aware of that and that occasionally the lab reported phosphorus on individual reports. Oberle said that there were 160 to 170 wells tested during the program. He noted that there was less arsenic than in previous years. He speculated that a higher water table may have resulted in either dilution of the arsenic or lessened the amount of oxidation. LCC members asked about coliform results, with Krug noting in one case both an original test and retest indicated coliform but that a test through AgSource did not indicate coliform.

Hannibal water testing results: Oberle had included a table of water quality results from 1998 and 2011 in the LCC packet and distributed a map with locations and data. Nine wells were tested; in 2011 samples were taken twice, approximately thirty days apart. The tests measured sodium, chloride, conductivity, iron, and manganese. Two wells had been affected, one at the New Hope Presbyterian Church and one at the Baptist Church (the old school). The county drilled a new well on Charlie Webster's property, with the stipulation that in addition to serving the two churches, it would also serve Webster. After drilling the new well, the two church wells were abandoned. Iron and manganese were also very high in the old wells. A meeting has been set up with DNR, Jess Sackmann, Taylor County Highway Commissioner, and Larry Peterson, Taylor County Zoning Administrator to review the results and possibly close the case. Oberle has reviewed the results with the homeowners whose wells were tested. He distributed maps of the chloride data, noting that Sackmann was interested in that data. Much of the chloride contamination appears to be along roads, where road salt and dust control materials both contain chloride. Septage is also a possible source of chloride contamination. In response to a question from Krug as to what health implications chloride contamination might pose, Oberle said it was an indicator of possible contamination by other contaminants, too. Krug also asked about the impact of road runoff on streams and lakes, and Oberle said there was no data.

NEW BUSINESS:

Reports

Land Conservation Department – Steve Oberle, County Conservationist, reported: Oberle attended training last week with Bob Plawski and Chris Borden of NRCS. The training included discussion of Farmland Preservation and agricultural

performance standards. NRCS is changing the tolerable soil loss (T) and runoff (k) calculations. There may be changes in the Runoff Rules [from the state]. Oberle said that he thought things were really tightening up concerning runoff.

Wildlife Damage Program – Ed Zydzik, USDA-APHIS, reported: Deer numbers appear to be on the rise, and shooting permits were issued to Robert Pinsch, who grows ginseng, and Joe Zenner, who had some of the worst corn damage Zydzik has ever seen. Ten tags were issued, and ten does were shot the first day. Al Neumann lost a calf to a bear. The incident occurred on leased land where the owner does not want bear hunting. An increasing number of people are keeping bees; fortunately electric fencing seems to be working to keep bears out of the hives. Lemkes are having a problem with deer in their strawberries, but due to the proximity to the City of Medford, shooting is not a feasible option so temporary fencing is being used. APHIS still does not have the option of killing wolves, and another lawsuit, based on the proposition that two species are involved, is likely if they are delisted. Wolves are taking a large number of calves in some areas. Bears are starting to move into corn fields. Jim Miller and Keith Skabroud have both had problems. Funds are available for paying farmers for crop damage. However, funds for staffing are limited. Zydzik covers three full counties plus about half of two others. If staff leaves, it is likely that replacements will not be offered benefits.

Natural Resources Conservation Service – Chris Borden, NRCS, reported: Wisconsin obtained additional EQIP funds from other states. One grazing project near Silver Creek was funded through a RAC (Resource Advisory Committee) grant from the USDA-Forest Service. As budget cuts are enacted, NRCS is looking for areas/offices that have good productivity, i.e. projects implemented with little staff time, and northwest Wisconsin looks pretty good, in part because of cooperation with partners, such as LCD. Bob Plawski, NRCS District Conservationist, is checking status of conservation compliance on HEL and is finding generally good compliance.

Pri-Ru-Ta RC&D –Lanice Szomi, Program Manager, reported: The state budget including state bonding money for grazing. Some projects were approved through the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI), but no federal funds are available. The state budget included previously unidentified projects that may affect the amount of money available through DATCP. Funding is up in the air. There may be technical assistance funds available through NRCS for grazing plans; however the amount and timing are not known. The Ashland, Bayfield, Douglas, and Iron Counties specialist has funding into September; Bob Brandt has funding through the end of this year; and the Northwest specialists, who work out of Spooner, have funding into March. After the most recent Council meeting at the end of July, Pri-Ru-Ta asked each of the LCDs to develop a list of top three concerns that the Council can work on, including finding funds. The Council will meet on September 2 to discuss priorities and also continued existence. Soper asked whether the regional RC&D conference was still going to be held. Szomi replied that the conference will be September 14-16 in Stevens Point and will be open to anyone who is interested, including other non-profits. The conference theme is "building financial stability".

OLD BUSINESS (cont.)

WLWCA/WALCE possible merger: Chuck Wagner, President of the WLWCA Board of Directors, joined the committee meeting by phone. Wagner summarized the current status of the merger discussion. At a meeting of the ad hoc committee last week, a draft of by-laws for the proposed new organization was presented. The proposed by-laws had been reviewed by Curt Pawlisch, attorney for WLWCA, and by Julian Zelazny, Executive Director of WLWCA, who both had suggestions. The draft was revised at the meeting, incorporating those suggestions. The full boards of both organizations will be meeting soon to review the proposed by-laws, which will be sent to all members of both organizations in September for review and comments. The ad hoc committee expects that by October a complete package, including by-laws and description of the new organization, would be sent to all LCCs/LWCCs

so that they would have time to review and discuss the plan and decide if they want to support the merger, which they will vote on at the December annual WLWCA meeting. WALCE members will vote on the merger at their annual meeting in February/March. If approved, the new organization will start in March. Krug asked Wagner about potential savings in staff, meeting time, and duplication and any potential impact on effectiveness. Wagner said that WLWCA has an executive director and one office staff and WALCE has no staff. The number of staff would probably stay the same. Wagner noted that Zelazny would not necessarily be the new director, and Zelazny has tried to keep himself separate from the merger discussion. The work of the new organization would probably be done mostly by committees. The board would probably meet two to four times per year. The executive committee would probably meet six times per year. Both the executive committee and the board of directors would have equal representation from LCC members and LCD staff. Other committees would also have representatives from both groups, but perhaps not equal numbers. Concerning potential effectiveness, Wagner noted that there appears to be a suppression of conservation throughout the state, with LCCs often being merged with other department committees, and conservation efforts being downsized. He said a larger organization would be likely to have more power. He noted that the staffing grant has never been fully funded as established in Wisconsin law. While staff is needed to do conservation work, DATCP wants to change the law to reflect the current lower funding situation, rather than maintaining the funding as required by current law. Wagner prefers the status quo even if it is not fully funded at this time because, once changed, additional funding would never be gotten back. Wagner went to the WALCE convention and even though he did not understand everything in the technical sessions, it helped him understand the need for training. He also thinks that if staff attended LCC sessions, there would be better understanding of issues. It would also benefit technicians who might want to move in to a county con positions. Mildbrand asked for information about the dues structure of the new organization. Wagner said that the dues would be the same in 2012 as they are now. Currently WLWCA dues are based on land valuation while WALCE dues are a set amount per person. In some counties the county pays those dues and in other counties each individual pays his or her own dues. After 2012 the county would pay a single fee (to be based on valuation or some formula) that would cover all LCC and LCD staff. There would be two votes per county, one from the LCC and one from LCD staff. If a county decided not to join, individuals would still be eligible to join, paid either by the county or the individual. They would also have a vote. Training sessions would continue, both at an annual conference and at other venues. There would be the same area associations as WLWCA now has. DATCP has expressed interest in providing grant money for training. Soper asked if the LCC would know the dues structure by the December meeting. Wagner said that only the 2012 dues would be known by them since they would be the same as the current dues. The new dues structure would be voted on after the merger and at the next meeting, either at the end of 2012 or beginning of 2013. Sixty-seven counties are members of the WLWCA; it is not known how many counties would join the new organization. It is likely that dues would be similar to the current dues. There may be a longer annual meeting to incorporate training sessions. The current dues are \$1279 to WLWCA and \$20 per staff member for WALCE memberships. The question of whether or not to support the merger will be put on the October LCC agenda.

Reports (cont.)

