



State of Wisconsin  
**GOVERNOR'S STATE TRAILS COUNCIL**

## Meeting Minutes

**Friday, August 12, 2016**

Town of Rib Mountain Town Hall  
3700 North Mountain Rd.  
Wausau, WI 54401  
10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

**State Trails Council Members present:**

Tim Duenkel [for Luana Schneider], 4-wheel drive vehicles (member of *Wisconsin Off-Highway Vehicle Association (WOHVA)*)

Randy Harden, ATV/UTV representative (member of *Wisconsin ATV-UTV Association (WATVA)*)

Leif Hubbard, *Wisconsin Department of Transportation* [non-voting]

Kricket Jewett [for Ken Carpenter], equestrian representative (member of *Wisconsin Horse Council*)

Doug Johnson, snowmobiling representative (member of *Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs (AWSC)*)

Skip Maletzke, tourism/business representative [non-voting]

Mike McFadzen, cross-country skiing representative (member of *WI Nordic Network (WINN), Northern Kettle Moraine Nordic Ski Club*)

Bryan Much, off-highway motorcycle representative (member of *Wisconsin Off-Highway Motorcycle Association (WOHMA)*) [STC Chair]

Ken Neitzke, hiking representative (member of the *Ice Age Trail Alliance*)

John Siegert, off-road bicycling representative (member of *Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin (BFW)*) [STC Vice Chair]

Jim White, boards and small wheels representative

**State Trails Council Members not in attendance**

Ken Carpenter, equestrian representative (member of *Wisconsin Horse Council*)

Phil Johnsrud, non-motorized water trails representative

Luana Schneider, 4-wheel drive vehicles representative (member of *Wisconsin 4-Wheel Drive Association*) [STC Secretary]

Robbie Webber, bicycling representative (member of *Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin*)

**Invited speakers**

William Duncanson, *Marathon County Forestry and Parks Director*

Matt Block, *Central Wisconsin Off-Road Cycling Coalition*

Aaron Ruff, *Marathon County Health Department*

Cathy Wendt, *Wisconsin Valley Improvement Company*

Ben Niffenegger, *Wisconsin Valley Improvement Company*

Roger Deffner, *Wausau Kayak/Canoe Corporation*

**Others present**

Daniel Borchardt, *MSA Professional Services, Inc.*

Dave Petersen

Ben Popp, *American Birkebeiner*

Kevin Thusius, *Ice Age Trail Alliance*

Hank Wozniel, *Wisconsin ATV-UTV Association (WATVA)*



# State of Wisconsin **GOVERNOR'S STATE TRAILS COUNCIL**

## **WI DNR Staff present:**

Brigit Brown, Daniel Buckler, Ed Slaminski, Bobbi Winebar

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### **10:00 A.M. – Welcome and introductions**

- Much called the meeting to order. Council members and guests introduced themselves.

### **10:01 A.M. – Agenda review/repair and approval of April meeting minutes**

- Johnson moved to approve the April minutes. Neitzke seconded. Motion passed.

### **10:02 A.M. – Chair report**

- Much expressed hope that the November Council meeting could tie into a local event. He encouraged Council members to nominate topics for the November meeting. He noted that we have not done a water trails orientation, though the Council does not currently have a water trails representative to present that material. He stated that it might be good to circle back to user group orientations that had been done in years past. Because of the new off-highway motorcycle (OHM) legislation, Much said that November would be a good time to do an OHM orientation.
- Brown said that it might be time to review recreational uses represented by the Council as well. She noted that there should be SCORP data available that could inform those discussions.

### **10:04 A.M. – Nomination of Council officers**

- Brown reviewed Council officer positions – Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary – and will accept nominations for the positions until October 10.
- There were no nominations at the meeting. Council members can send their nominations to Brown via email.

