

CWC Comp Rec Plan Advisory Group Meeting

Tuesday, October 26th at 6pm in Land Services Conference Room in the Land Services Building (322 Laurel Street, Brainerd, MN 56401)

In attendance: Brett Hardy*, Bob Manning*, Paul Thiede*, Mary Claire Ryan*, Russell Heittola*, Larry Moses*, Gail Brecht*, Bryan Pike***, Kirk Titus***, Katie Fernholz**, William Durham, Dave Clute, Jack McAllister, Mark Ostgarden, Duane Smedsrud, Peter Nelson, Paula Robinson, Daniel Olmschenk

* - advisory group member, ** - project coordinator, *** - Land Services Department staff

Agenda

6pm	Welcome/overview
6:10-6:30	Presentation of Water Trails & Other Types
6:30-6:40	Brainstorming ground gules
6:40-7:40	Brainstorming
7:40	Summary
7:45	Public comment
8:00	Adjourn

Next meeting: Nov. 30th

Review of 9/28/10 meeting notes – incorporation of clarifications on pages 3 and 4

Presentation made by Bryan Pike, Crow Wing County Land Services Department regarding water trails. Presentation posted at:

<http://www.dovetailinc.org/files/CWCPresentation102610sm.pdf>

Comments from Jack McAllister, Cuyuna Heritage:

“If you search on the internet for Minnesota portage trails, most of the information is on two trails, the grand portage and the Savanna portage. You will find nothing about the historically important portage trails right here in Crow Wing County.

One trail ran between Riverton and Rabbit Lake following the Rabbit River chain of lakes. Because of a large bow in the Mississippi, it is a shortcut, which shortens the distance by nine miles. Logging and mining affected the water levels which are now lower than in Indian times, but it is still navigable and on public land and waters.

Another ran from the Rabbit river chain thru Serpent Lake, Reno Lake, Long Lakes and Bay Lake to Mille Lacs Lake. Indian Carry Road in Deerwood was part of this portage.

If you can imagine traffic from Crow Wing to Sandy Lake or from Leech Lake to Mille Lacs Lake or from Gull Lake to Cedar Lake and Aitkin, you will know why we call Cuyuna Country the hub of Indian trails and portages in Central Minnesota.

We are fortunate that there are nine large volumes, over 2,000 pages of historical data called the Rabbit Lake Cases, all of which pertain to these old Indian portage routes. The Crow Wing County historical museum has these books in which there are stories told by Indians, missionaries, trappers, loggers and miners. One story is of a missionary from St. Anthony who was invited to spend the winter with Hole In The Day. After a tedious journey he found Hole In The Day camped on the Rabbit River.

A few tidbits of Indian lore: Ojibwe Chief Hole In The Day was born on Madeline Island, was made Chief and had a village at Sandy Lake and later had a village at Riverton. Hole In The Day II was born at Sandy Lake. Hole In The Day's brother – Strong Ground, was positioned to prevent the Sioux from using the Rabbit River shortcut. These Chiefs would have traveled each fall through the mentioned portage routes, on the annual elk and buffalo hunting forays from these areas to Long Prairie, staying the winter and coming back in the spring for the maple syrup run. There was a trading post at Riverton and one of the most famous Indians from our area, Indian Jack, is buried alongside of the road in Wolford Township. Other burial sites and mounds have been found in Cuyuna Country.

Most of you have heard of the John Beargrease sled dog race, which runs on the north shore to commemorate the mail route of that famous musher. There should be a similar event tracing the Rabbit river portage. The canoeists would start at Riverton, complete the portage as far as Highway 6 and then take the Mississippi loop back to their cars. Wouldn't that be a great bragging right for Crow Wing County?"

Comments from Paula Robinson:

- Member of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, knowledgeable about local Indian history and sites of historical and cultural importance
- Writing a book addressing history of American Indians in the region
- Interested in preservation of historic sites, only some are on the national registry. Need to preserve sites at Wolford Lake.
- Would like sites to be documented and added to the register in collaboration with the State Historic Preservation Office
- Sites could be documented as places for tourists to visit along trails
- The town of Manganese has important Indian and early settler history
- Brainerd was originally a trading spot

Brainstorming:

Ground Rules for the Advisory Group

- 1 person speaks at a time
- All share ideas, everyone participates
- Questions welcome for clarification
- No one may criticize another
- Ideas may be reviewed for themes
- Feelings may be expressed
- Discussions are about positions not personalities
- Listen respectfully and sincerely – try to understand others

Ground Rules for Facilitator

- Make participants comfortable
- Share/enforce ground rules
- Communicate with each participant
- Act neutral
- Stay positive
- Allow thinking time
- Avoid lengthy comments, verbal rewards, leading or loaded questions, or know-it-all tone

What is Present that supports Water Trails

(e.g., what are you glad the county already has?)