Northwest Land & Water Conservation Association (NWLCA) – Steve Oberle reported: The proposed merger of WLWCA and WALCE was discussed. Conservation Camp, which has been run by Paula Carow of Rusk County, will be run by Iron County in the futures. The Poster and Speech Contest, which had also been run by Carow, will be run by Ashland, Washburn, and Burnett Counties. Soper said that the consensus at the NWLCA meeting is that dues would go up if the WLWCA/WALCE merger takes place. He thinks proponents are purposefully skirting the issue. Oberle said he tells them that if the county's dues go up, the county may not be a member.

Grazing Specialist office space: Bob Brandt, Grazing Specialist, will have his position until his grant runs out but cannot stay in his current office space due to NRCS policy, and Szomi asked if it would be possible for Brandt to use either the side office within the LCD office or the space vacated by Matt Lapinski (former LCD Resource Conservationist). Mildbrand was in favor of supporting grazing in this way. **MOTION** by Soper/Peterson to allow Brandt to use office space in the LCD office at least until the current grant runs out. Smith asked what percent of farmers are graziers. Neither Szomi nor Oberle knew, but Szomi had data on the number of acres and livestock that Brandt has worked with in the twenty month period from August 2009 to March 2011: 1,093 acres put in new grazing plans and 1063 acres in revised grazing plans; 145 dairy cows and 250 beef cows in Taylor County. He also works in Clark, Price, Rusk, and Sawyer Counties. Soper noted that there is continuing interest in grazing, including with Amish and Mennonite farmers. Krug mentioned that grazing was good for the land, and Oberle mentioned that grazing appealed to new generations of farmers. Borden noted that farmers are often picking and choosing from aspects of grazing and conventional farming, creating customized blends of management styles. Krug also noted that equipment investment was less for grazing operations. The vote was called and the **MOTION CARRIED**.

Refilling Resource Conservationist position: Oberle stated Matt Lapinski had resigned his position effective July 29 and that had taken a position with Outagamie County. Oberle reviewed the history of the LCD staffing and cost-share grants, including that he had made a case to the county that four positions were needed. When the state increased the staffing grant in 2006, the position was filled as an LTE position without benefits. Oberle postulated that lack of benefits, along with other issues, may have been a factor in Lapinski, as well as previous holders of the position, leaving. Krug noted that employees gain experience and training and then leave. Oberle speculated that the county could lose money coming into the county over time if the position was not filled and that it would be difficult to get back. He said LCD could take a direct hit in staffing funds. He said the preliminary 2012 state funding figures he had been given included \$25,000 for SEG [usually used for nutrient management]. He questioned if the department would have the capacity to use the SEG funds without staffing. Krug asked if there was a waiting list of farmers wanting assistance with nutrient management. Oberle said that the demand builds for programs that are kept going and that it was widely known that everyone needs a nutrient management plan. He said there was also leftover work from plans worked on by Lapinski and others. Krug said that farmers could hire someone or they could write their own plans. Oberle said that they can hire someone and we [the LCD] have provided training for farmers to write their plans. Krug mentioned that NTC did training. Oberle said LCD worked with NTC and other counties to provide training. Oberle said the state has realized that plans farmers write themselves were more likely to be implemented, and that plans written by others, such as co-ops, were less likely to be followed. Krug asked if the county would lose funds if the position were not filled. Krug asked if the position was not filled, how much the county might lose in funding. Oberle said it was hard to say because concrete figures were not yet available. He said the projected figures were \$132,000 in staffing, \$60,000 in cost-share, and \$25,000 in SEG. Mildbrand pointed out that those figures would not be entirely dependent on whether the position was filled. Oberle agreed, saying it probably depended more on the governor and the legislators and how much the state agencies need to reduce their budgets. Krug asked if any of the money in the position was county money, saying he thought not. Oberle said it depends how you slice it. He claimed that the 2006 increase in the staffing grant was tied to the fourth position. He also referred to the formula that staffing grants (mentioned by Wagner) were supposed to be based on: 100% of the first position, 70% of the second position, and 50% of additional positions. He said that when looking at the funding in those terms very little if any of the position was covered by state funds. Krug asked if the 50% applied to that position, and Oberle said it does, but the state is not meeting that requirement. Oberle talked to Larry Brandl, accountant for Taylor County, who said that the staffing grant covered about 50% of the LCD staffing costs. He also noted that the staffing grant was going down and the county's costs were going up so probably less than 50% was

covered by state grants. Krug asked if the LCD could get by without filling the position. Oberle said if there was less demand for the department's programs, he would agree with that, but he thinks demand has increased. Oberle also noted that the department had been assisting other county departments. Krug mentioned that sometimes when he stops in the office that sometimes the staff does not seem all that busy. He mentioned that one day when he stopped in the office, Kyle Noonan, LCD Engineering Technician, mentioned that things were slow. Oberle said that was not exactly right, but that sometimes there were slower times. Krug asked for input from other committee members. Smith said there was a need to cut corners. Peterson suggested leaving the position vacant for the rest of the year, but not eliminating it, and then looking at it after the first of the year. Oberle said that if the position was vacant, the LCD would underspend on its budget and wondered if there would be a credit for next year's budget. When Krug asked for Oberle's recommendation, Oberle recommended filling the position as soon as possible, and if the funding does not come through for next year, then not refill it at that time. Soper wanted to know when Oberle would know with more certainty about the state grants, to which Oberle said probably September or October. Soper said it would be hard to make a rational decision without the funding for next year being known and questioned why the position should be filled now if it might be necessary to fire the person after the end of the year if there was not funding. Oberle asked about filling the position as a part-time position since the funding was already budgeted for this year. Smith asked if he had someone in mind. He said he did not but Oberle said he could go to other entities for additional funds to make the position full time. Mildbrand said he was in favor of not filling the position at this time and thought the Personnel Committee would not approve filling it. Oberle repeated that the department had the funds for this year and therefore he should be able to fill the position. Mildbrand noted that the county has a hiring freeze in effect and that the Commission on Aging and Human Services had not been able to fill positions. Oberle questioned why they would not fill a position if it was not county levy money. However, Mildbrand pointed out that about 50% of the LCD staff money was county levy money, and county levy money not spent on a position could be spent elsewhere. **MOTION** by Peterson/Smith to postpone filling the Resource Conservationist position until after the first of the year and then decide whether or not to fill the position based on need and funding. **MOTION CARRIED.**

2012 LCD Budget: Oberle discussed the proposed LCD budget, based on data from Brandl. He noted that the budget had a 4% reduction in discretionary expenses and a 0.4% reduction in the total budget. If he were to factor in under spending in 2011, including not filling the position, he would save about \$10,000 this year. Soper commented that Oberle's estimates were based on state 2011 funding figures. He asked Oberle how reliable the projected state grant figures were. Oberle said it was likely they would change. He only had the 2011 figures when he wrote up the budget, but the actual amounts are likely to be less, except for SEG funds. He posited that part of the SEG money might be transferred to cost-share and that the staffing amount would stay the same. Oberle asked if he should keep the Resource Conservationist position in the budget and that he wanted to avoid telling DATCP that we would not be filling the position. Peterson noted that the position was supposed to be 100% grant funded, which was how it was sold to the board, and therefore it would not need to be included. However, he also said the budget could be kept as is (with the position included) and if the money was left over at the end of the year, it would just be left over. Mildbrand proposed a \$3,000 cut from the \$10,000 drinking water program budget, noting also that that program had been overspent this year. Peterson suggested an increase in the amount charged, noting the high level of subsidy. Mildbrand pointed out that participants were only paying \$20 out of the \$88 [actually \$83] cost. Oberle said he had been hired to make such decisions and commented that the committee was picking away at individual programs. He asked why money should be taken out of programs if he was already under spending. Peterson noted that each program was budgeted for and needed to be justified on its own. Oberle said that groundwater and drinking water were the top priority in the Land and Water Resource Management Plan. Peterson said every program should be subject to taking a hit. Oberle asked why not take money out of all the other

programs as well, saying that pretty soon we would not even need the department [LCD]. Committee members noted that other departments are also taking reductions. Oberle reiterated that the LCD would be saving over \$10,000 in 2011 by not filling the Resource Conservationist position and other savings. He also asked if the services LCD supplies to other departments were considered. Oberle asked what the purpose of having an LCD and LCC was; Krug noted that a state statute required an LCC and that Oberle needed to justify the department. The question then arose, again, of how much the LCD would actually get from the state. Krug asked Oberle what he wanted to do as far as the budget, and Oberle said he had submitted a budget and any changes were up to the committee. Oberle said that he needed to have the budget to Brandl by September 9 and that his budget review session was set for September 22. Mildbrand reiterated his thought that the Resource Conservationist position not be filled and that \$3,000 less be budgeted for the drinking water program. Smith suggested keeping the \$10,000 in the budget for the drinking water program but requiring participants to pay 50%. Mildbrand agreed with her proposal. Discussion followed on whether or not the committee was interfering with Oberle's job by setting program details.

