

Tri-Creeks Land Use Committee Meeting
Thursday, April 4, 2019 – 1:00 PM
Monroe County Land Conservation Department, Sparta, WI

Those in attendance were: Eric Epstein, Dick Thiel, Bob Micheel, Roxie Anderson, Wayne Edgerton, George Johnston, Abbie Church, Zac Millbrand, and Ron Luethe.

Introductions were made. We welcomed Roxie Anderson the new Land Use Planner for Monroe County and Zac Millbrand from the Mississippi Valley Conservancy. Agenda items were reviewed.

Committee members provided the following updates on plan/data gathering activities:

Eric Epstein has submitted a one-page introduction describing the Tri-Creeks Watershed area. He is also working on the vegetation description section and will provide a draft for review by the committee when completed. Eric is also working on a draft bird list and will use eBird as one data source. Eric will be meeting with DNR personnel Kirk Olson for fish data and Camille Bruhn for water data. Eric stated WI DNR has bat information on all three tunnels on the Elroy-Sparta Bike Trail. Dick noted that there are several woodland bat species that have been inventoried on the Tri-Creeks property.

Dick Thiel provided a second draft of the mammal list. He will incorporate comments concerning the mammal list from the committee and added a column to document mammals sighted on adjacent properties and occurrences. Dick has again requested help from the committee to verify sightings of mammal species. Verification data can be emailed to Dick at: old2toes@gmail.com
Dick will be working on a herp list of species found within Tri-Creeks.

Bob Micheel provided an update of the lease agreements the county has within the lands of Tri-Creeks. The 5-year agreement has been leased for 2019. There are two fields that have one year remaining and were not renewed in 2019.

One of these fields is the cropland adjacent to the creek has the potential to be enrolled in the CREP (Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program) to create the buffer and still provide income for the land taken out of production. The use of cool season grasses within the buffer area is one option. Abbie Church mentioned cup plant that is a native and grows well in wet sites. Another plant mentioned was saw tooth sunflower. Sources for native plants include Prairie Moon Nursery and Prairie Nursery. Also mentioned was Bill Kaiser from USFWS as a source for bulk prices on native seeds.

There was also discussion on putting the field north of the creek (the "doughnut hole") into permanent cover (grasses or trees) to prevent damage to the field and the roadway leading to and across the creek and up to the field. Bob has inventoried the conservation structures within Tri-Creeks and identifying several areas where maintenance needs to be done.

As part of the Tri-Creeks budget Bob mentioned the need to identify and fund potential land acquisition for sensitive areas adjoining Tri-Creeks as well as funding for dam management, invasive species control, and forestry management.

Emergency Management Services – A meeting was held with Jim Stoikes, Chad Marti, Levi Helgren, Alex Karis from the local Fire Department and First Responders, Bob Micheel, Ron Luethe, and Darlene Pintarro from Monroe County Emergency Services to review the local emergency contact information, discuss the flood alarm system at the dam, map the emergency access points for Tri-Creeks, and response to potential emergency needs concerning the dam structure.

Background – History – Dick will continue to research the history of the property including land use changes and impacts to local and adjacent property owners. He requested to borrow the 3-ring binder provided by land conservation.

Wood Turtles – Dick Thiel and Eric Epstein – Wood turtle data that was collected over the years was entered into a MS ACCESS database. Bob will provide aerial maps of the Tri-Creeks stream corridor and adjacent land to be used to document wood turtle sightings and habitat areas.

Archeology – Inese Epstein has contacted personnel at UWSP and will be receiving archeological information from data collected at Tri-Creeks.

Other plan items:

George Johnston, Land Use Planning Committee member and Ridgeville Township resident re-iterated his interest in volunteer opportunities for data gathering and other plan activities for Tri-Creeks. The committee welcomes the offer and extends the invitation to anyone else on the committee or the community who desires to help out with any of the data gathering/plan activities.

Wayne Edgerton mentioned the Meadow Valley Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation Wisconsin is looking for projects in the area and may be willing to help out with management work on the property.

Abbie Church and Zac Millbrand noted another group that may be able to help out with work on the property would be at risk youth enrolled at the Fort McCoy Challenge Academy.

Roxie Anderson will be building a framework to begin organizing the plan. She will also develop a checklist of existing data to identify what we have and additional data needs.

The next meeting of the Tri-Creek Land Use Planning Committee will be planned for sometime in July 2019. Ron will solicit for potential July dates when emailing the meeting minutes. The meeting will be held in the conference room at the Monroe County Land Conservation Department, 820 Industrial Drive, Suite 3, Sparta, WI.

At the next meeting we will continue the process of data gathering and plan development. The goal is to complete the plan at the end on 2019.

Respectfully Submitted,
Ron Lueth