ICORE

Iron County Outdoor Recreation Enthusiasts

Annual Meeting - Notes

Tuesday, October 15, 2024 at **5:00 p.m.**

Mercer Community Center

2648W Margaret Street, Mercer, Wisconsin

In attendance: ICORE Board Members Karen Hagemann (President), Ian Shackleford (Vice President), Brenda Nelson (Secretary), Mark Fedora (Treasurer), Bob Traczyk, Kit Borgenschneider, Diane O'Krongly, and Gail Ondesky. Other ICORE members listed in attached sign-in sheet.

1. Call to order
   Karen Hagemann called the meeting to order at 5:11PM. Karen asked for round table introductions. Attendee sign-in attached.
2. Approval of minutes from the 2023 Annual Meeting
   Kit Bogenschneider motioned to approve the notes and Diane O'Krongly seconded. Motion passed.
3. Treasurer's report
   Mark Fedora reviewed current financials as of early October. The current total ICORE balance is $71,988: Mercer Bike Trail fund is $18,462, Hurley Bike Fund is $46,831, and the general fund is $6,695. $35,045 of the Hurley Bike fund is in an Edward Jones account and the remaining funds are all in checking. It was discussed and agreed to put $15,000 of the Mercer Bike Trail fund in some type of CD to earn interest for the next year. Income from memberships in 2024 was $3,208. Total expenses were $5,482.
4. Membership update
   Gail Ondresky provided an update on the membership drive that she conducted on July 11th. Letters were sent out to all current active members with their renewal date. Letters were also sent to all previous members to ask for their support again and tell them we miss them. Since these letters were sent, there have been 45 memberships renewed and/or added.
5. Election of board members

All Board members and officers agree to a two-year alternating term. President Karen Hagemann, Vice-President Ian Shackleford, Secretary Brenda Nelson, Board Member Bob Traczyk, and Board Member Gail Ondresky were elected in 2023. The board terms that were up in 2024 were as follows:

a. Board Member
   Diane O'Krongly is nominated for re-election
b. Board Member
   Kit Bogenschneider declined re-nomination. Bill Wagener was nominated for this board member position.
c. Treasurer
   Mark Fedora was nominated for re-election

Kit Bogenschneider motioned to accepted this slate of officers. Paul Hagemann seconded.

Motion passed.

6. 2023/2024 Activity Reports:
   a. Hurley Nonmotorized Trail

      Ian Shakleford reported that the Canadian National (CN) Railroad has offered to sell their 3-mile section between Hurley and Montreal to the City of Hurley for $175,000. We are working with the City of Hurley attorney to negotiate the purchase. ICORE would provide the entire purchase price, including earnest money. Issues being addressed are property lines, a building, and some soil contamination issues. We will agree to raise the $175,000 by Dec 31st, 2025, hopefully including a DNR grant. We currently have pledges for donations that are above the $46,000 that we currently have in the Hurley Bike Fund.

   b. Update on Mercer bike trail to WinMan
      Brenda Nelson's report on the Mercer Bike Trail is attached.

   c. 2024 ICORE Events
      Gail Ondresky reported that Monday evening kayaks were held 8 times of the 12 events that were planned due to weather issues. The Wednesday Looney Paddlers held weekly ladies' kayaks throughout the summer. Upcoming events are tentatively planned for a November full moon hike and pizza party, a Q1 morning hike with pancake breakfast in Hurly on the Uller trail, Q2 events focused on trail maintenance, Q3 bike riding

event in Mercer, and Q4 event TBD. These events will all be posted on our website as well as on Meetup.

d. Other Iron County updates

Bethany Thomas gave an update on the Heritage Chapter of the North Country Trail. Several projects are ongoing to replace temporary trail with permanent trail for a continuous experience.

Mike Shouldice gave an update on MECCA trails. Winterfest will be on January 18th along with the usual accompanying virtual event. MECCA needs about 50 volunteers. MECCA will be conducting several student outreach events through a grant that they received from SISU. MECCA will be featured on "Live at Five" on December 4th along with the Mercer Fire Department. This will include refreshments and a toy drive. SISU ski race is January 11th. MECCA will provide finish line support and volunteers are needed.

7. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 6:28PM by Karen Hagemann. The annual meeting was followed by a potluck dinner and a presentation on the Camp Mercer CCC Camp by Jim Bokern.

Mercer Bike Trail Update – 10/15/2024

Current Mercer Bike Trail Improvements:

- Ongoing bike trail maintenance contract between Mercer Parks Board and MECCA
- Mercer Bike trail logo created; trail signs designed and installed; including mileage markers and Natl Rec Trail signs. QR code leads to trail maps and new town of Mercer maps
- New trailhead at Carow Park with kiosk, air pump, and bike repair station

Trail Expansion Background:

- ICORE initiated the Mercer bike trail expansion committee in June of 2022. This committee investigated expanding the current bike trail from Carow Park to WinMan creating a 26-mile loop through Mercer, adding to the current 52 miles of bike trail already established in Iron and Vilas counties called the "Heart of Vilas" trail system which has been designated as a National Recreational Trail.
- A TAP grant was awarded in 2023 to conduct a planning and feasibility study.
- The engineering firm was selected, and the feasibility contract was finalized and approved in early 2024.

- The 3 party (DOT, Becher-Hoppe, and the Town of Mercer contract was approved to not exceed $115, 532 and to be completed by EOY 2024. The Town and the Chamber agreed to pay the 20% that was not covered by the DOT.
- The scope of services includes real estate analysis, Safe Routes to School, jurisdictional reports, public involvement, environmental reporting, utility reporting, funding analysis, surveys, trail plans, and structure plans.
- A Mercer Bike Trail event was held at Carow Park on August 4th called "Let's Get Looped". The event was a celebration of Mercer bike trails and information sharing on the trail expansion and loop. The event included an e-bike raffle and a silent auction and generated just over $5000 in profit. We also received several donations towards the bike trail expansion project.
- A bike trail usage survey was also initiated at the event to be used as part of our feasibility study. This survey is still active and can be taken from our ICORE website under the Mercer Bike trail expansion tab.

Trail Expansion Status

- The Planning and feasibility study is on track to be completed by yearend. We will likely have a report-out at a town meeting in January or February of 2025.
- The project will be proposed in 3 phases:
    - Carow Park to Martha Lake Road along Hwy J with smaller loop back to town utilizing Martha Lake Road.
    - Martha Lake Road to Cedar Lake Circle along Hwy J and then utilizing Cedar Lake Circle through Northern Highlands Forest Land to the Vilas County Line.
    - Vilas County section through Northern Highlands via a meandering path off the highway and coming out along Hwy W and back to WinMan

- Several obstacles currently being worked through:
    - Hwy J easements on private land for RTW
    - Snowmobile and bike trail co-habitation on Cedar Lake Circle
    - Vilas County section DNR and cost concerns
    - Sponsorships and funding plans. The DOT will want to understand this for all 3 phases before consideration of our phase 1 grant proposal.
- DOT construction grant submission for phase 1 will likely be fall of 2025. We will need to raise 20% of total cost.
- The Mercer Chamber of Commerce has turned over the Mercer Lupine Bike ride to ICORE to return it as a fundraiser for trail expansion. Julie Klug and Diane O-Krongly will lead this fundraiser. The current plan is to re-brand the bike ride to a loon-themed ride with a tentative date of Saturday, August 2nd. We want to make this big with live music, sponsors, raffles, etc. <u>We will need lots of volunteers</u> to pull this off. Julie will be organizing the first meeting soon. Please let Julie, Diane, Gail or me know if you are interested in helping.