Noting that two LCC members had other meetings at 1:00 p.m., Krug said that there was not enough time to complete the budget discussion and suggested that the committee meet in two weeks to finalize the budget. The meeting was provisionally set for 10:00 a.m., Tuesday, August 30, with August 29 as a back-up date if that does not work with committee members' schedules.

LCD Budget Review Session (Oberle) (Courthouse) 11:45 a.m., September 22, 2011
Next LCC Meeting10:00 a.m., August 30, 2011

MOTION by Mildbrand/Soper to adjourn at 1:00 p.m. **MOTION CARRIED.**

TAYLOR COUNTY LAND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

Minutes of June 21, 2011 Meeting

The monthly LCC meeting was called to order by Dave Krug at 9:30 a.m. The meeting was held in the UW Extension Meeting Room, County-USDA Service Center, Medford, Wisconsin. Members present were David Krug, Chairman, Scott Mildbrand, JoAnn Smith, and Ray Soper. Tim Peterson was absent. Others present were Chris Borden, NRCS; Lanice Szomi, Pri-Ru-Ta RC&D Program Manager; Deb Esselman, FSA County Executive Director; Steve Oberle, County Conservationist; and Cathy Mauer, LCD Conservation Assistant. Jess Sackmann, Taylor County Highway Commissioner, and Brian Wilson, *Star News*, were also present.

MOTION by Soper/Mildbrand to approve the agenda as distributed and posted. **MOTION CARRIED.**

MOTION by Mildbrand/Smith to approve the April 11, 2011 LCC meeting minutes. **MOTION CARRIED.**

April-June 2011 bills were circulated for review, and the **April budget analysis** was distributed. **MOTION** by Mildbrand/Soper to approve the bills and budget analysis as presented. Mildbrand and Krug asked for clarification about funding for the Rib Lake Pier project, which Oberle explained the project was administered through the County Conservation Aids program with DNR money and Rib Lake special fund money. No county funds are involved. **MOTION CARRIED.** Mildbrand reminded Oberle that the County Board was encouraging all departments to try to save 5% based on their 2010 budget. Further discussion and clarification followed.

OLD BUSINESS:

North Breeze Dairy (NBD) update: Oberle summarized discussion at a meeting/phone conference held in Madison in May. Participants included DNR, NBD, and CRA (NBD's engineering firm). Readings from monitoring wells indicated groundwater flow direction and water levels. NBD agreed that the water in the wells was not perched but was regional groundwater and that the groundwater was moving northeast. The parties agreed that the groundwater elevation was 1457.6 feet (about 9.2 feet below the top of the casing and up about 5 feet from earlier monitoring), and any manure storage system will have to be built mostly above ground. DNR is not requiring more monitoring. Gretchen Wheat, DNR, has noted that separation distances are designed to provide a safety factor to protect the integrity of the pit liner and thereby the groundwater. The distances are set in the technical standards. According to Oberle, the distance is 2 to 4 feet, but the standards are being revised. Oberle also said he didn't know if in-place storage was being allowed anymore. Mildbrand asked if DNR had given NBD specific requirements for their pit. Oberle said that NBD is working with DNR. New plans for the facility are expected in mid-August. Brian Gerrits, NBD, has indicated that there would be no construction this year and that they expect to start in spring of 2012. NBD is considering installing a digester. Mildbrand asked if that would reduce odor. Oberle said he did not know about the odor, but that a digester does not reduce the volume of manure. Smith asked if it was true that one of the monitoring wells had been overflowing, which Oberle said it was. Krug asked what effect that information had on the theory that there was a shortage of water in the area. Smith noted that the Village of Stetsonville was interested in protecting the municipal well area. Soper asked if 1457 feet was likely to be the final groundwater elevation. Oberle said the best way to site the facility would be by taking data from the monitoring wells for at least one year and that field data was taken for a minimum of two years for most studies. Smith asked if NBD/DNR was looking at potentially testing for a longer term, and Krug asked if monitoring was on-going. Oberle said the last readings he had were from May 17, with no plans for additional monitoring although the wells are still in place. Oberle also noted that

other parts of the facility also may be subject to separation requirements. Mildbrand mentioned that although a one-year storage period had been discussed in the planning, the minimum requirement is six months. Oberle said that the NRCS 313 Standard varied for each state and that DNR is requiring longer storage in the northern part of the state due to longer winters. Smith said she thought the requirement was eight months in the north; Krug thought it was eight to nine months. Mildbrand asked if the new facility plans were likely to come in with a shorter time frame for storage; Oberle said he didn't think so and that he had suggested that one option would be to downsize the number of cows. Several questions arose relative to the effect on the situation if a digester was installed: how it would affect storage requirements and design, the effect of sand bedding, and the need for high enough electricity rates to make it cost effective and if the rates were high enough in this area. Smith noted that there were overflowing pits in this area this past year, with some farmers hauling and spreading some manure as necessary. Oberle said new facility plans are expected in 2012. Soper questioned if the current contracts for land would still be valid and the impact of the delay on nutrient management plans. Krug said updating would be needed. Smith said she did not think most of those who had contracted would back out. There was discussion about the value of the nutrients. Oberle noted that land rents in the area are over \$100 per acre. Krug questioned where Taylor County would stand if NBD receives DNR approval and if there would be any issues other than the nutrient management plan. Oberle said that the dairy would need livestock siting approval by the Town of Little Black.

2011 Drinking Water Education/Testing Program update and Hannibal salt storage and water testing: There were about 160 wells tested in the recent special program. Oberle drove the bacteria retest samples to Stevens Point today. He expects to receive all the test results by early July, with education programs held after that (schedule below). There were twenty-five positive tests for coliform bacteria and one with E. coli. In addition to the regular drinking water program, Oberle is cooperating with the Taylor County Highway and Zoning Departments to conduct testing of private wells in the Hannibal area for possible salt contamination. An initial test will be done, and then repeated after thirty days. Eight wells have been identified for testing. According to Sackmann, shallow test probes were put in many years ago at what are now residential and a church site. Oberle said that there are some tough situations in the area, e.g. open dug wells and drilled wells in poor repair. Sackmann gave background information on the situation: State salt was stored in Hannibal where the Town of Cleveland Hall is now located. In the 1980s the school had problems with the water having a salty taste. In the 1990s it was decided that the issue needed to be addressed, and an engineering firm was hired to conduct test probes. The church, school, and a Webster property had very contaminated wells. The county replaced two wells, capped unused wells, and capped the old storage area with paving. Last year the DNR notified the county that case was still open. The same engineering firm that worked on the project previously estimated that it would take about \$16,400 to close the case so the county is trying to do it in-house. The land was later sold to the Town of Cleveland with no deed restrictions, which could complicate the situation. The plume was found to be moving west along Highway M, which is where the contaminated wells have been found. Sackmann reported that the DNR said there were no standards for salt contamination, but that they would like to see a decrease in salt levels to the extent that it will not be causing problems. Oberle said it would be necessary to separate contamination resulting from stored salt from contamination caused by salt spread on highways. Sackmann is especially concerned about the county being found responsible for contamination of mostly shallow wells. Oberle said that one well, which was in the park, had apparently been closed.

NEW BUSINESS:

Reports

Land Conservation Department – Steve Oberle, County Conservationist, reported: Oberle attended Conservation Observance Day, which was held in Columbia County. He circulated fact sheets about drinking water, the revised 313 standard (Waste

Storage Facility), "Losing Ground" (from the Environmental Work Group about water quality situation in the Midwest), Wildlife Management Report from DNR, April 2011, Strategic Direction from DNR Division of Forestry, and the USGS Discovery Farms report.

