

CARIBOU LAKE PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION

Spring Informational Meeting

Saturday May 28, 2011

9:45 a.m. – 12 noon

Meeting Notes

CLPOA Board Members Present: Bill Dunn, Bob Hewitt, Diana Kamp, Fred Morris, Larry Mullen, Jesse Neihart, Bob Reid, Pat Vaughn, Sally Westby . Excused: Louise Suomi.

1.0 Call to order - at 10 a.m. by President Larry Mullen who then introduced the board members present (see above).

2.0 Treasurer's Report – In the absence of Louise Suomi, Mullen gave the treasurer's report. The balance in the treasury as of the annual meeting in September 2010 was \$3441.00. Dues of \$20 are collected once a year at both the spring and fall meetings or via mail. Those present were urged to check at the sign in table to see if they had paid dues yet for 2011.

3.0 Guest Speakers

3.1 Cook County Commissioner Bruce Martinson

Commissioner Martinson told the group that a big issue before the County was whether or not to build a new community center. Part of the funding for the community center could come from the 1% sales tax fund established by Minnesota voters in 2009 for arts and the environment. Other projects for which sales tax funding might be sought are the Superior National Golf Course, biomass, and Birch Grove School. In response to questions, Martinson said there is no current plan to request 1% sales tax funding for broadband.

Association members questioned whether:

- Ø the county had the funds to operate a community center once it was built
- Ø tax dollars should be used for a community center during this time of economic hardship
- Ø funds would be better spent on projects such as the golf course that had more direct economic impact.

3.2 Clint Little – GIS Specialist, Minnesota Department of Natural Resource (MnDNR)

Bill Dunn introduced Clint Little who has been working with the Caribou Lake Property Owners' Association (CLPOA) to identify school trust lands in the Caribou Lake watershed. It is important that we know where these lands are located. Having undeveloped state lands such as these in the watershed and adjacent to the lake has a positive effect on the environment and on property values. While many have assumed these lands would never be developed, there is increasing interest among some legislators in using these lands to

provide enhanced revenue to fund state operations. The information that Little has compiled shows where school trust and other government lands are located as well as which entities have responsibility for them. Most of the school trust lands are in the area northeast of Caribou Lake.

Little said that school trust lands exist throughout the State and were dedicated in the State constitution between 1857-1866. Cook County has approximately 121, 000 acres of school trust land. Most school trust lands are administered by the Department of Forestry. Any sales of school trust lands have legislative oversight and are not easy to do. Exchanges of school trust land for other types of land typically have to involve equal value exchanges. Exchanges can be done between governments or between government and private individuals.

In response to a question, Little said he was not sure if the DNR had been approached recently to exchange school trust land in the Caribou Lake watershed. Bill Dunn noted that there have been sales of public land in the Caribou Lake watershed in recent years. There was a land swap on Bigsby a few years ago and school trust land near the north end of White Sky Trail was sold two years ago. The latter sale is what prompted CLPOA to begin its review of Caribou Lake area school trust lands. In addition, the Department of Natural Resources auctioned off state lease lots on Caribou Lake in the 1990's.

Discussion ensued about ways to protect state lands bordering Caribou Lake. Commissioner Martinson said that Cook County does not have any plans for exchanges of government lands in the CLPOA watershed, but that he will keep CLPOA informed if issues related to these lands arise.

Diana Kamp explained that revenues from any leases/sales of school trust land go into the Permanent School Fund. This is a general fund that is allocated per pupil around the State so proceeds from leases/sales in Cook County do *not* directly benefit Cook County schools. If lands were sold, however, there would be a benefit to County as the land would go on the County tax rolls.

Kamp noted both the importance of both getting more funding for schools **and** protecting the environment. While the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is under increasing pressure to get better returns on the lands it leases, the current law stipulates that leases/sales must be done keeping in mind "sound environmental principles". So far this balance between income and the environment has worked well. There was, however, a serious but so far unsuccessful effort in the 2011 legislature to delete the environmental stipulation from the law. Issues regarding state lands will be back in future legislative sessions and CLPOA will need to remain vigilant and involved.