### **10:06 A.M. – Report on issues submitted by the public**

- The Council received two requests from the public to examine issues which individuals had experienced in their communities. Much had requested a Council representative to further investigate the problems and report back to the Council.
- Johnson reviewed emails sent to the Council and to elected officials from a woman in Racine County who had issues with a snowmobile routed in a neighboring property. Johnson reported that the issue had been looked into comprehensively by the local and regional snowmobile community and recreational officials. Though the snowmobile trail had previously cut across an agricultural field, it was routed along the edges of the field in 2015. This comes to about 196 feet from the woman's house. The snowmobile trail has been on that agricultural field for about 40 years and the woman has lived in that house about 29 years. Though speed limits don't come into play until 150 feet away from a home, the local community made it 10 mph on the field to help satisfy the neighbor's concerns. Additionally, the local trails are not open very much there; the trail was not open at all last year, and was open for eight days in 2014-15. Johnson reiterated that local club members and officials acted appropriately and have been involved. Much said that the Council's role is to facilitate help, but local officials who have the power have addressed this issue already. Brown noted that if neighbors had the power to control neighboring property, then that could impact all trails, not just snowmobiles. Much recapped that the Council has no authority to change the situation, but noted that many of the issues have been addressed locally and ultimately it rests with those local authorities to make an agreement.
- Much will draft a reply to the woman that says the Council has reviewed her concerns and looked at the local authority structure, finding that the Council does not have authority in this situation, but that local officials have made concessions to ameliorate the situation and that any decision-making power



## State of Wisconsin GOVERNOR'S STATE TRAILS COUNCIL

rests with the local officials. McFadzen said that the letter should note that the speed limit was changed, and Hubbard said that it should include the fact that the trail does not get much use.

- Harden reviewed a complaint from an ATV rider in Iron River in Bayfield County who was having a problem getting stopped on the trail by a recreational officer when he didn't think he was doing anything wrong. Harden had spoken to the man on the phone and reviewed some of the details regarding his situation. Harden encouraged the man to get in-touch with the local club and said that he will also connect with them regarding any trends they are reporting locally with trail violations. Much asked the Council if they agreed that, because Harden has been in communication with the man, the Council does not need to take any further action. The Council agreed.

### 10:26 A.M. – DNR report

- Brown said that DNR staff members continue to work on the upcoming alignment and in the coming months the DNR will report more on things as they impact recreational trails. Brown brought up the road inventory for [Northern Forests](#), saying that Forestry is pioneering the process for getting road access proposals updated on maps. They are doing now what all DNR properties will eventually have to do – map all roads and then make proposals for which roads will be open for public motorized use. These proposals are expected to be available for public review in mid-2017.
- Duenkel asked if the project was like the recent USFS effort. Brown said yes, but whereas the USFS was focused more on closing roads, this is about opening them.
- Brown then reviewed more master plans. [Door County](#) will be a big plan with a lot of public interest. DNR staff is currently inventorying what the DNR has now. Brown said that this is the time when user groups should get involved in the process. For example, the mountain bike community has been very involved and vocal already. McFadzen asked whom he could contact to get involved. Brown replied that contacting the manager for a specific property is probably the best approach. Siegert asked about mountain biking activity for the plan. Brown said that Michelle Barker from the International Mountain Biking Association has been involved there and that the local silent sports organization is quite active and involved.
- The plan for the [Menominee River State Recreation Area](#) is entering its final round of public input sessions. It will be a low impact area, but water activities will be important.
- The draft plan for the [Horicon Marsh](#) will be going out to public comment soon. The DNR has been working closely with DOT, particularly with a proposed Gold Star Memorial Trail (long term trail route).
- Brown said that, with regard to storm damage in the northwest, the process for reporting damage could be improved. The DNR will coordinate with user groups, clubs and governments up there so that all damage is reported. Wisconsin Emergency Management (part of Department of Military Affairs) is in charge, but focus has been on huge road washouts. It was noted that when damage is documented, the reporters need to provide a lot of details, including photos, contractors, skilled labor, etc. A lot of planning is involved.

### 10:39 A.M. – State Trails Council member reports

- *Hiking* – Neitzke reported that both the Ice Age and North Country trails have been impacted by the northwest storm damage. National Trails Day was the first Saturday in June. There were 15 events in Wisconsin reported on the [NTD website](#) including an equestrian one in the Kettle Moraine State Forest. The Ice Age Trail Alliance (IATA) and North Country Trail Association have been very busy with fixing storm damage on top of their normal summer trail building activities. Kevin Thusius of IATA noted that at John Muir Memorial Park in Marquette County there was a celebration of the 100 year anniversary of NPS at John Muir's childhood home. About 300 people attended that event. There will be an Ice Age Trail University work day / week next week to teach people about trail building. Go to website. Much said that the new [IAT bridge in Taylor County](#) was really impressive.