Natural Resources Conservation Service – Chris Borden reported: CSP (Conservation Stewardship Program) is working well in Taylor County, due in part to the past environmental work that has been done in the county. He mentioned services provided by DNR personnel like Scott Mueller, DNR Forester. EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program) had twelve out of twenty applications funded. Many of the unfunded projects were barnyards and manure storage. The program is underfunded, but Wisconsin may get more funds. HEL/Wetland Compliance checks are being done. There is pressure to clear forests and drain wetlands, due to high corn prices (\$7.00). Larry Naske, formerly employed by NRCS, is working for Pri-Ru-Ta on compliance. Borden circulated a notice concerning women and Hispanic farmers who were discriminated against by USDA in processing loans, and that there is now a program to compensate those who may have been subject to such discrimination. Oberle asked Borden about the status of CRP (Conservation Reserve Program). Borden pointed out that what is considered marginal land at \$2.40 corn is different than what is considered marginal land at \$7.00 corn. Borden said that a lot of land is coming out of the program due to pressure from high corn prices and better soybean varieties. Continuous CRP often has small acreages and can include grassed waterways, trees, etc. and includes payment and a cost-share rate of 90%. Esselman said that prices are set by the national office but can be disputed. The continuous sign-up period is also a benefit because it allows immediate approval, which can address pressing problems.

Farm Service Agency – Deb Esselman, County Executive Director, reported: They have done a few continuous CRPs, including a living snowfence. CRP has not been big in this area where most suitable land is already used. Taylor and Price together only have thirty-five contracts. Conservation is getting slashed in many of the federal budget the proposals. BCAP (Biomass Crop Assistance Program) has been cut; the program had possibilities but also problems. Crop reports are due by July 15. Farm Technology Days will be held June 12-14 near Marshfield. Esselman mentioned that there is compensation for the discrimination mentioned by Borden. The SURE disaster program is a disaster with probably less than 25% of those eligible having been paid. Krug, talking about the federal budget, noted that there had been an effort to eliminate subsidies. Esselman agreed, saying that this was especially true of direct payments. Esselman noted that USDA is offering an early out for employees. There are expectations of 14% - 25% cuts in the 2012 budget, and that vacated positions are not likely to be refilled. RC&D Coordinators may be offered a \$25,000 buyout.

Pri-Ru-Ta RC&D – Lanice Szomi, Program Manager, and Ray Soper, LCC Representative, reported: The federal budget was retroactive back to October 1, 2010, and RC&D money was lost back to that date. NRCS had to find the money to account for money that had already been spent. Pri-Ru-Ta has other funds and some money from grants to continue operating. NRCS has broken all ties with the RC&Ds. The coordinators, most of who were NRCS employees, are no longer allowed to work or volunteer with the RC&Ds. Pri-Ru-Ta has received a notice to vacate NRCS space by August 1; they also may not pass through NRCS space, which limits flexibility in using the existing office area. They are negotiating with the county for space, with the possibility of creating a new entrance to the back office from the hallway; if Pri-Ru-Ta should later vacate, the space could be used for other purposes. Money is still available for the grazing specialists; there are state funds for two years, but beyond that, funding is uncertain, and Pri-Ru-Ta is looking for other funding sources. Mildbrand asked if the Building and Grounds Committee had given their input yet, and Szomi replied that while the Committee hadn't, Jeff Ludwig, head of Maintenance did not like the idea. FSA pays the rent on the federal office space, about \$40,000 per year; it is not affected by the rules that affect the NRCS relationship with Pri-Ru-Ta

Pri-Ru-Ta has had two no-till drills available, a Truax from the US Fish and Wildlife Service out of Necedah and a Great Plains from Almeena. They hope to purchase a no-till drill for use in this area. In response to questions, Szomi said the price of a new drill is about \$15,000 and that there were two people in the area with drills that can be rented.

Pri-Ru-Ta is continuing to work with the Upper Chippewa Invasive Species Cooperative.

WLWCA/WALCE merger discussion: An ad hoc committee is continuing to discuss a potential merger of WALCE and WLWCA. Oberle referred the LCC to a recent special edition of the *Thursday Note*, which he had included in the LCC meeting packet. Oberle indicated that he thinks the potential for the merger going through is iffy. Krug said he thought it seemed like a good move based on the discussion points. Soper, however, said he thought there is a big difference between the two organizations, including structure and goals. He pointed out that WALCE represents professional staff whereas WLWCA represents the counties. He is opposed to the idea. A two-thirds vote of the memberships of both entities would be required for the merger to go through. Oberle said there would still be two conferences for now, with voting on the merger occurring at the conferences (WLWCA in December and WALCE in February). Soper mentioned that LCC members might want to contact Kay McKenzie, representing LCCs on the ad hoc Committee. Krug said that a merger is expected to result in cost savings, noting the need for only one annual convention. Oberle questioned how a merger might affect counties that don't have LCCs due to combining of departments, though he did think it possible that they have an LCC representative on their combined committees. Krug said the LCC would have a vote on the issue before the WLWCA meeting in December.

Conservation/NMP plans: Oberle circulated nutrient management plans for committee review. Four plans, from farmers who took the NMP training course, needed Krug's signature. Soper said he did not think the committee needed to review NMPs if the LCD staff had found them satisfactory. Plans requiring Krug's signature were for Jeff and Karen Fiedler, Chad Pearson, Ray and Carol Sackmann, and Blasel Fur Farm. Additional plans were for George Niggemann, Ryan and Chris Klussendorf, Ray Soper, Cheryl and Charles Young, John and Jane Laub, Dale Oldenburg, Jack Goebel, Richard Hamland (Pine Creek Farms), and Phil Jazdzewski.

Correspondence: *The Lake Connection*; state runoff rules news releases

Future meetings/events: **MOTION** by Mildbrand/Smith to approve all meetings below.
MOTION CARRIED.

Pri-Ru-Ta RC&D (Oberle/Soper) (Hayward) June 24, 2011
Drinking Water Education Programs (Oberle)(Medford, Gilman, Westboro) July 18, 19, 2011
Taylor County Fair (All) July 28-31, 2011
NWLCA (Oberle)..... (Hayward) July 29, 2011
Next LCC Meeting9:30 a.m., August 16, 2011

MOTION by Mildbrand/Smith to adjourn at 12:20 p.m.

TAYLOR COUNTY LAND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

Minutes of April 11, 2011 Meeting

The monthly LCC meeting was called to order by Dave Krug at 1:00 p.m. The meeting was held in the UW Extension Meeting Room, County-USDA Service Center, Medford, Wisconsin. Members present were David Krug, Chairman, Scott Mildbrand, Tim Peterson, JoAnn Smith, and Ray Soper. Others present were Chris Borden, Pri-Ru-Ta RC&D Coordinator; Deb Esselman, FSA County Executive Director; Bob Plawski, NRCS District Conservationist; Ed Zydzik, USDA-APHIS; Steve Oberle, County Conservationist; Kyle Noonan, LCD Engineering Technician; Matt Lapinski, LCD Resource Conservationist; and Cathy Mauer, LCD Conservation Assistant. Don Purvis, former LCC member; Brian Wilson, *Star News*; and Steve Suchomel were also present.