Members expressed concern about potential sale/loss of state lands in the Caribou Lake Watershed and discussion ensued about how best to keep members informed and how they could influence discussion and legislation.

The CLPOA board will develop a communication to be sent to members and posted on the CLPOA website. Bill Dunn noted the importance of thinking strategically as well about how to involve other interested parties in working on this issue with us.

4.0 Reports

4.1 Water Quality – Bob Reid reminded the group that residents of the Caribou Lake Watershed are financing 5 years of water quality sampling via a special tax that costs each property owner \$18. Five sites have been established on Caribou Lake for sampling each year.

Reid reported that overall there are not big differences in the data from the five sites (appendix A). The data reveals that the phosphorous load starts out relatively low in the spring, gets worse as the summer proceeds but then drops down again in the fall. Other water quality indices (e.g. Secchi disk) show similar patterns. The Caribou Lake Management Plan has established the phosphorus goal for Caribou Lake at 15 parts per billion.

Reid noted that water quality is a dynamic situation. Everything that goes into the lake has an effect on water quality. The best thing we can do is manage our own personal behavior and keep phosphorous out of the lake.

In response to a question, Reid said that taking two readings in August (while only one reading is taken in the other months) could skew averages but that over time this would even out. The goal is to get insight into what happens each year so we can look at long term patterns. Hopefully we will see improvement in water quality as the years go by.

Bill Dunn noted that there is now 100% compliance with the required septic upgrades in the watershed. This should have a positive impact on the amount of phosphorous going into the lake.

4.2 Loon Report – Pat Vaughn reported that loon nestings were not successful last year but that there is hope they will be this year!

4.3 Shoreline Plantings – Jessie Neihart discussed the work he has done to return the shoreline of his property to a more natural state. Professionally he is an environmental preservationist and wanted to see what he could do using native plants and without using herbicides. He distributed three plant lists (appendix B) showing native plants that will survive and do well at Caribou Lake.

Neihart said that the Caribou Lake shore line can be hard to work in and that for many property owners the best they can do is a buffer strip of healthy native plantings. No matter what kind of soil you have, you can always enhance it. If you have turf grass, you should

consider a minimum of a 10 foot buffer or alternately, just let the grass grow. Gravel does *not* stop water flow and is not a good idea near the lake.

It is important to know your seed/plant source so that you do not introduce noxious weeds such as trefoil, reed canary grass and Canada goldenrod. In response to a question, Neihart said that Cook County does have more noxious weeds than it used to have. The County recently hired a noxious weed coordinator.

Neihart cautioned about planting *in* the water. Aquatic plants are beautiful but also very good at carrying invasives so you might inadvertently be bringing in something such as purple loosestrife.

There are a number of websites where you can purchase native plants (see appendix B.) In the interest of full disclosure, Neihart noted that he is an employee of Prairie Restorations one of the companies listed. The plants on the DNR website are not really applicable to Caribou Lake since most are for sandy lake shores.

If you wish to put down a cover crop while waiting for wild flowers to grow, consider oats or winter wheat rather than annual rye. The former cover well and will die and not return.

5.0 Lutsen Fire Station Improvements – *Pat Vaughn MOVED that CLPOA contribute \$500 to assist with the expansion of the Lutsen Volunteer Fire Department facilities. The motion was SECONDED by Don Sivertson and CARRIED.*

6.0 Upcoming Events

The 7th Annual **Caribou Lake Flotilla and potluck will be held on Saturday July 2 beginning at 2 p.m. at the Public Access.** Water craft will float around the northwest bay (between the access and Dunn's point) and then return to the public access for a potluck picnic. (Appendix C).

6.0 Stewardship Award – Larry Mullen presented Bill Dunn with the Stewardship and Distinguished Service Award for his outstanding efforts on behalf of Caribou Lake.

7.0 Adjourn – 12 noon

8.0 Next Meeting – Saturday Sept 3rd @9:45 a.m. – 12 noon. Location to be announced