## State of Wisconsin GOVERNOR'S STATE TRAILS COUNCIL

- *Cross-country skiing* – McFadzen said that the [Central Cross Country Ski Association \(CXC\)](#) has a “Nordic Rocks!” program which introduces kids to cross-country skiing (XC). The program further emphasizes outdoor recreation and 12,000 kids have gone through the program. There is a goal is to reach 100,000 kids and 400 schools by 2020. CXC provides coaching and equipment. Some kids go on a high performance track, but most kids who are involved just have fun. CXC also has an adaptive Nordic skiing program in which 280 disabled veterans get access to adaptive recreational equipment Nordic Rocks! is also starting to use adaptive equipment for kids in need. Some kids can parlay that to Paralympics. On July 30 was the 30th annual [Portage and Paddle](#) in Madison. This year they had adaptive equipment and people too. CXC provided some equipment and teaching. There was a lot of storm damage on XC trails in the northwest. Ben Popp, the Executive Director of [American Birkebeiner](#) spoke about how the trail (and other XC trails in the area) is increasingly used year-round for multiple uses, and the XC trails have a large economic impact in the northwest. It is important to report the damage and clean them up as soon as possible. The Birkebeiner also has an initiative to get more kids skiing statewide. They have had 1,000 kids in their program so far. The organization also has a project to create one central interactive map for all trails in the northwest. McFadzen thanked Brown for coordination work on the repair work and reporting following the northwest storm damage.
- *Tourism* – Maletzke said that tourism has been great, though winter was a little slow because of lack of snow. The Department of Tourism is coming out with new advertisement campaign soon. Maletzke related that in 2006 there was a tornado in the northeast which cut a 37-mile swath through the area and it took all government units to improve services. Maletzke said that the northwest storm has galvanized people to action and people will continue to clean and rebuild their communities.
- *Off-road bicycling* – Siegert said that he is continuing to be involved with an effort in Racine County to convert a railroad corridor to a trail which would connect to the White River State Trail. He said that local officials have voiced their support and that most community meetings John has attended are positive. Siegert also noted a hoped-for trail to follow a utility corridor in Oconomowoc. The [Wisconsin Off-Road Series](#) is still in the middle of their season. The [Wisconsin High School Cycling League](#) continues to grow and its season will start with the new school year. The Kettle Moraine Southern Unit [Fall Color Festival](#) event will be September 24.
- *Equestrians* – Jewett said the trail school which the Wisconsin Horse Council (WHC) sponsored was full and very successful. They are still determining whether to do it next year or begin a cycle of hosting it every other year. The WHC sent three people down to the [National Equestrian Trails Conference](#) in North Carolina. Jewett said that more trail conflicts have been seen. The equestrian trail committee of the WHC will work on education. Brown said that she has received reports of accidents between bikes and equestrians, mostly on roads by cyclists going fast and wearing ear buds. Jewett said that other users should make themselves known.
- *4-Wheel Drive Vehicles* – Duenkel said that the [Jeep Jamboree](#) in Mole Lake had 150 vehicles participate, not counting leaders/guides. Over 300 people booked hotels all the way to Rhinelander. The [Great Northern Trail Ride](#) is another guided trail ride which will be held August 18-19. Sixty vehicles have been registered so far. By the end of the year, WOHVA will have about 12 work days, including clean up at Mole Lake and the pipeline corridor. WOHVA’s website is a forum and a lot of people ask where they can go in Wisconsin from out of state. Duenkel noted that there are not a lot of places, though he expressed happiness at the DNR’s road inventory project. A lot of people leave the state to go riding. Some of WOHVA’s members go to Iron Range Park in Minnesota, sand dunes in Michigan or cliffs in Illinois. McFadzen asked about the status of the [Off-Road Vehicle Park](#). Duenkel said that the organization is exploring other areas. Marinette County probably won’t work, but possibly down by Elkhart Lake by the racetrack. Duenkel noted that if the 4WD community could at



## State of Wisconsin GOVERNOR'S STATE TRAILS COUNCIL

least get 400-500 acres, that would be a good start. Much asked about the Pipeline. Duenkel said that communication had been lost the last few years, but hopefully soon communication and a trail network could be reestablished.