MOTION by Mildbrand/Peterson to approve the agenda as distributed and posted.
MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION by Soper/Peterson to approve the February 14, 2011 LCC meeting minutes as amended. **MOTION CARRIED.**

February-April 2011 bills were circulated for review, and the January budget analysis was distributed. **MOTION** by Mildbrand/Peterson to approve the bills and budget analysis as presented. **MOTION CARRIED.**

OLD BUSINESS:

2011 Conservation Assistance Program status: Noonan reported that cost-share contracts cannot be signed until after the Taylor County Land and Water Management Plan has received final approval from DATCP. Sign-ups have been slow, though there is one for a grassed waterway and one for lane work. Some bigger projects are being held up while waiting to hear if there will be co-funding through NRCS. Approvals for NRCS funding in Taylor County has been slow. There has been some interest in pit closures, and LCD will probably fund some of those without NRCS funding. Closing idle manure pits is a top priority of the LCD. The LCD has approximately \$60,000 to allocate. In response to a question from Soper, Noonan replied that there were statutory requirements for closure of idle pits with the state requiring closure after 2.5 years of being idle and the county after 2 years. However, he said this was hard to enforce. Noonan asked committee members their opinion of setting aside part of the cost-share funds for regulatory purposes, for example for fencing to keep animals out of waterways. He noted that many counties use most of their cost-share funds for regulatory purposes. Soper asked if a short list of the worst offenders was available, and Noonan replied that he does not have a written list but was aware of problem sites, most of which were just off a road where they could be seen. Soper followed up by asking if most problems involved streambank issues, which Noonan said was the case, i.e. direct runoff to a stream. Soper also asked whether or not the LCD would need to offer cost-share a second time for regulation purposes if that person was paid now. Noonan stated that if a person has been given a legitimate offer, they must correct problems even if they don't take the offered payment. He suggested that verbal contact be made first, followed by a formal letter if action is not taken. Krug questioned if Noonan had some percentage of the available cost-share funds in mind. Oberle said there were also other funds that the LCD could apply for to be used in these cases. In response to a question from Smith, Oberle said there might be one or two handfuls of sites involved. Smith noted that if twelve projects averaged \$5,000, the whole \$60,000 would be used up. Oberle said many cases require offering of cost-share; in those cases NRCS will usually not cost-share these projects. Krug mentioned the possibility of using some of the money as an incentive to get projects done even if it didn't meet the 70% required to enforce correction. Zydzik asked if the LCD spent all of the money in past years, and Noonan responded that we usually did, though last year some funds were carried over from the previous year and the projects not completed. Because funds can only be carried over one year, those funds were returned to

the state. Noonan asked for direction from the committee on whether LCD staff should make cold calls when problems are noticed or focus on specific townships or watersheds. Soper mentioned that he saw no problem with making stopping in to talk to someone if a problem is noted. Krug suggested that if an incentive seemed needed, LCD staff could bring the case back to the committee for a recommendation. Oberle said that he thinks most problems require only easy fixes and are management issues that would not take much money to resolve.

2011 Land Stewardship Conference update: Mauer reported that the Land Stewardship Conference had about 110 attendees and was generally well-received. There was a glitch with FISTA (Forest Industry Safety and Training Association) registrations when FISTA decided shortly before the conference to allow only four continuing education credits rather than the eight credits that had been offered in the past. When notified of this change, approximately thirty loggers decided not to attend and will be issued refunds. The potential shutdown of the federal government also caused last-minute concern because three of the speakers were federal employees who would not have been able to speak if the shutdown had gone through. Staff from the sponsoring agencies were prepared to substitute for them, but the last-minute resolution of the federal budget resolved that problem.

Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) update: Lapinski reported that letters had been sent to all FPP participants, notifying them of the basic requirements of the program and requesting they contact the LCD to set up an appointment to review their contract(s). All but one participant has replied. Lapinski has made no farm calls due to the snow; he would like to look at the properties at the same time to ascertain if there are any issues. In response to a question from Krug asking if there had been any negative attitudes expressed, Lapinski said there had been only one person, who didn't want to do a nutrient management plan. Lapinski is making follow-up calls to participants.

North Breeze Dairy (NBD) update: A meeting was set up in Madison by Brian Gerrits, one of the owners of NBD. Rather than driving to Madison, Noonan joined Ronnie Williams, DATCP engineer, at the DATCP Altoona office to participate via teleconferencing. CRA, the engineering firm working with North Breeze, is reworking the manure storage facility plans to adjust to groundwater issues that have been identified on the site. Among the ideas being considered is changing the lagoon sizes to two 20 million gallon cells and one 14 million gallon cell and raising the floor elevation. DNR is requiring additional readings of the monitoring wells into June. Oberle expressed concern that proposed manure lagoons could be in the flow path to the recharge area for both the dairy's own wells and Stetsonville's wells. Mildbrand asked if the proposed higher bottom would require more land and a larger surface area or would it just include higher walls. It was noted that the planning is being done for one year's worth of storage, but state law only requires 8-9 months. Oberle, however, said that DNR wants longer storage periods in the north due to snow. He doesn't know the groundwater height at the site. He also said that groundwater height would not be as high due to facility installation, including paving, which would lead to less recharge. Noonan said that the site would include stormwater ponds. Krug said it was good that Noonan went to Altoona for teleconference. Soper, noting that Wisconsin is updating standards to coincide with federal standards, asked if NBD would be required to meet the revised standards. Oberle stated that the current 313 standards is a federal standard, but that he didn't know if NBD would be required to meet the revised standards. Noonan said that the date the application was submitted would determine the standards to be applied. Smith asked if Walker's (Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker) fast tracking of permits would affect this [the application and permit process]. Oberle said it would come under a general permit and that DNR would have more staff time available for enforcement. However, he also noted that many DNR staff are leaving DNR and suggested that there is a push for more local involvement in enforcement. Oberle said he had heard nothing new about water supply issues.

NEW BUSINESS:

Reports

Land Conservation Department – Steve Oberle, County Conservationist, reported: Oberle attended a recent statewide county conservationist conference. One of the main topics of discussion was a proposed merger of the Wisconsin Association of Land Conservation Employees (WALCE) with the Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association (WLWCA), which is the association of the Land Conservation Committees. Discussion of the merger [in this LCC meeting] revolved around similarities and differences in the structure, goals, and outlook of the two organizations. Ben Brancel, Secretary of DATCP, and Cathy Stepp, Secretary of Wisconsin DNR, spoke at the conference.

Natural Resources Conservation Service – Bob Plawski, District Conservationist, reported: Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) applications have been processed, with sixteen out of twenty-six applications tentatively approved including seven for crop/pasture and nine for forestry. Ten projects have not yet been funded. Letters have been sent to those who were approved to verify that the applicant wishes to proceed. If so, field verification will be done, and if satisfactory, contract will be signed. It is possible that Taylor County could receive funds from other parts of the state. Seven EQIP projects were funded. Two of the three grazing applicants dropped out, leaving one grazing project. One organic project was also approved. There will be a second organic sign-up because not all of the organic funds were used. An Environmental Assessment will be required for one of the EQIP/CSP projects. Plawski will be doing HEL (Highly Erodible Lands) and wetland determinations, which need to be done to maintain eligibility for future FSA funding. Unfunded applications included barnyard and manure storage; only barnyard, which is organic, was funded.

Farm Service Agency – Deb Esselman, County Executive Director, reported: DCP sign-ups are 60-70% complete. CRP sign-ups are down nationwide, due in part to high land rental rates. Locally, there have been three contacts from interested parties but no sign-ups. The SURE program is almost ready to go for this year. There is funding for facility loans for hay and grains, but no applications so far.

Wildlife Damage Program – Ed Zydzik, USDA-APHIS, reported: Funding for wolf control was an earmark; that funding is now gone, but the state added some extra money. There has been some deer and turkey damage; fencing is being tried. Some people do not like shooting permits. There was a repeat case where wolf proximity to humans was a health and safety concern, and those wolves are being euthanized under special permission. Zydzik assisted in the Rochester, Minnesota area with removal of approximately 900 deer in a CWD area; he is also assisting with removal of deer in the Apostle Islands. Over 9,000 bear tags were issued for this year. Too many bears are being moved, which is very costly. Current estimates are that the bear population is between 30,000 and 40,000, but the target number statewide is about 20,000 to 25,000. Bear reproduction is high, with as many as five cubs being seen last year. The Wisconsin Venison Donation Program is in good shape with a carryover of \$2 million; administration costs are about \$275 per county.

Pri-Ru-Ta RC&D – Chris Borden, Coordinator, reported: RC&Ds were not funded in the federal budget repair bill. Most of the RC&D funds were for coordinator salaries, and, with the elimination of these funds, Borden will be reassigned to other job duties. However, Pri-Ru-Ta RC&D expects to continue operating; Lanice Szomi, Program Manager, will remain, as will the grazing specialists. Because some federal funds also went into Pri-Ru-Ta operations, Pri-Ru-Ta will need to rely more on other partners or do without. Soper asked about office space; Borden is hopeful that either the county or NRCS will be able to furnish space. Soper noted that Pri-Ru-Ta had furnished maps of properties for the Land Stewardship Conference.

