

**Board Meeting Minutes of the
MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION PROFESSIONALS**

**1 November 2012
St. Cloud Public Library**

Present: Brian Stenquist, Willis Mattison, Paul Stolen, Nicholas Snavely, Bill Faber, Todd Holman, Jack Lauer, Jesse Amo, Paul Ojanen.....*(Others?: please add your recollections.)*

Notes taken by Paul Stolen.

Electronic Actions by Board since last meeting

None to report

Secretary's Report – none

Treasurer's Report – Todd

The current total in the account is \$3,400. *(I didn't record any other details; are there any?).*
There are 15 jackets left; 4 or 5 were sold at \$30 each.

Website Update & Discussion

Jack reported no emails or requests coming through the web site. He indicated he would pass around any other items to the Board after the meeting, if any were brought up.

Old Business

MNACP Mission and Purpose

This topic was discussed because Brian Stenquist indicated he had a discussion with Steve Hirsch, DNR head of Division of Ecological and Water Resources about language on the MNACP web site. He noted that a statement on the web site regarding the MNACP purpose raises red flags with some agency managers. This was the one concerning the public deserving to hear relatively unfiltered information from the experts they pay for. Brian indicated that this had also been noted as problematic by another upper level DNR manager, and he brought up that MNACP might be perceived of as being similar to PEER (Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility). Further discussion indicated the red flag was that MNACP was going to critique specific decisions. However, the context of this problem was that it was interfering with managers allowing staff to attend the annual meeting on state time.

This triggered discussion of possibly removing this language and also clarifying the purpose. Some felt that if the language offended some that it could be removed; others felt that it was important to leave it and that it was at the heart of distinguishing MNACP from other organizations. One Board member indicated that when he joined the organization he did it from the perspective of professional development among a diverse group of individuals and

didn't think of it as an organization that would take strong positions on specific management issues. He indicated that all employed professionals had to be cognizant of what they say with respect to positions taken by their own agencies. Another indicated a big benefit was young conservation professionals being exposed to older experienced ones.

There appeared to be general agreement that there was potential for this statement to raise red flags. However, several Board members indicated that some very important agency decisions were not science based, and in fact were politically based contrary to good science. They felt MNACP had to retain an ability to address these circumstances and that it was important to dedicated professionals who felt there was no other organization doing this. But they also said this ability was a reserve ability, not a central purpose of MNACP. They indicated that there was never an intent to be anything like PEER, which was a strong advocacy group using lawsuits and publicity to challenge agency decisions.

One point made by Brian during this discussion seemed to have the agreement of every board member: that a key purpose was serving the needs of conservation professionals, and that this should be elevated more as a clear-cut purpose to be added to the central tenet of MNACP being an advocate of science based conservation and natural resource decision making. Another purpose was mentioned: that of bringing together conservation and resource professionals from diverse agencies and interested parties.

There was a tentative conclusion that, first, the Hirsch issue was less important because the Saturday date meant no state time anyway, and second since this topic continues to be brought up, it might need additional clarification in the future and discussion of the language on the web site, and perhaps the mission statement. There was some feeling that perhaps the language could be tweaked without losing the intent. The general membership might need to be involved; this might be discussed before the annual meeting.

Non-profit Status

This has been a perennial topic of discussion at the Board. Some have been uncomfortable with the informal status that we have, and the fact that money is raised and spent by this informal organization. It was noted by some members present that there are many such organizations that do not have formal status and that spend substantially more money. It was also noted that no one has found that there is a legal requirement to obtain formal status. It was agreed that tax-exempt status would be beneficial, since then donations would be tax deductible as a charitable organization.

Paul Stolen noted that in other years he had contacted lawyers and had been told that at least some legal assistance would be needed to fill out the necessary forms. He also noted that IRS reports would need to be submitted each year after achieving such status, and that a manual would be necessary for the Treasurer to follow given that additional complexity of following rules. This would be a relatively substantial workload addition. Perhaps this could be farmed out to a paid accountant using some of the additional funds that would flow in from being tax-deductible? Others added additional discussion along these same lines. Bill indicated his organization has only state tax status with a tax identification number, obtained by registering with the Minnesota Secretary of State. *(Bill is this correct?)*

No action was taken on this item; however, there was discussion of bringing it up at the annual meeting, and asking the membership if they desired the Board to pursue it. (*Is this correct??*)

Other MNACP Old Business: *policy/issue advocacy; local meetings; other?*

I don't recall what other issues were discussed.