- *Department of Transportation* – Hubbard said the DOT has been working a lot on issues related to the northwest storms. Like Brown, Hubbard had also seen a lot of underreporting of damage. Much asked about the timeline for the roads to be reopened. Hubbard said most likely a few months, but there is a lack of contractors up there to do all of the work needed quickly.
- *Small wheels* – White had no report.
- *All-terrain vehicles* – Harden reported that the season has been busy. Earlier in the summer was the Mercer adaptive sportsman ride in Iron County with canoeing, hiking and ATV/UTV riding. It was a muddy weekend, but otherwise a great success. In Townsend in the northeast there was a ride in July at which UTVs were 70% of the participating vehicles. The northwest event will be held August 13 by Danbury. Harden said he is working with the Department of Tourism in a couple weeks to film in Ashland County for an advertisement. September 9 is the VIP ride in [Dyracuse Recreational Park in the Town of Rome in Adams County](#). There is a big water skiing event that weekend too. Jon Sonnenberg (park manager) is doing a good job coordinating the events. Most ATV/UTV trails close at the end of October. Harden then discussed the update of the [trail ambassador program](#) which has been around for about 15 years. The next generation of the program features online training before going out in the field with experienced people to complete training. A call center is also being added to the ambassador program. Additionally, a tracking device is being added to groomers up in Marinette in a pilot project. They are using TraccRs. The club can then watch their groomers in real-time. The Forest Service reinstated a recreational committee which is made up of user groups in the USFS eastern region. The first meeting is October 14-15 in Ohio and they will be discussing user fees. Harden also related that there is a drone workshop in Sheboygan County. Much praised the trail ambassador program, saying it is useful for all trail users, not just motorized.
- *Snowmobiles* – Johnson said snowmobile club volunteers have been busy assessing and repairing trail damage from the northwest storms. This is the second year of the new trail pass and sales have been going smoothly from AWSC. With some vendor changes in DNR, trail passes are not being sent out immediately, but this fall the DNR will be caught up with everything. September 10-11 is [Haydays grass drags and swap meet](#) in Minnesota, which is the largest event of its kind. Then on Sept 27 is the Wausau Grass Drags and Swap Meet which is the largest event of its type in Wisconsin. [AWSC](#) will have their annual workshop in Chula Vista October 28-30. The Governor's Snowmobile Recreation Council will be meeting on August 21-22 to talk about storm damage, trail passes and other things. Lastly, the Celebrate Wisconsin snowmobile event will be Feb 19-20, 2017 in Siren.
- *Off-highway motorcycles* – Much said that after seven years the new motorcycle law takes effect in October and he will discuss more in detail at the November meeting. The large OHM event in Boulder Junction starts today (August 12). An event in eastern Dane County event is already full. Another event in the Northern Kettle Moraine is coming up, as is one in Wabeno. Much also said that he took conservation wardens out on trails to help develop their safety programs. Brown said that the DNR will be putting out a press release in the next week or two to provide public with program before October opening.

### **11:25 A.M. – Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)**

- Johnson said that a June 15 meeting of the SCORP advisory team was postponed until September 8. Brown said the SCORP website will be updated soon and everybody can fill out survey then. Initially



## State of Wisconsin GOVERNOR'S STATE TRAILS COUNCIL

the surveys were sent out to 6,400 random Wisconsin households, stratified across regions. They received about a 46% response rate. Brown said the most egalitarian activity (consistent participation across demographics) is cross-country skiing. Brown passed out a few copies of the survey that had been sent to people and discussed a few things related to it, particularly about how different uses have been separated out.