Northwest Land & Water Conservation Association (NWLCA) – Steve Oberle reported: The main topic of discussion at the most recent meeting was the proposed merger of WALCE and WLWCA. NWLCA renewed its contract with Douglas County for management services. Dues will stay the same.

Recognition of LCC member service: Don Purvis was recognized and given a certificate of appreciation for serving six years on the LCC as the FSA representative.

Finance Committee meeting with department heads: Problems with balancing the county budget are projected, and there is a possibility that department heads may be asked for additional budget reductions now to offset fund shortages next year. There is also discussion of trying to reopen union contract discussions.

LCC/LCD 2012 Joint DATCP/DNR Nonpoint Source Grant Application: Oberle is asking for \$199,800 for staffing and \$178,000 for cost-share funding. He noted that a \$5,000 to \$6,000 cut from 2011 is possible. MOTION by Mildbrand/Soper to submit the application as presented. MOTION CARRIED.

Nutrient management plans: Oberle presented nutrient management plans for committee review for the following farms: Gemini, Andrew Dums, Bovine Asset Management, Scott Mildbrand, Dennis Blasel, Jeff Fiedler, Richard Hamland, and Chad Pearson. Discussion followed on nutrient management plans vs. conservation plans. There were questions as to what aspect of the nutrient management plans the committee was supposed to be reviewing and what the purpose was.

Correspondence: DNR Large CAFO General Permit; Pri-Ru-Ta meeting minutes.

Other New Business: NONE

Next LCC Meeting 9:30 a.m., June 21, 2011

MOTION by Mildbrand/Peterson to adjourn at 4:05 p.m.

TAYLOR COUNTY LAND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

Minutes of February 14, 2011 Meeting

The monthly LCC meeting was called to order by Dave Krug at 10:05 a.m. The meeting was held in the UW Extension Meeting Room, County-USDA Service Center, Medford, Wisconsin. Members present were David Krug, Chairman, Scott Mildbrand, JoAnn Smith, and Ray Soper. Tim Peterson was absent. Others present were Chris Borden, Pri-Ru-Ta RC&D Coordinator; Deb Esselman, FSA County Executive Director; Bob Plawski, NRCS District Conservationist; Steve Oberle, County Conservationist; Matt Lapinski, LCD Resource Conservationist; and Cathy Mauer, LCD Conservation Assistant.

MOTION by Mildbrand/Smith to approve the agenda as distributed and posted. **MOTION CARRIED.**

MOTION by Mildbrand/Smith to approve the January 18, 2011 LCC meeting minutes. **MOTION CARRIED.**

January-February 2011 bills were circulated for review, and the December 2012 budget analysis was distributed. **MOTION** by Soper/Mildbrand to approve the bills and budget analysis as presented. **MOTION CARRIED.**

OLD BUSINESS:

Land and Water Resource Management Plan (LWRMP) update: Oberle presented the plan to the Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Board (LWCB) via telephone conference, and the plan was approved. It still needs approval by the Taylor County Board. Oberle also sent the LWCB a copy of a groundwater news release that he had prepared and most of the questions from the LWCB related to the County's drinking water education and testing program. Soper asked if the LWCB voted for approval as a straight up or down or if they had suggestions. Oberle said that he had worked with Dennis Presser from DATCP to assure that the LWRMP met state requirements, but he was unsure if the LWRMP needed only LWCB approval or if they made a recommendation to the state, perhaps DATCP. Krug mentioned that DNR had offered suggestions prior to the LCC approving the plan. Oberle also mentioned that he had revamped a paper called "State of Our Groundwater". He will be sharing that with the County Board and mailing it to the town and village boards.

Farmland Preservation Program (FPP)/Working Lands: Included in the Committee packet were conservation standards for FPP that had been revised in 2007, a news release, two draft versions of a letter to send to FPP participants, and a list of conservation compliance requirements for those in FPP. Lapinski discussed the draft letter, expressing concern about the time frame to require compliance. The letter also includes a date for participants to contact him. Mildbrand asked about tax implications and suggested compliance by December 31 for tax reasons. Soper asked if the department would have time to do nutrient management plans (NMPs) by that time. There was concern about participants taking tax credits even if they were not in compliance with the conservation requirements. Mauer clarified that the tax credit is an income tax credit rather than a property tax credit. Discussion followed about the tax credit structure, with participants having the option of converting to a flat tax credit rate rather than the sliding scale that has been used. There was also discussion of differences in the flat tax credit rate if the farm is in an area under Agriculture Zoning or in an Agricultural Enterprise Area. Soper suggested that the conservation requirements be included with the letter. Oberle asked if the NMPs should be 2011 or 2012 plans. Mauer noted that the conservation requirements for those under the old FPP included issues in addition to those covered by NMPs. Oberle said that there were separate FPP requirements from the ag performance standards. Oberle suggested that the letter included contract numbers, contract dates, number of acres, and location. Esselman suggested highlighting the deadline date. Mildbrand suggested that, at minimum, participants needed an NMP. Soper said most people are already aware of the requirement.

Krug said that the goal was to try to get all ag land under NMPs and that FPP was one way to provide an incentive. Mildbrand suggested emphasizing NMPs in the letter, and Krug suggested using a December 31 deadline for compliance. Mildbrand suggested authorizing Krug to approve the revised letter before it is sent to participants, and Krug suggested sending a copy of the letter to all LCC members so that could suggest any changes. Lapinski will revise the letter and send it to the LCC.

Northcentral Wisconsin Land Stewardship Conference (LSC): Mauer distributed copies of the LSC brochure. The conference will be held Saturday, April 9 at the Rib Lake High School.

NEW BUSINESS:

Reports

Land Conservation Department – Steve Oberle, County Conservationist, reported: Oberle requested Krug's signature on the reimbursement request for the 2010 Soil and Water Management Grant, which funds staffing and cost-sharing. The reimbursement will be for \$54,393.10. A previous reimbursement was for \$85,944.90, making a total grant of \$140,388.00 for 2010. The grant application for 2012 funds is due April 15. Because the LCC wasn't scheduled to meet again until April 19, Oberle asked if the committee would like to reschedule the April meeting. It was rescheduled to Monday, April 11, at 1:00 p.m.

Natural Resources Conservation Service – Bob Plawski, District Conservationist, reported: Twenty-six applications were received for EQIP, including three for crop-related practices, four for pasture, and eight for farmstead practices. It looks like all crop practices will be funded. Pasture practices requests totaled \$75,000, but there is the initial allocation is only \$19,000. Additional funds may be available from other counties that do not use their allocations. The top-ranked pasture practice will probably be funded through the US Forest Service. Twenty-seven applications were received for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), including eighteen for cropland/pasture and nine for forest. There was one cancellation, leaving twenty-six in the application process. They are currently doing interviews, which need to be done by March 9. Field verification needs to be done by April 22 for those who are tentatively approved. They will be doing HEL and wetland determinations for FSA, though the latter need to wait until snow is gone and frost is out of the ground so that soil borings can be taken. There is an Organic Initiative sign-up going until March 11. Both those already organic and those in transition are eligible, and there are usually four to five sign-ups.

Farm Service Agency – Deb Esselman, County Executive Director, reported: The SURE disaster program is under way, but there are problems with people meeting the paperwork/appraisal requirements. DCP sign-ups have been slow and a reminder will be sent. CRP sign-up starts March 14, but there are usually only one or two sign-ups. A three-county meeting, which will be held in Colby, is coming up.

Pri-Ru-Ta RC&D – Chris Borden, Coordinator reported: The 2011 federal budget is still undermined, despite being almost half way through the fiscal year. If there are still budget cuts, there will be a greater impact because the effect will be felt in the last six months. Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative funds may be affected. Grazing conferences are coming up, starting March 10 in Stetsonville. Topics include grass-finishing beef, predator control, Focus on Energy programs, and calf health. There will be a series of conferences throughout northern Wisconsin. Pri-Ru-Ta worked with the LCD and other agencies to apply for Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) grants for invasive species. \$33,000 was awarded for the Upper Chippewa Invasive Species Cooperative to hire a coordinator and fund several control projects. A second \$33,000 RAC grant was awarded to Pri-Ru-Ta to fund a grazing project. Lanice Szomi, Pri-Ru-Ta RC&D Project Manager, was elected treasurer of the Wisconsin Grass-fed Beef Cooperative.