(includes comments from the Advisory Group and public input)

- Water
- Mississippi River (backbone)
- Landings
- Designated campsites
- Public land bordering waterways
- Good supply of water trails
- A sufficient number of potential water trails
- Lot of history along water trails
- Some documented identification of historical waterways and related sites
- Extensive mapping with warnings of dangerous areas, dams, etc.
- Some documented identification of historic waterways and related areas
- Cuyuna Rec. Area – connected mine pits (no portaging/could portage to more)
- High public support for non-motorized water trails
- Fish
- Ducks, waterfowl, geese
- Wild rice
- Wildlife
- Data gathered at French Rapids, Rabbit Row landings (user numbers, etc)
- Demand for motorized water trails
- Good maps available
- Remote areas that are still close
- Nisswa Lake, Roy Lake, etc. in west-central part of county
- Businesses that support canoeing, fishing, boating, camping
- Kayaking one of fastest growing sports
- Active kayak club
- Law enforcement, safety coverage to accommodate concerns
- Resorts on lakes
- Lakes connected with rivers and streams
- Rapid River Resort? Still open?
- Water skiing, Personal Watercraft on lakes
- Wakeboarding
- Swimming
- Paul Bunyan Scenic Highway (driving trail) – resource to include on maps
- Maps identifying public waterways, protected water status
- Protected public waters
- DNR website (online info. more current)
- Dispute of navigable waters (Rabbit Lake cases – court testimony)
- Merrifield business rents canoes, etc. and does drop-off/pick-up
- Also business in Crosby
- Preservation efforts
- County water patrol (lakes, rivers) – on call
- State and county agencies that maintain boat landings, campgrounds, etc.
- Whitefish chain of lakes
- Canoe licenses
- Camp Ripley Vet. Memorial Trail (in planning stages) – water trail
- Mississippi River Revitalization Project

What is Missing to support Water Trails

(e.g., what do you wish the county had?)

(includes comments from the Advisory Group and public input)

- Maps at welcome center; chamber of commerce
- Info about what is navigable (current reports of water levels)
- More accesses
- Need more accesses on Pine River (e.g. places to get out within recreational timeframes)
- Definition of what a water trail is or isn't
- Lack transportation back to access points (one business in Crosby)
- Advertising of what we have
- Place to get info about conditions
- Agreement on if all trails are motorized or non-motorized
- Agreement to establish appropriate trail criteria for water trails
- Designated campsites – county development of old DNR campsites by Wolford?
- Kayaks not licensed? Less than 12 feet
- Maps need to be updated (e.g. missing carry-in sites)
- Info on historical areas
- Tubing operation on Pine River (closed)
- Identification of important historical/architecture along Mississippi and right next to it – area was a big activity area
- Better coordination between agencies and units of government about what we have and where (e.g., unused DNR campsites)
- More designated routes
- More sufficient enforcement to patrol water trail issues (e.g., boats) – not enough for all the water? Risk of accidents
- One stop source of maps for all forms of recreation trails
- Need to GPS points of interest along rivers
- Data on potential economic development
- Data on money spent on law enforcement and related emergency costs compared to other trails
- Info about money for trails, who pays – where money comes from for development

Priorities

- Advertising – “Brainerd Rivers Area”
- Link county website to DNR and other government sites (also chamber of commerce, etc.)
- More info on historical sites
- Promotion and public info to outline history and promote respect and use but not abuse of area
- Data on how many people use summer water trails
- Coordination between agencies (e.g. on info collected, reprinting maps by Mississippi Headwaters Board) – need to share information
- Need updated maps
- More accesses on existing routes we have

Public Comment

Jack – Important to have respect for areas. Old maps have trail from Brainerd to Rabbit Lake that follows the current snowmobile trail. Could make public aware of roads, trails that follow historic routes. Army Corp of Engineers claims no records of water levels before mining/logging altered levels with dams and dam removals. We have many resources, including the Journals of Zebulon Pike and the Rabbit Lake cases.

Dave Clute - Potential for white water trail in Brainerd. Water diversion can construct rapids and could create an attraction and training opportunity. Would need to analyze appropriate location. Could be compatible with other “risk recreation” users.

Jack – 15’ drop between Pascal and Rabbit Lake – portage is there to avoid existing rapids.

Jack – How is public waterway determined? What are the factors related to ownership rights?

Bryan – Need to look at public access rights to travel drainages between lakes.

Adjourn 7:50pm