### **11:37 A.M. – Report on the Recreational Trails Program**

- Winebar reviewed the funding amounts given to projects over the last few years. This past year, 19 motorized and 19 nonmotorized projects were fully funded. There is also some money from previous years the DNR is trying to get deobligated from previous years which might enable more funds to be put into this year's projects.
- Slaminski related to the Council the issue of multiple grant applications which relate to different components of the same project. He is looking for guidance on how to treat those applications – would those be considered separate projects, or part of the same project (and thus should not be able to access multiple grants from the Recreational Trails Program).
- Slaminski and Council members then reviewed that before the \$45,000 grant cap was in place, the RTP / STC would fund 2-3 projects a year; now they fund about 57 projects. The cap is working as it was designed to spread funds to many smaller projects. McFadzen, who was on the Council when the cap was established, reaffirmed that the intention of the Council was that it did not want to fund large projects that pile RTP grants on top of each other; rather, smaller projects were to be the focus.
- In previous years, there have been exceptions of projects that have received more than \$45,000, but these were indeed exceptions which were brought to the Council's attention and had compelling reasons to fund it beyond the cap (e.g. trail network would have shut down without those funds).
- Much said that if there is a compelling reason to make an exception, then that project should be brought back to the Council, but if without compelling reason, you cannot stack multiple components of a project. There is the \$45,000 cap. There should be no splitting the projects to try to acquire multiple RTP grants. If it's a large project, the project organizers can try to acquire the \$200,000 grants.
- Brown said that this is one of the few grants that can be small and could be used for maintenance purposes. For example, the RTP grants purchased lights at Lapham Peak and help pay for trail maintenance such as grooming up north. Probably 10 of the 57 projects were grooming / maintenance related. These were small \$5,000-\$20,000 projects that would have few other grant options.
- Much repeated what had been discussed and agreed upon by the Council – that there should not be stacked projects and that the \$45,000 should not be exceeded except in an exceptional, compelling case, at which time it could be brought to the Council's attention for review.

### **12:03 P.M. – Lunch**

### **12:30 P.M. – Marathon County trail opportunities and developments**

- Duncanson gave a review of the county's extensive park and forest system and then went through different recreational opportunities for different user groups, referencing the [county website](#).
  - Snowmobiles – there are 29 clubs, 47 groomers and 884 miles of snowmobile trails. There is a Marathon County Snowmobile Council. Of the 884 miles of snowmobile trails, 756 miles is open to winter ATV. If it is above 29 degrees, trails are closed to ATVs. As of now, UTVs are not allowed on ATV system.
  - ATVs - there is one ATV club and the Burma Road property is their bread and butter. It has about 11 miles of trail there. The Edgar to Stratford rail grade gets a good amount of use.
  - Biking – Duncanson held off on speaking much about biking because of later speakers.
  - Canoeing, boating, kayaking – there are a lot of great whitewater opportunities. There is also the Lower Eau Claire River Water Trail. It is about 15 miles and that project is just starting.





## State of Wisconsin GOVERNOR'S STATE TRAILS COUNCIL

There will be a lot more to come regarding water trails in Marathon County. They have accessible canoe/kayak launches which are so successful that the Fox River Water Trail is copying that design.

- XC skiing and snowshoeing – Nine Mile County Forest is the big recreational location for XC skiing. It is about 4900 acres of actively managed forest, with the trails located mainly on upland. In addition to skiing, there are bicycles in summer, some equestrian use in winter and a snowmobile trail runs through there. There is a fee on some of those trails because they are groomed. For a few years it was fastest growing winter sport, but being overcome by fat bikes. About 75,000 people in the urban area around Wausau and the Nine Mile County Forest is right next to the urban area.
- Hiking – the Ice Age Trail is on Marathon County land. The Dells of the Eau Claire River is a beautiful area and partners are trying to acquire more land for a multi-day experience.
- Equestrian – the Big Eau Pleine County Park has day trails
- Marathon County has an advisory committee that focuses just recreation on the county forests. They help sort out issues and conflicts as they come up. Seven people are on that committee.

### 1:06 P.M. – Mountain biking trends and opportunities in central Wisconsin

- Block reviewed current projects of his organization, the [Central Wisconsin Off-Road Cycling Coalition](#). These projects include:
  - Nine Mile County Recreation Area – CWOCC spent 1,600 man hours and a lot of money getting trails established here. It is ranked as the best spot in Wisconsin by singletrack.com. Its popularity is going to lead to maintenance issues if other trails don't open up.
  - Sylvan Hill Bike Park – only in conceptual stage right now. When completed, it is going to be an all-encompassing bike park with different skill levels available there. CWOCC received three grants from local sources totaling \$150,000. The park is near schools and students are pretty excited about the development of the bike trails.
  - Weston Park – Tree Farm Mountain Bike recreation plan – in conceptual stage. A lot different from Sylvan Hill, particularly because it is more cross-country style riding here.
  - Ringle – multi-use property. This would also be more cross-country style riding.
- Block noted that if other groups or government agencies do not help, it is unclear whether CWOCC can do all of the maintenance for the trails that are being proposed.

