

Natural Resources Advisory Board

Minutes – October 30, 2007

Members Present:

Joe Pearson	Randy Blackford	Claudia Emken	Dick Wren
Dennis Ferrell	Joyce O’Keefe	Pat Kernan	Richard Mark
Randy Blackford			

IDNR Staff Present:

Deborah Stone	Tom Dilello	Greg Akers	Dave Sellman
Mick Rosendahl	Emily Chezem	Sue Eubanks	Steve Gonzales
Jan Nation	Ellen Pietrzak-King	Bill Richardson	Leslie Sgro
Mike Mason	Tami Evans		

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

The June 19, 2007 minutes and the October 30, 2007 agenda were adopted by a motion provided by Dick Wren with Joyce O’Keefe providing the second.

OSLAD Grants/Subcommittee Report – Joyce O’Keefe/Tom Dilello - Copies of the subcommittee report prepared by Joyce O’Keefe were given to the board. Joyce noted that the committee, consisting of herself, Dick Wren and Sharon Morelli were pleased with the number of good applications received and that the number of land acquisitions had increased. 84 applicants requesting \$29.8 million were heard. 16 applications were for land acquisitions, five requested money for development on donated land and the remaining were for existing projects. Requests for dog parks are becoming frequent, and due to some concerns, the committee recommended that the board consider taking a close look at these types of requests. The subcommittee recommended that projects 1-70 be fully funded, and should additional monies become available, alternate projects in rank order be funded as recommended by staff. Joe Pearson provided a motion to accept both the subcommittee and staff recommendations; Joyce O’Keefe provided the second. A roll call and voice vote on the motion was given; all members present accepted the motion and no opposition were heard. Both Dick Wren and Joyce O’Keefe expressed their appreciation of the professionalism shown by Grants staff throughout the OSLAD process. Randy thanked the committee for investing their time and efforts in the OSLAD hearing process and for their recommendations to the Board.

DNR Budget – Ellen King-Pietrzak – Ellen provided the board with an overview of the Department’s FY08 budget; a copy will be provided. Increases include operations and new appropriations for capital, and personal service lines. Total budget for FY08 is \$634 million;

General Revenue funds are down but other state and federal funds are up. Several new initiatives are included in the FY08 process. Fiscal staff continues to look for alternate revenue streams as there has been some decline in certain areas.

Discussion ensued on the decline of hunting & fishing license revenues. Mike Conlin attended the Midwest Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies annual meeting earlier this year and added that a national survey shows that hunting & fishing license sales are declining. Mike stated that not as many individuals are participating in outdoor activities and that looking into alternative funding is imperative. Mike noted that because of these trends, the Department has several programs geared towards encouraging youth interest in natural resource activities. The Urban Fishing Program which encourages youth to fish and the Hunter Apprentice Program which allows youth the opportunity to experience hunting opportunities with a licensed individual prior to purchasing a hunting license. Illinois is also proposing an internet based hunter safety education program and would like to capture federal reimbursement monies for on-line classes.

Suggestions given to look at potential funding sources include:

Chairman Blackford suggested that the Department look at the possibility of allowing youth who purchase permits the opportunity to hunt every season as long as they are with their parents. It could potentially increase the number of permits bought. Randy also suggested a sales tax on sporting goods, recreational equipment. Several states already do this.

Dennis Ferrell suggested looking at a tax on outfitters.

Claudia added that several states had generated a report to look at dedicated funding sources that various states use and what successes were found. In addition, TNC and Trust for Public Land commissioned through the Environmental Council on looking at dedicated sources of funding as potential sources for Illinois. Claudia suggested that the Board have someone do a presentation on both at the next meeting.

After much discussion, Pat Kernan made a motion that the Board send a letter of support to the Illinois Delegation regarding the Department's interest in capturing federal reimbursement dollars for the on-line study portion of the hunter safety education classes. Joe Pearson provided the second. All board members present were in favor of the motion; no opposition was heard.

Urban Forestry – Leslie Sgro/Mike Mason – The Urban Forestry program is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service. The Department receives an annual allocation from the Forest Service to administer grant programs in the State of Illinois. The grant works as a 50/50 reimbursement program; DNR expends funds and then is reimbursed 50%. Due to some concerns with closing out past grants, and to ensure that DNR did not lose out on future monies, an agreement with the USDA Forest Service allowed DNR to direct FY07 dollars to natural resource partners for administering purposes. Chicago Wilderness and the Morton Arboretum helped with this process. The Division of Forestry assists communities with

a variety tree maintenance and management issues. Informational materials on Division of Forestry programs will be sent to the Board.

SB17 – Leslie Sgro/Mike Mason – In October, the Governor signed SB17, a new law providing tax incentives to landowners for conservation management. SB17 is the outcome of the Wooded Land Task Force and evolved because of a discrepancy among counties in how certain lands were being assessed. Individuals who had small tracts of land not being used agriculturally were at risk for significant increased assessments. SB17 allows for a broad based conservation stewardship program allowing individuals who have an approved conservation management plan an exemption. Deputy Director Sgro and Mike provided the board with the logistics of the program and answered questions from the board. Copies of a recent press release on SB17 were made available. Because of the interest in this, Claudia recommended that a notification through the “Dear Friends of DNR” letter be sent out regarding the drafted emergency rules.

HB33 Dam Safety – Gary Clark – HB33 was created to focus on improving public safety on rivers throughout the state and creates warning and enforcement standards on publicly owned dams. Gary provided a power point presentation on Safety at Dams, Dam Modifications and Dam Removal Issues. Throughout Illinois, there are historic, century old lowhead dams that cross the full length of the river and pose significant dangers to recreational users. Safety campaigns from brochures to public service announcements have been sent out throughout Illinois warning of these dangers. In addition, a consultant has been hired by the State do an evaluation of all the run-of-river dams on public waterways to improve safety measures, including suggestions for signage and buoy placement and dam related options. Hard copies of the power point presentation were given to the Board.

2008 Board Dates – Randy Blackford – The first meeting of 2008 will be February 7th. Other dates tentatively include April 29, June 25, and October 21. If there are any conflicts with these dates, they will be revised at the February 2008 meeting.

No public comments were heard. Meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.