Resolution Declaring the Second Saturday in May as International Migratory Bird Day and Authorizing Taylor County to Apply and Implement Criteria for "Bird City" Recognition:

Mauer noted that recognition as a "Bird City" would benefit tourism in the County as well as recognizing the importance of conservation efforts. The Taylor County Tourism Committee has already approved the resolution and the \$50 application fee. The Chequamegon Bird Club will manage the application and associated activities. **MOTION** by Soper/Mildbrand to approve the resolution. **MOTION CARRIED.**

Correspondence: Dues notice from WLWCA; agenda and minutes from Big Eau Pleine Task Force; "Glaciation of Wisconsin"; Potassium Fertility, Plant Health, and Productivity".

Other New Business:

Pine Creek Assessment: Craig Roesler, Wisconsin DNR Water Resources Management Specialist, sent results of testing he did at several sites along Pine Creek. LCD staff assisted with taking samples. Oberle has requested information on having Pine Creek listed as an impaired water. Soper asked what the ramifications of such a designation might be, but Oberle said he didn't know.

NWLCA (Oberle)..... (Hayward) March 25, 2011

Northcentral Wisconsin Land Stewardship Conference..... (Rib Lake) April 9, 2011

Next LCC Meeting 1:00 p.m., April 11, 2011

MOTION by Mildbrand/Smith to adjourn at noon.

TAYLOR COUNTY LAND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

Minutes of January 18, 2011 Meeting

The monthly LCC meeting was called to order by Dave Krug at 10:05 a.m. The meeting was held in the UW Extension Meeting Room, County-USDA Service Center, Medford, Wisconsin. Members present were David Krug, Chairman, Scott Mildbrand, Tim Peterson, JoAnn Smith, and Ray Soper. Others present were Lanice Szomi, Pri-Ru-Ta RC&D Program Manager; Deb Esselman, FSA County Executive Director; Bob Plawski, NRCS District Conservationist; Ed Zydzik, USDA-APHIS; Steve Oberle, County Conservationist; Kyle Noonan, LCD Engineering Technician; Matt Lapinski, LCD Resource Conservationist; and Larry Peterson, Taylor County Zoning Administrator.

Welcome of JoAnn Smith to the LCC. Smith will be serving on the LCC as the Farm Service Committee representative.

MOTION by Peterson/Mildbrand to approve the agenda as distributed and posted.
MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION by Mildbrand/Peterson to approve the November 16, 2010 LCC meeting minutes.
MOTION CARRIED.

November 16 – December 31, 2010 bills were circulated for review, and the November 2010 budget analysis was distributed.

Donald Purvis, who is no longer on the LCC, will be receiving a certificate of recognition for his years of service to the committee.

OLD BUSINESS:

Taylor County Land and Water Resource Management Plan (LWRMP): A public hearing was held at 9:00 this morning; the only attendees were three committee members. Oberle summarized the history of the LWRMP, which was first done in 2000 with a revised plan in 2005, and reviewed the chapters that are included in the plan. Approved plans are required to receive state funding, and the state requires specific items to be covered in the plan. The LWRMP will be presented to the Wisconsin Land and Water Board on February 1. Discussion followed about the advantages of holding the public hearing before vs. after the committee meeting and about the benefits of highlighting the changes that were made to the 2005 plan in creating the 2010 plan to make it easier to compare the plans. The 2005 plan had four goals and the 2010 plan has five goals. As a result of the survey results, the order of the goals and priorities changed, though groundwater remained the top priority. Oberle questioned the need for the new fifth goal, which includes legislative activities, but Krug and Peterson stated that it was valuable to include. Soper proposed several changes, including a suggested revision, which was distributed, of the section covering the non-compliance component found on page 53. Mildbrand questioned the inclusion of a fifth staff position, stating that another position would not be accepted by the full County Board; Oberle explained that he was including that position only to indicate the number of staff that would be required to fully implement the plan, not as a proposal for actually funding a fifth position. Krug mentioned a discrepancy in listing of Kraft Dairy Trust funds on page x, where it is included under forestry, vs. page 67, where it is included under agriculture. Oberle said it should be under nutrient management [agriculture] and that he would correct that on page x. Peterson suggested that it would be beneficial for Zoning and LCD to work more closely together, especially concerning enforcement of NR 115 (Wisconsin Shoreland Protection). Oberle said that it was included in the LWRMP goals. Peterson stated that the LCD had more expertise in some aspects of that and also has more staff. Oberle agreed with working together, noting that LCD has worked with Zoning in other areas and also had some cost-share available for shoreland projects. Peterson observed that LCDs in more

northern counties frequently worked with shoreland issues and that Taylor County was more or less divided, with more shoreland issues in the north and more agricultural issues in the south. Krug said that he thought it was necessary for the LCD to not only work with Zoning but also with towns. **MOTION** by Mildbrand/Soper to approve the Taylor County Land and Water Resource Management Plan with the suggested changes (Soper's revision and other minor corrections and revisions to wording). **MOTION CARRIED.** Oberle circulated the resolution to be sent to the full county board for committee signatures.

MOTION by Peterson/Mildbrand to approve the bills and budget analysis as presented. **MOTION CARRIED.**

NEW BUSINESS:

Reports

Land Conservation Department – Steve Oberle, County Conservationist, reported: Oberle provided background for his credentials for nutrient management planning, noting that according to a letter and follow-up email he received shortly after he came in 1998 and a couple years later, respectively, from Dave Jelenski (DATCP), he met the requirements for developing nutrient plans under ATCP 50.

Natural Resources Conservation Service – Bob Plawski, District Conservationist, reported: The 2011 application period for EQIP (Environmental Quality Incent ended January 14. There were twenty applications: four for grazing including one beginning farmer, seven for cropland practices including three beginning farmers, six for barnyards including one beginning farmer, one for pit closure, and two for manure storage. There were a total of five beginning farmers, which have a separate pool of money. There are two pools of money in the County: cropland and pastureland. All other practices (barnyards, forestry, manure storage) go to the area. Applications will be ranked, and, based on ranking, they will be approved as funds become available. If they are approved by NRCS, farmers whose cost share amounts to less than 70% are encouraged to apply to LCD for additional funds. Beginning farmers get an increased cost-share rate. NRCS utilizes flat rates and funding for some practices is about 50%, so those are the practices that are more likely to get LCD funding. Plawski is in the process of ranking applications. Noonan has been assisting Paul Malovrh from NRCS with designing practices and doing estimates. NRCS received an increase in EQIP funding for 2011, \$15,106,775 state-wide, which was an increase of \$499,000 from 2010. The County received \$61,268 as the base allocation (\$41,467 for cropland practices and \$19,802 for pastureland). That was a decrease in cropland and an increase in pastureland from last year. Last year NRCS used over \$90,000 for pastureland, and NRCS did not use up its cropland pool. This year he expects that they will use up the cropland money because NMPs will be fundable rather than having to be part of a CNMP. While money cannot be moved between pools, it can be moved between counties.

Another program that NRCS is offering is the Conservation Stewardship Program, which rewards good conservation in both agriculture and forestry. The final sign-up is January 21. There are sixteen applications so far this year; Last year all the acres allocated in the state for cropland/pastureland were used, but all the forestry allocation was not; this year there is a push for forestry enrollments. Plawski expects 25-30 applications by the deadline. There were thirty-three contracts last year, and people seem satisfied. Payments ranged from a low of \$400/year for four years for forestry to \$1575 to \$21,000/year for cropland/pastureland.

Oberle asked if there was a state pool for waste storage under EQIP. Plawski said the allocation was for the area, but that it was not specifically for waste storage but rather for farmsteads. The northwest area has a base allocation of \$1,464,960.

Farm Service Agency – Deb Esselman, County Executive Director, reported: Interagency meetings are being held January 18 in Medford, January 19 in Gilman, and January 20 in Phillips. The meetings provide an opportunity for residents to learn about the programs offered by the various agricultural service agencies located in the Ag Center. The 2009 SURE disaster program was announced; producers need to have had insurance on all crops, including hay. However, most farmers do not insure hay. Limited resource farmers, beginning farmers, and socially disadvantaged farmers don't need to have had insurance. DCP is running, and FSA is setting up appointments; sign-up is due by June 1. There is a new crop reporting system, but there are problems with the system, as well as with the maps. Federal employees are coming under scrutiny for possible cuts, and many people who are eligible for retirement are likely to leave. The Farm Bill has been delayed for now.

