



Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
The State of Minnesota

State Office Building, Room G95 100 Dr. Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

July 20, 2015

Mr. Kirk Titus
County Land Supervisor
Crow Wing County
322 Laurel St., Suite 12
Brainerd, MN 56401

Re: Mississippi Northwoods Habitat Complex Protection – ML 2012, Ch. 264, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 3(b)

Dear Supervisor Titus:

Please accept this letter as feedback on behalf of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council regarding the “multi-use trail system” application for potential ATV trails upon the Mississippi River Northwoods (MRNW) property.

Following the attendance of Mr. Mark Liedl and Mr. Dan Listug, at the March 13, 2015 LSOHC Council meeting, the Council was not able to review and discuss the MRNW issue again until our June 23rd meeting. Although it is unfortunate the discussion was delayed, it perhaps gave individual Council members time to digest the information more fully and has led to a more inclusive dialog.

At our June 23rd meeting, the Council directed Executive Director Mark Johnson to meet with you (Crow Wing County) to discuss several items of Council interest and gain additional information to provide greater clarity to Council members. As I understand, he has been in touch with you seeking such a meeting. Additionally, the Council discussed MRNW and the “multi-use trail system” at length.

As Crow Wing County (CWC) continues through its process of consideration for the “multi-use trail system” mentioned previously, I wish to provide you with several points of concern held by the Council.

1. The initial and ongoing intent of the Council in its recommendation for funding of the MRNW project is habitat protection. In large part this is due to the sensitive nature of the property’s proximity to the Mississippi River, its proximity to significant populations of people and the potential for future development if left unprotected. The Council is concerned and urges that the unique and sensitive nature of the MRNW property continue to be protected under County management.
2. While the Council understands that CWC manages the MRNW property in the same manner as other CWC lands, including management under the County’s Recreation Trail Proposal and Planning Process, the Council is very concerned regarding the extent of motorized-use trails

upon the MRNW property and the potential for habitat degradation should the property become a defacto destination ATV park. With that in mind, and the understanding that CWC is managing this property with multi-use trails upon it, the Council's urging is that CWC strive to minimize detrimental impacts upon wildlife, habitat and other public uses (especially hunting) by controlling motorized trail usage upon the property.

3. As was discussed at length during funding proposal hearings of 2011/2012, and as was detailed in the Accomplishment Plan, the Council believes it appropriate that any improvement of motorized-use trails be inventoried and reported to the Council and that any plan for trail alignment for development of a paved trail be brought before the Council for discussion and approval.
4. In the Accomplishment Plan, a Project Management Team of nine named individuals was detailed "to help steer and guide this project." It appears that Team may not have been engaged and the Council would like information whether that is correct, whether another such team has been engaged and, if so, to what extent such a team has been thus far utilized, especially with regards to any multi-use trail considerations and management upon the property.
5. The last paragraph on page 2 of the CWC Land Services' Mississippi River Northwoods Project Management Summary (V.011812) states, "Certain initial project work is required to implement the MRNW parcel into the County's sustainable forest management system." Eight bullet points follow including:
 - Forest Inventory
 - Inventory and Map Native Plant Communities to Ecological Classifications
 - GPS Roads and Trails
 - Classify Roads and Trails
 - Close spur roads and trails – Signage
 - Road Maintenance
 - Reclaim gravel pit
 - GIS Mapping and Data Entry: Digitize stand boundaries, forest, road and native plant community inventory, forest and road inventory.

The Council is very interested to receive an update from CWC as to the progress of this initial project work as it will have definite impact upon future management of the MRNW parcel.

With respect to the above concerns, as well as additional items such as the potential of a land exchange regarding certain acres of the MRNW property and adjacent CWC property, I trust that a meeting with LSOHC's Executive Director Mark Johnson will be helpful in reaching a mutually beneficial understanding on this project.

Thank you for your consideration of the Council's concerns regarding a motorized trail usage. I will look forward to our continued communication.

Sincerely,

Bob Anderson, Chairman
Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

cc Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Members
DNR Commissioner Tom Landwehr
Mark Johnson, LSOHC Executive Director