New Business

Annual Meeting Planning - All

Theme and speakers

Brian Stenquist suggested a theme of focusing on women as conservation leaders and managers, since such people hold key positions in the agencies. He said he had contacted several such people and that they had indicated a tentative interest and ability to attend. He listed Erika Rivers (DNR deputy commissioner), Michele Beeman (*I don't recall her current position*), _____, the current director of The Nature Conservancy, and _____ (*a PCA person.*)

There was discussion at some length of this idea, mostly focused on how this would be presented. Paul Stolen asked what exactly would they be asked to do, such as focus on different management styles between men and women? He noted & agreed that there was, but that there might be some sensitivity to doing this, and they themselves might not be comfortable with doing this. He also noted that there have been a couple of biographies of Rachel Carson receiving a lot of press, and that this might be worked into the theme. He also suggested Tamara Cameron, head of Regulatory branch for the US Army Corps of Engineers St. Paul District as a possible speaker.

Nick Snavely suggested a theme of what training is needed for natural resource and conservation managers and staff in the various agencies. It was noted in this part of the discussion that academic programs in some colleges/universities were going to conservation biology, with much less emphasis on resource management. A board member indicated that universities should know that this change in emphasis meant that graduates weren't looked on very highly by resource management agencies because of this.

After discussion of Brian's original proposal, there was a tentative conclusion that the theme would be to have these same women talk on "resource challenges facing conservation managers in the future, 50 years after Rachel Carson, with a focus on the two or three main challenges." Brian was to write this up as a written proposal for further discussion and submit to the full Board by email in order for there to be agreement and clarity.

Note: Other people added to the discussion; please add in any other comments if you feel it is necessary, or suggest changes in my summary.

Logistics - date/location. Those in attendance felt that the meeting should be held on a Saturday. This would make moot the issue of meeting attendance on state time. It was felt that the date should be either February 23 or March 2. Historically, the perception is that attendance at annual meetings would be very low if we choose weekend dates, and the fact is many have attended past meetings on state/work time.

Possible locations that were discussed were Central Lakes College in Brainerd, the Initiative Foundation in Little Falls, and Camp Ripley. Bill was to check out the college, Paul Stolen the Initiative Foundation, and _____. *(Other ideas discussed? I don't recall. Did Bill find out during a meeting break that the College wouldn't work because fund raising wasn't allowed, or did this happen after the board meeting?)*

Meals and Meeting Costs

There was a tentative discussion of meal needs, with the idea of not providing a meal given serious attention. The meal decision was left to further discussion pending the location selected.

There was tentative agreement to try to keep costs down, such as not providing lunch by having the business meeting in the morning (with attendees bringing their own lunch) and speakers in the 1-5 PM slot. Some felt that we could provide lunch for an extra fee, and that it would be completed by the time the speakers started. Last year the membership fee was \$15; and total was \$25 for lunch and membership. It was pointed out that there are conference fees. A tentative decision was made to set the membership and conference fee at \$40, and that business attendees pay an extra \$10 for a meal.

Please critique this part; my notes are somewhat sketchy on the actual tentative decisions though I think the numbers are right.

Fund-raising

There was some discussion of dropping this, but the decision was made to keep it since significant funds were raised from it. Ray Norgaard was to be contacted.

Elections. Discussion centered on the importance of making prior contact before the annual meeting to enlist board members. An email will be sent to current senior members to determine if they will be willing to re-up as a junior member. (Paul Stolen and _____ indicated they would be willing). The open seats will be 4 retiring senior members, Secretary, and President-elect. Members in attendance agreed to make special efforts to do this.

Other Annual Meeting Issues

Anyone recall anything?

Next Board Meeting

Discussion centered around having a meeting before Christmas or early in January; no date was selected. *Note: I know we discussed more than this and that action was supposed to occur rather quickly to select a meeting date, but I didn't seem to make any notes on this.*