

news

Land and Water Committee learns status of DNR applications

by Will LaBreche
Staff Writer

County Land and Water Committee members were updated on the progress of two ongoing projects last Thursday.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) told the committee that the county's first proposal — to lower the Highway NN culverts as part of the Round Lake watershed project — had moved on to consultants.

Dave Kafura, water management specialist with the WDNR, said that the proposal went to Bill Clark, DNR regional program manager in Spooner, and consultation has begun with the Voight Task Force, an extension of the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission.

The main concern for the Task Force, Kafura said, will be the wild rice area created by the culverts under Highway NN. Other culturally-sensitive issues could arise from this project, Kafura said.

As part of the Round

Lake watershed plan, the culverts under Highway NN would have to be lowered and another culvert added in order to meet the flow models designed by Short Elliot Hendrickson, Inc. (SEH) engineers. During meetings of the now disbanded Round Lake Task Force, the Lac Courte Oreilles tribe expressed concern that the lowering of the culverts would eliminate a wild rice bed growing in that area. It has yet to be determined whether the riced area is natural or planted.

Kafura explained that the project application was submitted by the county and has to receive approval from the WDNR. Part of that process will involve consulting with the Voight Task Force before final approval or rejection of the plan is issued by the WDNR.

The DNR is awaiting word from the Voight Task Force before proceeding.

Placid Lake diversion project

On the second project,

an application for the abandonment of the Placid Lake dam, the WDNR delivered a letter to the county last week requesting additional information.

"A lot of times (with) smaller projects, information is more of a mental shorthand than is actually put on paper. In this particular case, we want it on paper," Kafura said. "I want to make sure we have everything in front of us."

Kafura wants to make certain that the WDNR is given all the details of the project in order to respond to any public comments or questions that might arise during the public hearing process.

"Each project is unique," Kafura said, adding that there is "no checklist" for dam abandonment applications. As a result of the initial application, Kafura put together a list of issues that need to be addressed before the review can be finished. These recommendations, when addressed, will help the process move along more smoothly.

Sawyer County paid

\$4,200 for the abandonment study, completed by SEH Engineering. When contacted about the information lacking in the application, SEH told County Conservationist Dale Olson that the \$4,200 had already been used and amendments to the application would require further funding.

"We paid for this. As far as I'm concerned, the \$4,200 should have covered (the study); this oversight is not our problem," committee member Shirley Riedmann stated. "I think SEH should eat the difference because they didn't complete it in its entirety."

"The engineer dropped the ball, plain and simple," Zeitlow said.

Olson drafted a response to Kafura's issues with the application. According to Kafura, Olson's responses satisfied 90 percent of his concerns and the rest could be handled by the Land and Water office.

Comments:
will.labreche@mx3.com