

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

MEMO: Agenda Item #7

DATE: August 5, 2020

SUBJECT: AMENDMENT REQUEST – ML2019, 1st Sp. Session, Ch. 2, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd, 3(a) – Protecting Strategic Forestlands Near Camp Ripley

Presenter: Emilee Nelson, Minnesota Representative, The Conservation Fund
Gary Griffin, Land Services Director, Crow Wing County
Ryan Simonson, Environmental Services Supervisor, Crow Wing County

Suggested Motion: Motion to approve/deny the accomplishment plan amendment request as presented.

Background: The Conservation Fund is working to acquire forested parcels within Crow Wing County. These parcels will subsequently be donated to Crow Wing County and will be protected and managed as county forest lands in perpetuity. While requesting county board approval to accept the donation prior to purchase, The Conservation Fund was asked by the county board how and if future trails could be developed on these parcels. The County has stated there are currently no plans at this time for new trails, but the County Board wanted to understand how the issue would be handled in the future if needed. After collaborating with Crow Wing County, The Conservation Fund would like to amend their accomplishment plan to allow Crow Wing County greater flexibility in the future should the need to develop new trails be warranted.

The current accomplishment plan states:

Will new trails or roads be developed or improved as a result of the OHF acquisition –

No

The proposed amended accomplishment plan language is as follows:

Will new trails or roads be developed or improved as a result of the OHF acquisition – Yes

Describe the types of trails or roads and the allowable uses:

No new trails are planned for development at this time or in the future. If a new trail is developed in the future, the County will ensure no net gain of new trails occurs on the property. Allowable uses would be motorized and non-motorized use unless posted closed.

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished?

Management of the property will be for forest wildlife habitat and forestry purposes. The property will be managed to strict environmental standards under third-party forest certification.

In addition, Crow Wing County provided potential scenario(s) that would be pursued by the County to demonstrate how the amendment would work:

See attached map titled “Example Scenario Crow Wing Township”. There are many different scenarios such as:

1. A snowmobile club could propose a connection across the OHF acquired property to the west to Hwy 371. No new trails would be created, but the existing trail would go from being an informal, non-managed, non-designated forest trail, to a designated, managed, GIA snowmobile trail. The use would not change, only the trail designation. Maybe the trail would see an increase in snowmobile use now that it is designated as an official snowmobile trail.
2. An ATV club could propose a trail system in the area. Same as above. No new trails would be created, but the existing trail would now be a designated ATV trail, and may see increased ATV use. Or maybe not...?
3. Either a snowmobile or ATV club could propose a new trail across the OHF grant parcel. In this case we would implement the “no net gain” policy. If 500 feet of new trail was created, we would plant 500 feet of existing trail to trees.
 - By new trail, I mean new physically created trail. The council may see “new trail” to mean an existing trail that becomes designated as an ATV or snowmobile trail. If that is the case, and we designate this segment on the OHF parcel as new snowmobile GIA trail for example, we can’t implement the “no net gain” policy because there are no other trails to reclaim and plant to trees.
4. A club could propose a non-motorized hunter/hiking trail across the existing trail on the OHF parcel.
5. A club could propose a non-motorized hunter/hiking trail across different areas of the OHF parcel (we would then likely have to plant trees and reclaim the existing trail).

Attachments:

Accomplishment Plan with Proposed Amendments

Maps (3) – Example Scenario Crow Wing Township, Timothy Township, Crow Wing Township (provided by Crow Wing County)

Alexandria Echo Press Article