

Natural Resources Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes

April 22, 2009

Members Present:

Richard Mark	Joyce O'Keefe	Claudia Emken
Dennis Ferrel	Dick Wren	Gene Abbott
Randy Blackford	Pat Kernan	Larry Lucas
Richard Mark	Joe Pearson	

DNR Staff Present:

Marc Miller	Deborah Stone	Leslie Sgro
Mike Conlin	Tim Schweizer	Virginia Yang
Tami Evans		

Chairman Mark began the meeting at 1:00 p.m.; roll call was given and quorum was met.

The January 13, 2009 minutes and the April 22, 2009 were adopted; no opposition was heard.

Election of Chairman/Vice Chairman – Randy Blackford, along with Joe Pearson nominated Richard Mark for Chair. Motion was adopted; no opposition was heard. Joe Pearson, along with Randy Blackford nominated Claudia Emken for Vice Chair. Motion was adopted; no opposition was heard.

DNR Direction - Marc Miller – Director Miller provided the Board with a list of priorities and asked that the Advisory Board take an active role in a number of issues, set priorities, and engage the help of our constituents to begin working through them. Priorities include: 1) Restoring faith in DNR with its constituents; 2) Youth recruitment – engage our young constituents, involve them in outdoor activities; 3) Public Access – address access issues to private lands to sustain the traditions enjoyed by so many.

The Director asked that everyone continue to work on openness and transparency and to use these tools and priorities to rebuild the faith in DNR.

Budget – Director Miller provided the Board with a power point presentation of the FY10 budget. DNR has not been a priority in the past few years; last year the Agency had a \$19 million dollar budget veto in General Revenue Funds. Because of the \$19 million veto, available cash will be diminished. It will be imperative to work at replenishing funds and keeping them solvent in the next few years.

Department priorities include a \$35 million dollar increase; 14% over last year's levels. This will allow for some flexibility in additional headcount.

The Historic Preservation Agency will be merging with Agency. This merger will bring additional staff and additional funds into the Agency.

The Governor is committed to rebuilding DNR. To do this we must work on protecting our dedicated funds and provide the kind of accountability that the public demands, and we need a budget increase to restore the \$19 million veto.

To date, the State parks have opened, DNR has received an increase in spending authority for a new conservation police officer trainee class; the IL Natural Areas Inventory is continuing and DNR will have \$1 million for federal funding that will help access FEMA money for disaster relief purposes.

The Board made several suggestions on ways to increase funding opportunities. They include:

- .5% sales tax on sporting goods.
- Look at ways to get money from private endowment funds.
- Develop relationships with the University's. Students could assist and connect in many ways through a University project in a state park.
- Target entities for land acquisition opportunities.

The Director thanked the Board for their suggestions and added that the Agency is looking at every opportunity to find additional and dedicated funding sources and that any opportunity to partner with our constituents should happen.

Larry Lucas asked that a process be put into place that addresses the Boards suggestions and ideas. The Director stated that he is in the process of revising, reviewing and implementing new committees to address issues. This will allow the Board to be heard and an avenue to move forward with ideas/suggestions.

Richard Mark suggested that the Board look at the NRAB committee structure and focus on getting these ideas/suggestions formulated in the committees. Once they are formulated, they can be presented to the full Board. Claudia suggested holding the committee's and the Board meetings throughout the State so that constituents can participate. Joyce asked that the committee's meet on the same day as the Advisory Board.

The Director suggested that four to five committees consisting of Deer Task Force, Youth Recruitment, Public Access, and Funding be established. Once these committee's are established, the Department will help with suggestions and with getting the constituent

groups involved. Committee hearings should be recorded and formal responses should be brought back to the Board. Pat Kernan asked that there be a staff person assigned to each committee so when questions arise they will have someone to go to.

The Director provided the Board with a summary of the Department's FY10 proposed fee increases and asked for the Board to help in any way it could. After a lengthy discussion, Director Miller stated that these increases are a cautious approach to Department needs. The implementation timeline gives the Agency time to work through the details of the proposed increases.

Larry Lucas recommended that the Board take two minutes to go through each of the proposed fee increases and provide the Director with their recommendations. Joe Pearson seconded the motion; Joyce O'Keefe opposed. Motion carried.

Joe Pearson provided a motion to increase the recommended State Park Parking Fee to \$7.00 for in state visitors and \$10.00 for out of state visitors. Included in the motion is to increase the recommended annual parking pass to \$30.00 for in state users and \$40.00 for out of state users. Larry Lucas provided the second; Joyce, Claudia & Pat opposed.

After a brief discussion, Pat Kernan suggested that a motion be made to accept and support the general fee increase schedule as stated and then vote on the individual fee increases. Dennis Ferrell provided the second; Gene Abbott opposed. Motion carried.

Larry Lucas made a motion to increase the recommended State beach user fee to \$3.00 per person and \$7.00 per family. Joe Pearson provided the second.

Claudia suggested that the Board acknowledge its support of the fee proposals but in an effort to understand them and have the opportunity to review them thoroughly, they should be discussed in the funding committee.

Deborah Stone added that these proposals are not locked in and will not be voted on at this time. Leslie Sgro added that the vast majority of these fees will go through the administration rule process and two proposals require legislation. For those that do require the ad rule process, there is some time to weigh in and any recommendations can be made in committee. It is anticipated that those that do require legislation will be included in the budget process.

Pat Kernan made a motion, as a general statement, that the Board accepts the proposed fee increases but feels that they are low and should be adjusted. Joyce O'Keefe provided the second. Randy Blackford & Gene Abbott opposed. Motion carried.

Deer Task Force – Mike Conlin – Mike provided the Board with an update on the Deer Task Force recommendations and implementation process. For clarity and informational purposes, a copy of the May 4, 2009 press release of these changes is included with these minutes.

Randy Blackford made a motion to allow unfilled youth permits to be used in the late season. Larry Lucas provided the second. No opposition was heard; motion carried.

Randy also asked that the Department look at using rifles that shoot straight wall cartridges during the firearm deer season. Pat Kernan suggested that the use of crossbows be allowed for youth 16 and under. Chairman Mark asked that these recommendations be taken up within the committee's, formalize a recommendation and present them to the full board.

Board Comments:

Quail Unlimited has contacted Dennis Ferrell and inquired as to when DNR will release money for seed and chemical. Staff will follow up and reach out Dennis.

Joe Pearson stated that it is refreshing and engaging to have a Director at the helm that you feel is listening and that will breathe life into the Department.

Richard added that it will be up to the Board to work on restructuring the committee's so that suggestions/ideas can be done in a formalized manner.

Larry Lucas asked if the Advisory Board felt that they should be listed in the Hunting & Fishing digests with appropriate contact information so that constituents can reach out to them. Richard Mark added that the Board e-mail contact information is on the DNR web page and that if he receives questions, he forwards them on to appropriate DNR staff. Richard suggested that an advisory board in box be set up so that if constituents want to contact them, they could do so. Richard suggested that this topic be discussed at the June 2009 meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for June 25.

Randy Blackford motioned to adjourn, with Joyce O'Keefe providing the second. Board adjourned at 3:25.