BIG CHETAC AND BIRCH LAKES ASSOCIATION STAKEHOLDERS COMMITTEE MEETING JANUARY 25, 2017 APPROVED 3-2-2017

Facilitator: Dave Blumer (DB), LEAPS

*Minutes prepared by LEAPS based on a digital recording of the meeting.

Participants:

BCABLA: Mark Robinson, Bill Miller

Birch Lake: Steve Longacre

Town of Birchwood: Romaine Quinn

Village of Birchwood: Virginia Hurckman

Town of Edgewater: Not Present

Fred Thomas Resort: Julie Thomas-Telitz

Maple Terrace Resort: Not Present

Red Cedar River Partnership: Gerry Johnson

WDNR: Alex Smith

Facilitator's Update

Summary of Big Chetac and Birch Lakes grant

DB:

- Budget:
  - Total Cost: 45,308
  - State Share Requested: $25,000
  - Sponsor (BCABLA) Match: $20,308
    - This is a combination of money, donated boat use, and volunteer time.
- Tasks associated with this grant:
  - Lake and tributary water quality testing
  - Warm and cold water point-intercept, whole-lake plant survey
    - Birch and Little Birch Lakes.
    - This has already been done on Big Chetac
    - WDNR will conduct this
  - Shoreland parcel evaluations
    - LEAPS will do this
  - Fishing success survey
    - Resort owners
  - Stakeholders committee support
  - Miscellaneous project costs
- AS: Award of grant and timing
  - Grants will be ranked and decided on February 1st.
  - WDNR secretary will release this to the public around February 15th.
  - WDNR staff cannot disclose grant information until WDNR secretary releases the grant awards.

Question (Q): Which projects are focused primarily on Birch and Little Birch Lakes?

DB: the whole –lake, point-intercept surveys will be done exclusively on Birch and Little Birch Lakes, and everything else will include all of the lakes.

Open Meetings and Public Feedback

DB: Public concerns about this committee have started coming forward. How open can or should the committee be at this point? The public will need to be involved at some point as a part of the decision making process.

DB handed out two documents: The Decision Process – Public Needs; and "Sample Techniques" showing formation of an Advisory Committee followed by a Public Open House. He referred to these as what we need to do and are trying to do with the current process.

Public Meeting

DB: Is it time for a public meeting?

Comment (C): The lakes are all very passionate about these issues, so a public meeting, at this point, would be counter-productive. An open meeting will be necessary, but some work needs to be done first.

C: The entire purpose of this committee is to figure out what the issues were and how to fix them. There should not be a public meeting until these issues have been figured out.

C: The public should be involved before any work is physically done on the lakes.

C: BCABLA will be putting out public notices about the grant work, so the public will still be aware of what is happening.

C: Nothing has been posted yet, but will be before any work begins.

C: The committee was assembled to figure out what the issues were between BCABLA, the towns, and the WDNR.

C: If people do show up they can observe but not participate.

DB: Those most likely to show up would probably make some of the committee members uncomfortable by simply being present.

C: Agreed

C: That is sad, but understandable.

C: The whole point of the committee is to improve communication to the public about lake management and for committee members to talk to their representative groups. Once a plan has been made, a public meeting will be needed, but it is currently too early.

C: Create a plan and then have a public meeting to disseminate information and get feedback.

DB: Maybe there should be an information only session to inform the public about what the committee is?

C: A meeting would be a bad idea at this time.

Q: Maybe consider a newsletter, bulletin, or newspaper article to release to the public?

C: This would be the most effective method.

DB: The more time this committee is behind closed doors will result in less trust from the public.

C: That will be something that is handled when it comes up.

Q: Will the minutes be public?

General consensus: Meetings will continue to be private, but the minutes will be public.

Committee Logistics

DB: Should this committee be considered advisory to the BCABLA or a separate stakeholder entity?

Q: What is the goal of this committee?

DB: To guide the management and planning process.

One of the slides from December Stakeholders Committee meeting presentation was brought up

Staekholders Committee - "Mechanism to increase the level of public involvement in management discussion, planning, and implementation"

Q: Isn't there a mission in this slide?