### 1:32 P.M. – Wausau Wheelers and the Marathon County Metropolitan Planning Organization Bicycle & Pedestrian Sub-Committee

- Ruff said that the Marathon County Health Department has been able to help CWOCC with grant writing expertise. Additionally, the Health Department has received funding and they have been better able to promote recreational opportunities. The Metropolitan Planning Organization is a council of governments and it has a bike/ped committee. Together the committee and Health Department has pursued a project to create a metro bike system.
- There is now 105 miles of signed bike route. The signage was MPO project staffed by the Health Department. There are seven incorporated municipalities which are part of the metro area. There are 622 custom bike/ped route signs and 318 arrows signs along the 105 miles.
- The bike network effort is a \$33,000 project paid for by a Marathon County Handprint Grant and a Transform Wisconsin Grant. The latter is for obesity prevention.
- The project produced a [Wausau Area Bike Map](#). It also featured a television marketing campaign for the new bicycle system sponsored by Marshfield Clinic.
- Phase 2 of the project is the establishment of a [bike fixtation](#) network. They currently have six in the community and are well-used.
- The [Wausau Area MPO](#) was just completed last year. It includes 105 miles of signed routes. 3.5 miles of bike lanes. 4.3 miles of sharrows, 26 miles of paths and 24 miles of paved shoulders.



## State of Wisconsin GOVERNOR'S STATE TRAILS COUNCIL

- The [Wausau Wheelers](#) are a local road bike club with 64 family memberships and 103 single memberships. They totaled 1,013 riders, 3053 total miles and 34,890 total rider miles. Ruff said that those numbers speak to the fact that biking is really booming here.

### 1:52 P.M. – Wisconsin Valley Improvement Company

- Niffenegger presented the history of the Wisconsin Valley Improvement Company which was created and written into state statutes in 1907 to try to manage a stable flow in the Wisconsin and Tomahawk rivers. It is a private corporation owned and funded by Wisconsin River hydro plant owners. It is regulated by FERC and the DNR.
- The WVIC owns and operates 21 storage reservoirs, 5 man-made reservoirs and 16 natural lakes. They store water during high flow periods, release water during low-flow periods, coordinate communications network with hydro plant operators.
- Wendt discussed the WVIC's Recreation Management Plan. They facilitate financial assistance to entities with recreational facilities on WVIC reservoirs. Since the 1999 recreational plan, 30 projects have been funded to date totaling \$273,177 in funding/in-kind.
- In 2006 WVIC was looking to celebrate its 100 year anniversary of WVIC in 2007. They thought a water trail might be a good idea. They went to all members to see if signs for portages were possible and then signed 56 locations. Every portage has a sign. Wherever towns permitted they put signs on or around bridges. [They have maps for the entire trail](#). These are available online as well as aerial images of that section. The maps also show areas to camp and include photos.
- Niffenegger has been working on an interactive map of the water trail that should be available soon.

### 2:12 P.M. – Wausau Whitewater Park

- Deffner said that there is a [world class kayak course](#) right in Wausau. During events, the park closes down water levels to get 650 cfm in the kayaking channel. The Park hosts two types of competitions: freestyle races and slalom (gates). On August 27-28 they will host disabled veterans.
- Deffner then spoke about the park's master plan. Aesthetics is a component of the plan, as well is accessibility. A river walkway and pedestrian bridge will be developed. Deffner then elaborated upon the need to link the two sides of the water course and to improve accessibility along the banks.

### 2:37 P.M. – Storm damage in northwest Wisconsin

- The Council and guests held an open discussion on the damage in the northwest.
- Slaminski said he compiled a quick survey of the damage to ATV and snowmobile trails in his region and tabulated the claimed damage at \$1.7 million, which he thinks is too low. Many ski trails will not be open this year. Ashland County will try to retrieve or fix their bridges, but some are downstream. Additionally, Ashland County is not sure if they can get trails into Clam Lake, Mellon or Marengo.
- Brown said that the DNR has five state trails that had about \$600,000 in damage. Copper Falls and Pattison state parks had about \$40,000 in damage.
- Even with FEMA reimbursement, the storms will have a huge economic impact on everybody.

### 2:53 P.M. – Public comment

- No public comment.

### 2:53 P.M. – Identify future agenda items

- Much and Council members identified user group updates (off-highway motorcycles in particular), SCORP and storm damage updates as agenda items for the November meeting.

### 2:55 P.M. – Adjourn

- Motion to adjourn by White. Seconded by McFadzen. Meeting adjourned.