

**Annual Member Meeting**  
**Friends of Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge**  
**Thursday, January 13, 2022**  
**6:30 pm Social Time**  
**6:45 pm Business Meeting**  
**Zoom Meeting**



Meeting called to order at 6:45 PM.

Attendees: Steve Chesney, Myrna Krueger, Randall Holt-Woehl, Roger Leider, Mike Brubaker, Scott Suhsen, Susan Julson, Emy Minzel, Bill Kolbinger, BearPaw Shields, Carol Mertesdorf, Matt Finn, Sue Hix, Bruce Ellingson, Steve Karel, Alaina Larkin, Renay Leone, Jessica Nelson, Sheri Olson, Anita Schneider, Stacy Morse, Dorothy Holmes, Don & Mary Leason, Jill Beim. 25 in attendance.

The minutes of the January 14, 2021 Annual Meeting were presented. Motion was made by Susan Julson and seconded by Mike Brubaker to Approve Minutes of 2021 Annual Meeting as presented. Motion passed.

President's Report: Steve Chesney  
Friends Accomplishments 2021

- Strategic Planning: Surveyed Members, Staff, and community to shape the plan for the next five years: Five Pillars: Education, Advocacy, Volunteerism, Inclusion, Sustainability.
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee: Randall Holt-Woehl, BearPaw Shields, Emy Minzel, Debbie Russell, Myrna Krueger
  - Goals: to develop contacts in target communities, partner with groups and schools, bring individuals to the refuge, outreach to targeted communities and hire speakers to improve diversity and inclusion.
  - 2021 Diversity Scholarship for minority student in natural resource studies at St Cloud State. Our first award was to Ceann Yang, a biology major from St Paul MN.
  - Honored to have BearPaw Shields join the board and the DEI committee. We seek to continue to recruit diverse candidates to represent us on the board.
  - Sponsored outings by Urban Bird Collective and Promise Neighborhood
  - Urban Bird Collective: We funded transportation, meals and leaders for a June hike, and an October crane viewing.
  - Promise Neighborhood: A Saint Cloud non-profit that serves Lincoln and Talahi elementary schools. We funded transportation and provided volunteers for a visit by 35 students and 12 adults.

- 2021 Birding Map: Available at the Oak Savanna Learning Center Nature Store and on Friends' website [exploresherburne.org](http://exploresherburne.org). Thanks to Bruce Ellingson, Kris Spaeth and others for collaboration.
- 2021 Spring Plant Sale: Co-hosted with Sherburne History Center, with curbside pickup.
- Fall Wildlife Festival was not held due to Covid, but bookstore was open during Open Roads Day.
- Advocacy Committee: Myrna Krueger, Steve Chesney, Emy Minzel, Randall Holt-Woehl, Sue Hix: Met with staff of Tina Smith and Tom Emmer to discuss refuge needs. Hosted Senator Smith for a tour in June. Responded to USFWS inspector general audit recommendations on Friends groups.
- Marketing Committee: Sue Hix, Steve Chesney, Bruce Ellingson, Myrna Krueger, Marilyn Danielson. Published newsletters, e-news, website, member and donor letters and mailings.
- 2021 Fundraisers: Online Fundraiser, Sandhill Salute, raised \$3210. Give to the Max Day raised \$2822.
- Sandhill Stations: 48 Friends Volunteer Hours. 32 Refuge Volunteer Hours. Contact with 145 visitors.
- Youth Photography Contest: Friends provided financial and publicity support.
- Software Updates: Donation and Membership records migrated from Excel spreadsheets to cloud-based Little Green Light. The new system allows multiple people to update and maintain records.
- Financial reports migrated to Quickbooks and is maintained by Roger Leider.
- Eagle's Nest Nature Store: Converted to Shopify for online sales and reopened for in-person sales.

#### Friends Plans / Goals for 2022

- Trail Signage. Funded new trail signs for Mahnomen, Blue Hill and Oak Savanna Learning Center trails.
- Amphitheater: Friends hired a contractor and an architect to create a plan for a 100-seat amphitheater to be located west of the Learning Center. Thanks to committee members: Sue Hix, Scott Suhsen, Steve Chesney, Myrna Krueger, Steve Karel, Alaina Larkin, Tyler Paulson. Awaiting approval of fundraising agreement with USFWS before we can begin fundraising. The amphitheater will be low-maintenance and ADA compliant.
- Membership: We now have 559 total members, up from 475 last year.

