



Annual Meeting Minutes

Friends of Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge Thursday, January 14, 2021 – 6:30 pm Social Time 6:45 pm Business Meeting Zoom Meeting

1. Meeting Called to Order at 6:45 pm: Carol VanHeel, Mike Brubaker, Matt Finn, Steve Chesney, Marilyn Danielson, Scott Suhsen, Susan Julson, Alaina Larkin, BearPaw Shields, Dean Kleinhans, Sue Hix, Steve Karel, Bill Kolbinger, Emy Minzel, Beth Watson, Randall Holt-Woehl, Jessica Nelson, Diane Stroschein, Jim Stroschein, Renay Leone, Robin DeLong, Sheri Olson, Bruce Ellingson, Norm Anderson, Carol Mertesdorf, Kenneth Brennen, Myrna Krueger, David Martin, Cynthia McSherry. 29 in attendance.

2. Reports

- A. Refuge Report – Steve Karel: Overview of what happened in 2020. Staff changes: Samantha Lobdell (10-2019 thru 3-2020) was a seasonal Visitor Services intern and now has moved on. Ashely Biggs, Visitor Services intern, 1-2020 thru 12-2020, also has moved on. Staff updates from the whole complex: Duane King, Rice Lake biological technician retired. Jason Ferguson, career seasonal firefighter is new to Sherburne NWR, and Roger Marks, maintenance worker, is new to Rice Lake NWR. Christina Giarusso is the new administrator. She arrived during the middle of the Covid-19 period.
- B. Refuge Highlights this year include: closed headquarters because of Covid-19. Developed preparedness plans and staff started teleworking except for maintenance workers. There was a huge increase in refuge visits from the public. Our staff focused on invasive species treatments; 924 acres of cattails received aerial treatments this year. Staff focused on wild rice production. We had 4600 acres grazed with cattle this year; both goats and cattle do a great job for keeping down the brush. Our staff did crane counts: 11,244 cranes this year. New tables were purchased for the Oak Savanna Learning Center; we donated the old tables to Baldwin town hall and a local nonprofit. There are new decals on the doors at the Learning Center and the headquarters. The Sandhill crane was mounted and installed. New kiosk signage was installed in March, and work continues on signage this coming year. New refuge entrance and parking lot signs include parking lot numbering to be included in maps/brochures. The newly revamped Welcome Station for the Wildlife Drive was funded by the Friends, includes new picnic tables. The Friends funded the wildlife observation blind. Road and trail improvements also happened this year. The only in-person event was the afternoon snowshoe event with 325 participants in attendance! Many virtual programs were presented including wildflower, sandhill crane, bat and others. Cody and Tyler conducted a waterfowl survey at

Rice Lake. Many of our staff was out west fighting fires. Sally Zodrow passed away in March and a new memorial bench is by Long Pool as a memorial for her. Ahead for 2021: New access to trail for Black Bear Pond, staffing a Career Pathways position and biology intern CDIP. Some of the projects in the works: Junior refuge ranger program, kiosk for Mahnomen trail, other trail signage, water control structure work, new refuge website, installation of a gate on east side of the Welcome Station, prescribed fire, and amphitheater for the Learning Center.

C. President's Report, Myrna Krueger, Friends president

1) Approve Minutes of January 14, 2020 Annual Meeting

Motion to approve the Annual Minutes from January 14, 2020. Motion passed.

2) Friends 2020 Accomplishments: Continued our funding of part-time naturalist Jenny Hengel. Jenny not only does the school partnership coordination, but also has led virtual learning. The Welcome Station project was important for the Friends to complete. The wildlife viewing blind was completed and funded by the Friends. Dean was instrumental in getting this going and doing maintenance on this structure. Thanks to Dean for doing all of this. Other projects that the Friends supported were the new Learning Center tables, the taxidermy of the crane and the Facebook live programs with live animals. There was a substantial amount of advocacy this year with both Senator Tina Smith's staff and also Congressman Tom Emmer's staff. Advocated for other refuges through NWRA alerts. Actively responded to the Friends General Audit. Princeton Chamber of Commerce selected us as the 2020 nonprofit of the year. We also had a successful online fundraiser for the first time and increased our membership by 45. The Eagle's Nest Nature Store went online also because of the pandemic.

3) Look Ahead for 2021: Reflecting on 2020 we created a DEI statement and plan to do all we can to include everyone at the refuge. With additional outreach, we will bring more people to the refuge and become a destination for the metro and St. Cloud area. We have plans to create a college scholarship for a minority student in the natural resources field of study. We also plan on bringing in speakers on how to improve diversity and inclusion. Also the Friends seek to have a more diverse board. Strategic planning for the next 5 years is also on the list of things for 2021, along with trail signage for Mahnomen, Blue Hill and Oak Savanna Learning Center. Also on the list of projects for the Friends in 2021 is pursuing an amphitheater at the Learning Center.

4) Recognition of Volunteers, Donors and Community Supporters: Remembering Lee T. Johnson. He was a refuge volunteer, a board member and is greatly missed. Also want to thank the membership and marketing committee. Without the donors we would not be able to do what the Friends do here at the refuge. We really appreciate all the folks who donate to the Friends. The Planned Gift recognition category is new this year. Some of these gifts are handled through the Initiative Foundation. We are very thankful for the many important donations that were made to the Friends.

Treasurer's Report, Carol VanHeel, Friends Treasurer

1) 2020 Financials: Actual vs. Budget. We exceeded our goal for donations. In addition to the recurring expenses, we spent money printing refuge brochures and Friends mailings, and paying for the part-time naturalist contractor Jenny Hengel, the Welcome Station revamp, crane taxidermy, new tables and viewing blind. 86% of our expenditures were on refuge projects, advocacy and outreach.

2) Proposed 2021 Budget and Approval: We expect to get income from donations, membership and festival, Transfer of funds from Be Wild campaign, hope to increase sales in the store and online store. How we are planning to spend money: strategic planning, DEI projects, printing refuge brochures, education programs, events and fundraisers, naturalist contractor, viewing blind signage, and construction plan for amphitheater.

Motion to approve the 2021 budget. Motion approved.

D. Old Business/New Business: None

E. Election of Board Members: Nominations for 3-year terms include: Mike Brubaker, Steve Chesney, Matt Finn, Carol Mertesdorf, and BearPaw Shields.

Motion to elect the slate of candidates presented. Motion approved.

Motion to adjourn the annual meeting. Motion approved at 8:12pm.

Respectfully submitted, Susan Julson