C: In that respect, the committee should be considered advisory to the BCABLA.

General consensus: The committee will remain a separate entity to advise and guide the management planning process as well as any management activities. The name will not be changed to "Advisory "Committee, it will remain a Stakeholders Committee.

More discussion will be had in future meetings about the exact role in guiding management planning.

Participant Updates, Comments, or Concerns

C: Both the Red Cedar Lakes Association and the Red Cedar River Partnership fully support this committee

Past Management

DB showed a presentation from 2010 regarding the management that was completed on Big Chetac.

C: The plants are the worst in June, but because April and May were also considered in the same time frame July through September seems to be worse overall than April through June.

DB: Initial WDNR Technical Team Review of APM Plan Letter is attached. What the WDNR approved in the existing APM Plan is outlined there.

- Exploratory herbicide management of CLP to see if native plants would respond once CLP was treated (done)
- Complete a modeling study to determine how much reduction in phosphorus would occur with CLP management and other management and what it might do to water quality (never done)
- Complete an Alum Study to determine dose needed and expected costs (done)
- Begin promoting shoreland BMPs (not done)

- Maybe consider small-scale harvesting if logistics can be figured out (not done)

DB: Is there any other information needed?

Q: Did the Town of Edgewater produce the water quality survey results?

DB: There are some results, but the survey was leading, so the results are questionable. That said, written comments on the survey are interesting and could be considered credible. The survey results are public information and can be released. I prefer to wait until the Town of Edgewater has a chance to weigh in on the decision to share the results more widely. DB has copies of the first 250 surveys, and has looked at them.

Interview Report- Lake Use and Fisheries

DB: Fishing is the primary use, but other activities are important. Are there any tensions that need to be addressed?

C: Big Chetac is a large lake, so there is plenty of space for the various uses.

C: The fisheries are important, but so are all of the other things the lakes are used for. Lake uses evolve over time.

C: Government interviews are completely wrong about fishermen being less successful. 2016 was a very successful year for fisheries.

C: Any decline in fishing success cannot be blamed on the herbicide application, but the size distribution could have been impacted by the herbicide.

C: There is a statewide trend showing a decline in average size.

C: Correcting misinformation about the herbicide treatments should be a priority.

C: The fishing success survey is a great idea.

DB: Town of Edgewater/Birchwood Resort had concerns related to declining bass populations affecting the number of bass tournaments on the lake.

C: There is a large difference between the government interviews and the resort owner interviews. The numbers from the resort owners are probably less skewed, and therefore more reliable. Had the results of the WDNR fisheries survey with him and referred to those findings.

C: 2016 did not seem like a very good year for northern, but that is a personal opinion. The resort owners probably have the most accurate view of what is actually happening within the lake.

C: The fisheries are not being impacted by the herbicide. Those are natural fluctuations over time.

C: Misinformation is unfortunate and should be addressed.

DB: One concern was a lack of fishery impact monitoring after the herbicide treatments.

C-Q: Maybe the WDNR fisheries person (Max Wolter) would be beneficial to the public meeting. Who should have the most say in management? Lake property owners or lake visitors?

DB: Everyone should be able to have input, though it could be weighted. This question was asked during the summer interviews so will be addressed during an upcoming Stakeholders Committee meeting.

C: More information should be acquired from resort owners.

C: The fishing success surveys that are included in the new Lake Planning Grant Application should move forward regardless of grant funding.

C: That survey should be designed to collect several years of data.

Next Meeting

C: Another resort representative should be invited to join the committee.

All other participants felt it was worthwhile and will plan on attending the next meeting.

Topics for Next Meeting

- the next two bullets on the Interview questions will be a topic for discussion at the next meeting: Aquatic Plants & Aquatic Plant Management.

- newsletter or another form of written communication will be prepared and put in local sources: newspaper, newsletter, web sites (BCABLA, TofBirchwood, Vof Birchwood, TofEdgewater(?)

- Next meeting should not be held on February 22nd as originally planned, other dates will be explored. 3-5 pm time frame works well.

-Other meeting locations should be considered.

C: The town hall would work, but it is a public building. Will explore costs for using the Senior Center again.

C: The golf course would work.