#### Recognition of Volunteers, Donors, and Community Supporters

- Thank you to departing naturalist Jenny Hengel, who helped sustain nature education and experiences for children and adults. Several Facebook Live events were well received.

- Thanks to store manager Sheri Olson who will be leaving in May. Recruitment will begin for a new store manager.
- Remembering Carol VanHeel. Carol served on the board of directors since 2007 and kept financial and membership records. She also volunteered with seed collecting and on refuge trails,
- Thanks to the many donors and community supporters.

#### Treasurer's Report, Roger Leider

- 2021 Financials: Actual vs Budget: Expenses were down, due to some activities being canceled due to Covid. The bookstore was a great asset, even though it only reopened in July. Friends Net Income all activities including the store: \$35,611.57.
- Proposed 2022 Budget: We anticipate resuming more activities and expense.

Motion to approve the 2022 budget. Motion approved.

#### Refuge Update, Steve Karel, Sherburne Refuge Complex Project Leader

- Staff changes. Intern: Amelia Bard, Career Pathways Program. Elise Davis – Biology Intern, CDIP.
- 2021 Highlights: Visit from Senator Tina Smith June 4.
- MAPS bird capture and banding program – many golden wing warblers, a threatened species, were found.
- There were some benefits to the 2021 draught:
  - Better understanding of water management capabilities,
  - Access to wet areas to clean ditches.
  - Rough fish die off.
  - Removed willows in St Francis pool. Follow up in 2022 to improve crane habitat.
  - Great year for wild rice!
  - Gate repair
- A new gate on the Wildlife drive will allow winter access to the Bur Oak welcome station.
- 4250 acres were grazed to control hazel and cattails.
- 2622 acres were managed with prescribed fire. 9 staff assisted other agencies with Western and MN wildfires.
- Continued mechanical treatment to eliminate aspen and hazel.

#### Refuge Update, Alaina Larkin

- Headquarters opened in July W-F 10-4. They resumed Issuing America the Beautiful passes and stamping passport books,
- Jr Ranger Day – Apr 16
- Nature Education with partner schools. Volunteers went to Princeton and Zimmerman rather than bringing students to OSLC.
- Crane count was not a record number but did extend later than usual.
- First ever refuge sighting of a Whooping Crane breeding pair with the sandhills in Spring 2021. Prior to 2018 no whooping cranes had been spotted in the refuge.
- Sandhill Stations – This new volunteer activity paired a refuge volunteer with a Friends member to provide information about the refuge, the Friends, and the cranes during peak viewing times. Afternoon and evening proved more popular than mornings.
- Events: mostly virtual or self-guided: Facebook Live, Virtual Youth photo contest, Stroll at Sherburne.
- Refuge Open Roads Day – very popular. Included an opportunity to talk to a ranger at OSLC and visit the store. Store sales exceeded that of recent wildlife festivals.
- Crane tours – smaller, by reservation only, entirely outdoors, with Friends and Urban Bird Collective.
- In April 2021 some volunteer activity resumed: Only activities that are fully outdoors, alone or with family units, such as Adopt a Road and Adopt a Trail.
- July 2021 return of in-person volunteer roles: front desk, nature education, in-person rovers.
- Mahnomon and Blue Hill kiosk signs were installed. Next year's plans are to replace some worn signs and add directional signage at OSLC.
- Bur Oak Plantings. Kris Spaeth monitoring the success of the growth tubes purchased by the Friends and installed in the prior year. Look forward to more partnership in 2022.

## Old Business/New Business

### Election of Board Members

- Three-year term new members: Dorothy Holmes, Roger Leider
- Three-year term renewal: Bill Kolbinger, Emy Minzel
- One-Year Term: Myrna Krueger.
- Leaving the board: Marilyn Danielson: board member since 2019

Motion to Adjourn: 8:29pm. Motion Approved.