

PLAA ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES - 2022

After meet and greet from 10:00-10:30 am the business meeting was convened at 10:30 July 23, 2022 by Peter Rauen, acting Chairperson. There were 28 people in attendance.

Peter recognized Doug Graham who reminded us of the value of PLAA. We haven't had an annual meeting for 3 years because of Covid, although we did get together at Biz Clark's home last year to renew friendships and discuss some concerns. Doug went on to outline how, in the past, PLAA had been involved in educating members regarding septic regulations, working with a hydrologist for lake level concerns, working with the Sheriff's department to control speed along the Gunflint trail, developed a welcome package for members and, of course, has been active in measuring lake water quality. He discussed the results of core sampling done in 2019 and reported by Dr. Mark Edlund, Senior Scientist Science Museum of Minnesota^[1] St. Croix Watershed Research Center indicating Poplar was as pristine as it was 200 years ago.

Peter then introduced Biz Clark who shared that her dog has been diagnosed with Blastomycosis, a fungal lung infection, that can be fatal to animals and humans if not treated. Cook county has the highest levels of this disease in the state with 30 cases (in animals) in the county so far. With treatment there is an 85% cure rate. Symptoms include: lethargy, weight loss, coughing and increased thirst.

Guest speakers included:

Ann Sullivan, Cook County Commissioner for District 4.

The Gunflint Trail Scenic Byway Committee formed a subcommittee, including mid-trail residents, called Byway, Safety and Signs, which is chaired by Ann. Sheriff Eliassen and Highway Engineer Robbie Haas also participated in those meetings. Additional signs were added to the existing 40 mph signage posts, saying "Next 2.5 miles" and two moose crossing signs (designed by Nancy Seaton) will be placed in the near future. Visit Cook County has added electronic information for tourists stressing the need to slow down for the safety of two and four legged creatures; their support of our safety needs is appreciated. Newspaper articles, both local and regional, and radio coverage, are helping to get the word out.

Our local Soil and Water Conservation District meets monthly. Most of the waters in our county are in good shape, so we need to focus on education and protection. Aquatic invasive species are in a handful of our lakes, so the "Clean, Drain, Dry" initiative is really important. We have a number of terrestrial invasives, so Tia Parks of the Highway Department is our specialist in that area and leads the Cook County Invasives Team which meets quarterly with multiple agencies (USFS, DNR, County, and Arrowhead Electric) to cooperatively and efficiently deal with those terrestrial invasives.

On a water related note, it was announced that there will be a meeting at the Seagull Community Center on August 16 at 5:00 p.m. for stakeholders regarding the newly created Rainy River/Vermillion River One Watershed One Plan. The focus at the end of the trail is protection of those waters.

Tim Nelson, Director of Land Services, was unable to be in attendance today due to the Cook County Hazardous Waste Event today. Ann had shared concerns with him from the recent MidTrail Property Owners meeting regarding the recycling trailer at Loon Lake. A flier with information was made available to those attending today. It was stated that everyone

appreciated the fact the site had been graded and smoothed to ease access to the trailer. Question: Clear cutting trees along the Gunflint was a great concern. Ann was asked about the Gunflint Scenic Byway Group preventing this; she reiterated what Nancy Seaton shared a couple of weeks ago. The group has no legal authority. Letters and phone calls by any individuals—not just members of the GTSB—to the USFS are appropriate and may influence USFS decision-making. Ann felt the USFS has been listening and seeking outside perspectives, as evidenced by the field trip last fall provided to the GTSB near Lullaby Creek, which is part of an upcoming USFS project. If you have concerns, you can contact the Forest Service through email: michaelcrotteau@fs.fed.us, but he is on a four-month fire detail. For now, you can contact Joseph Mundell at joseph.mundell@usda.gov or Gene Dressely at gene.dressely@usda.gov (or call 218-387-5004).

Lastly, spruce budworm is an issue. Ann mentioned the issue is widespread throughout the county and is discussed monthly at the Firewise meeting. Then, she introduced Elsa Lunde, from Firewise, to provide more detailed information

Elsa Lunde, Cook County Firewise Coordinator

SPRUCE BUDWORM:

Eric Otto, a DNR forest health specialist, has an interview on WTIP on the spruce budworm in Cook County. Spruce budworm is a native caterpillar that prefers to feed on balsam. During outbreaks, the caterpillar will also feed on white/black spruce, tamarack, and pine. Outbreaks occur every 30 to 40 years and last about 8-10 years. Balsam fir should be thinned out to mitigate spruce budworm damage to your property and the forest. Firs that stick out above the forest canopy are more attractive to moths laying eggs so thinning out young and old balsam is important. Individual trees can be sprayed with a natural pesticide, BT but it is not a forest-wide solution.