Wildlife Damage Program – Ed Zydzik, USDA-APHIS, reported: Zydzik summarized that the program pays for damage from deer, bear, geese, turkey, and elk and the producer must have sold at least \$1 worth of goods. They also deal with wolves and other wildlife, but there are no payments. He worked with twenty-two producers in Taylor County; one person will be getting a payment – Keith Skabroud had bear damage of \$2423 and will receive \$1923.05 after the \$500 deductible. They do not yet have a permit for shooting wolves, but they have a special permit to return to the Ocker farm where wolves have been coming right into a barnyard and the concern is human health and safety; twelve wolves were removed last summer. Two more wolves have now shown up. There was another situation in Price County where a wolf came into a yard three times, but the wolf has not returned since Zydzik set up a camera. One producer in the state has lost over thirty calves. Reimbursement at market prices does not cover actual costs. The bear kill was 5,056, which is extremely high. The dog hunters go first in 2011, which usually results in fewer killed than when bait hunters go first. There are more permits available for next year. Sawyer and Rusk Counties are some of the worst areas in the state. A lot of DNR staff are leaving. There is a DNR deer study going on to assess the impact of predators on the deer herd. **MOTION** by Peterson/Smith to approve payment to Keith Skabroud of \$1923.05 for bear damage. **MOTION CARRIED.** Mildbrand had a question about the deer damage program and costs. Although the state has proposed dropping the program, people in the state like it.

Pri-Ru-Ta RC&D – Chris Borden, Coordinator, or Lanice Szomi, Program Manager, reported: Save the date postcard for 2011 Northcentral Conference in conjunction with the Regional Conference set for September in Stevens Point. Wisconsin will also host the national RC&D conference in Madison in June, 2012. The Wisconsin Grass-fed Beef Cooperative member meeting will be held Saturday, January 29, at Hancock. The Northwest Grazing Group has been awarded a DATCP grazing grant for over \$13,000 for an educational demonstration. Grants to fund the educational demonstration for Bob Brandt and the grazing specialists in Ashland, Bayfield, Douglas and Iron Counties are on hold until the federal budget is set and DATCP receives federal funds. Grazing conferences will be held March 10-12. Pri-Ru-Ta RC&D was awarded RAC grants from the US Forest Service in the amounts of \$33,000 for a coordinator for the invasive species coordinator and \$30,000 for a grazing grant to include fencing, water lines, streambank stabilization and other practices on the Darrin Kohls property on Silver Creek. Pri-Ru-Ta is working with the Forest Service to set up a Memorandum of Agreement to facilitate future cooperation with the Forest Service.

Regional Nutrient Management Classes: Lapinski reported that a grant was received in cooperation with Northcentral Technical College, Clark, Marathon, and Taylor Counties to offer nutrient management classes, which are being held in Abbotsford, Medford, Spencer, and Wausau. Computers are furnished by NTC and instructors are from the Land Conservation Departments and UW-Extension in the participating counties. Mildbrand asked about the compliance rate for nutrient management, and Lapinski said it was about 20%. Oberle thought it was less. Smith commented that she thought all farmers were mandated

to have NMPs, and Lapinski explained that although all farmers are required to have a nutrient management plan, the requirement is only enforceable in certain circumstances (e.g. notice of discharge and manure storage) or if cost-share is offered. In response to a question from Krug relative to the Farmland Preservation Program and requirements for nutrient management planning, Oberle said that the LCD would be using NMPs to meet the conservation plan requirements, as well as the nutrient management plan requirement, of the FPP program. Krug noted that there is a requirement for conservation plans in order to qualify for a tax credit. The discussion rolled into a discussion of the Farmland Preservation Program.

Farmland Preservation Program: Lapinski reported that there were thirty-eight contracts in the program, including three new contracts that had been applied for in past years but not completed. Oberle reiterated the plan was to work with the FPP participants to develop a timeline to create a nutrient management plan to meet both the nutrient management plan requirements and the conservation plan requirements. Lapinski distributed a summary of FPP participants. He asked the committee for direction in prioritizing the FPP participants with whom the LCD would work, asking if those whose contracts would expire in 2012 should be the top priority or if everyone in the program should be sent a letter of compliance stating that they have one year to get in compliance and if they do not, their contract would be terminated. Cost-share is not required for those in Farmland Preservation. Krug expressed concern that participants who are not in compliance are taking tax credits; other members agreed. Lapinski pointed out that average credit was \$1300 for 2009 and that sixteen participants had received tax credits. Plawski said that in most programs compliance is required to receive payments and that NRCS does an annual status review to determine compliance. He also said that years ago conservation plans were required for FPP participants. When FPP started, everyone was required to have a conservation plan and if there was no HEL or if they were farming to 'T' or below, that would be documented and in the information put in their file. Plawski questioned if compliance requirements were in the county Farmland Preservation regulations, and Oberle said they were. Lapinski has reviewed all of the files and noted there are only a few people with conservation plans, some with partial information, and some who had nothing. Some participants had apparently started working on their NMPs but had stopped working on them. Krug noted that in the past if someone was not in compliance and was kicked out of the program, they were required to pay back past credits plus interest, as well as not being eligible for more payments. He said something had to be done to bring participants into compliance. While the LCC does not want to fine people, compliance should be required. Oberle said that this issue had been talked about many times and that there were several ways to deal with it. He mentioned prioritizing based on contract expiration date and number of acres, with those expiring soonest and with the most acres being highest on the priority list. He also listed the possibility of prioritizing by location based on watershed. He suggested that those with contracts expiring soon posed an opportunity to still get compliance while there was still some incentive. The committee consensus was that all participants should be sent a letter. Oberle, however, asked for more guidance on prioritizing who to work with and said that he wanted committee feedback on the initial letter. Krug suggested that the LCD prepare a draft letter for the next committee meeting.

2011 LCD Meeting Schedule: Monday, February 14 at 10:00 a.m.; Tuesday, April 19 at 1:00 p.m.; and the following Tuesdays at 9:00 a.m.: June 21, August 16, October 18, and December 20.

Correspondence: WLWCA Board of Directors Conference Call agenda (1/18/11); Big Eau Pleine Task Force agenda (1/20/11); article "Validation of manure on Wisconsin farms"; Discovery Farms newsletter.

Other New Business: Noonan and Lapinski were on-site to observe North Breeze Dairy (NBD) monitoring well borings that were done to monitor water levels in an effort to determine if water in the ground is in a perched water table or is part of the true groundwater table. NBD is also working with DNR to develop a plan for new pump tests.

Mildbrand reported that he had talked to Noonan and Peterson about the monitoring wells and what the results mean. His understanding is that if water levels in the monitoring wells are steady, the water is in a perched water table, which would be favorable to siting of the NBD facilities, and if the water levels fluctuate, the water is part of the groundwater table, which would be favorable to the opponents of NBD. The monitoring wells were installed at two or three sites and at various depths at each site related to the depth of the proposed manure storage facility. Oberle said that Tom Aartila and Dave Johnson, both with DNR, would have more information. Krug said that NBD would not be scheduling another pump test until they are sure of other issues. Oberle commented that he was waiting for a new permit application, but Mildbrand pointed out that NBD needed an approved site plan first so there was no point in submitting a permit application to the LCD at this time.

Future meetings/events: MOTION by Mildbrand/Smith to approve all meetings below.
MOTION CARRIED.

USDA/UWEX/Taylor County Interagency Meetings (Medford/Gilman) January 18-19, 2011
2011 Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Board (Oberle) (Madison) February 1, 2011
2011 Soil and Water Conservation Society Conference (Lapinski, Oberle)(Stevens Point) February 8, 2011
2011 WALCE Annual Training Conference (Oberle) (Wisconsin Rapids) March 2-4, 2011

Next LCC Meeting February 14, 2011

MOTION by Peterson/Smith to adjourn at 12:48 p.m.

Chair	Date
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