Eric also mentions that an army worm outbreak may also be on the near horizon. While army worms are less of a worry to forest health compared to spruce budworms, they are a pest no less.

BRUSH PICK-UP/CHIPPER DAYS

There is funding for brush pick-up and chipper days, some communities have already been awarded funds for this summer/fall. In-kind hours are very important for Firewise funding. In-kind hours are time spent reducing wildfire risk to your property, they include a variety of normal activities that you do every year such as mowing your lawn and cleaning your gutters.

NATIVE AMERICAN FIRE CONTROL

A video has been created on the history of Native Americans in the Great Lake Region and how they used fire intentionally to manage the ecosystems they lived in. The video, Oshkigin: Spirit of Fire, highlights the deep, reciprocal relationship with the land and the role fire plays in that relationship. This story is told by Ojibwe Wildland firefighters, Fond du Lac elder Vern Northrup and Damon Panek. You can watch the video on the Cook County Firewise website here: <https://cookcountyfirewise.org/2022/03/23/watch-oshkigin-spirit-of-fire/>.

WHAT IS FIREWISE

The most recent Firewise article: "What is Firewise" has been posted on Boreal Community Connections and the Cook County Firewise website. The article provides a layout of the structure of the Firewise Program.

POPLAR LAKE

Poplar Lake has many Firewise Ambassadors that cover the entire lake, including islands. Firewise also has certified Firewise Communities across the county. Firewise Communities assess the wildfire risk of their community then make a Community Fire Adaptation Action Plan to reduce that risk and carry out that plan over the years. There is a possibility of making all of the Lake a certified Firewise Community. (PLAA members were emailed firewise informations and a link to the Native American fire control video. If you did not receive one, let us know)

Pat Eliassen, Cook County Sheriff

Speed control on the Gunflint trail 40 mph zone. Sheriff Eliassen agreed this was a problem and a deputy on the highway yesterday gave 8 tickets. He described the staffing problem he has with his staff down from 8 to 6 persons now and potentially losing another deputy soon. He said that he and his staff are working many extra hours but encouraged calls to the department as needed. If calling about a reckless driver he asked that we try to get license plate number and state. He will have a deputy on the Gunflint as often as that is possible. He felt he may well not be up to normal staffing until Christmas. Ann Sullivan thanked him and his staff for their hard work.

Question:

Are salaries competitive? The county is now studying competitive pay, although Sheriff Eliassen did feel salaries with additional payments were competitive....here is a problem with too few candidates and housing in Cook County makes it difficult to move here.

Question:

Would speed bumps help to limit drivers to 40mph? The Sheriff felt they may be helpful but were very hard on campers and boat trailers.
Would traffic constrictors, as those in Beaver Bay, be helpful? Sheriff Eliassen agreed they may be.

Question:

Mona Hanson asked about radar signs stating that next to citations they were the most efficient way to slow traffic. There were many persons in agreement and concerned re speeding danger as there are 80 driveways in the 2.5 mile stretch of 40 mph limit. These signs would not interfere with the Scenic byway status.

Matt Weberg, Assistant Area Fisheries Supervisor, Grand Marais

Handed out summary of Poplar Lake Management Plan. Poplar Lakes primary fish species is walleye with stocking of fingerlings every odd-numbered year, 4 year surveys of the lake and management plan revisions every 10 years. Poplar is considered a high priority lake. There is also consideration of a 17-26 inch protected slot size limit coupled with a bag limit of 3 fish to protect breeding fish. (PLAA members were emailed a complete Poplar Lake Management report. If you did not receive one please let us know)

Peter Rauen discussed the revisions of the bylaws and asked for approval. There was unanimous approval.

Peter Rauen discussed the Committee members;

Chairpersons: Peter Rauen and Biz Clark

Secretary: Peter Rauen

Treasurers: Linda Moss and Tom Saunders (second signer)
and asked for approval. There was unanimous approval.

Peter Rauen called on Patti Craddock to discuss the lake management plan. She thanked all who have worked on the plan in the past and helped us in understanding our lake. Patti reported improved health of our lake and asked for volunteers to help in updating it. She also reminded us to fill out the lake survey that has been emailed to members. Biz Clark and Doug Graham volunteered to assist in this update.

Peter called on Doug Graham who reminded the group that there is a place for all Poplar Lake residents in the PLAA. Minutes will be sent to those who were unable to attend, there are small projects planned such as cleaning the roadsides annually and he encouraged us to consider being a Firewise Adaptive Community. Finally, we ask that you share this information with you neighbors on Poplar Lake to help us be more inclusive.

There was a round of applause for Joan and Harvey Perusse who were instrumental in founding PLAA but were unable to attend. You are missed. Peter Rauen closed the meeting at 12:00 noon July 23, 2022.

Approved: _____ Peter Rauen, PLAA Co-Chair

Approved: _____ Barbara Clark, PLAA Co-Chair