



ACME TOWNSHIP
YUBA CREEK NATURAL AREA STEERING COMMITTEE
Thursday, May 6, 2004, 7:00 p.m.
Acme Township Hall
6042 Acme Road, Williamsburg MI 49690

Meeting called to Order at 7:25 p.m.

Members Present: Dan Morrison (Chair), Bob Carstens, Voss Guntzville, Jason Hullman, Stan Malaski, Ron Reinhold

Members Excused: Dan Hanna, John Heiam, Matt McDonough, John Pulcifer

Staff Present: S. Corpe, Office & Planning Coordinator/Recording Secretary

- A. Consider approval of minutes from April 1, 2004:** Reinhold noted a typographical error on page 2 in the 3rd paragraph on the 4th line, where “wire” misspelled as “while.” Also, on page 3 in paragraph 1 on the 3rd line, “a” should be inserted before “nice.”

Motion by Reinhold, support by Morrison to approve the minutes as corrected. Motion carried unanimously.

- B. MDOT Update:** Dave Langhorst, MDOT accepted an invitation to attend the meeting.

- 1) US 31 North Road Project – 2006:** Langhorst believes that a “crush and shape” project is planned, but needs to research further. He will provide the information to Corpe to give to the committee as soon as possible. Carstens asked if any widening is planned, particularly near the YCNA; Langhorst doesn’t expect so at this time.

Langhorst asked if the committee sees as need for enhanced shoulders for bicycle traffic. Carstens feels that if one were available, people would use it as an alternative transportation source to and from Elk Rapids. The committee does not feel that provisions to get bicycle traffic specifically to the YCNA is an issue, as we do not allow wheeled traffic within the area itself.

- 2) Possibility of Grant Funding for parking area, etc.:** Morrison has spoken with representatives at the GT Regional Land Conservancy, who seem to have a similar vision for a scenic turnout: 1 of 3 total information kiosks (the other two to be on Yuba Road and Bennett Road). The Conservancy says that local inmates are turning out some high-quality kiosks that can include the names of the 29 significant contributors to the property purchase. A similar structure can be viewed on the old state hospital grounds near the soccer fields. Reinhold asked what material the kiosks are made of and whether the messages thereon will be sufficiently durable. He mentioned how nice the bronzed plaques can be and how durable they are. Langhorst stated that cast bronze signs can cost around \$6,000, which may be more than the group could hope to afford. Some signs are made of milled aluminum now that might be nice; there may be an individual in Elk Rapids who could be contacted for more information and a quote. Langhorst stated that local sign companies should be able to give us some ideas and quotes.

Trail improvements from a parking area to the overlook are another question. Reinhold stated that we have spoken of building a platform or deck, but because the area enjoys a decent elevation, with some brush trimming and leveling and perhaps a fence, a nice overlook with a very natural feel could be achieved. Morrison agreed

and said that the Conservancy also agrees that any overlook area should be kept as natural as possible. Reinhold asked if the group would want to surface the area with wood chips; most favored simple mowing. Morrison stated for Langhorst's benefit that the group would like a parking area to be reasonably close to US 31. Along the highway there would be a buffer of grasslands with flowers that would allow wildlife near or crossing the road to be visible. Further back it would transition to shrubs and eventually to trees that would provide a sound and visual buffer.

Langhorst stated that federal "enhancement" funds (TEA21) are available. MDOT can't plan very far into the future regarding these funds because they are only renewed for 2-month periods so they don't seem reliable. An application for these funds must be accompanied by a minimum 20% match. If MDOT is the applicant, they provide the match through state fuel tax dollars. If the township and MDOT were to apply jointly, their 20% match could meet the minimum and the township could bring extra matching funds to the process. The greater the match, the more points the grant application earns. The township would be providing the land, which could account for most of our match rather than dollars. The difficulty is that if MDOT becomes the primary applicant, they would want to create something on the lines of a rest stop with a significant view for travelers who stop there. Capture of the federal funds must be for a "transportation-related" use. Hullman felt that a rest stop would be incompatible with the real purpose of the land acquisition. Langhorst stated that perhaps there could be a compromise; an area where the public could park, take a path to a scenic overlook and a path back to their cars without restroom facilities, it might still be possible to make a successful grant application. He also mentioned that anything constructed with federal funds must be barrier free. This implies some sort of surface that will support a wheelchair and changes the scope of the site engineering (more than just a dirt or grass area..)

Langhorst believes that to submit an application for these funds some sort of transportation agency must be involved. If MDOT development involvement isn't sought, they won't have requirements of us other than to obtain a driveway permit. Carstens asked what the conditions of a driveway permit are; they generally involve size and sight distance. MDOT will not have any other specific requirements for improvements outside of the right-of-way. Reinhold asked what the current ROW width in the area of the turnout is; Langhorst will have to look this up. Carstens asked if a ROW widens automatically when a road is widened; Langhorst said that it depends on how much ROW is already owned and how much is needed. He does not envision that much widening would be needed in this area in the foreseeable future.

Reinhold asked what other sources of state grant funding might be available for a moderately improved driveway. Langhorst replied that the state doesn't really have funds to hand out from MDOT, although DNR funding is sometimes available. He stated that the driveway apron will need to be curbed and paved with a solid surface, at least to the breakpoint of the turn radius, and possibly to the width of the ROW. Carstens stated that the parking lot should be as close as possible to the road, with people walking in to the overlook. He has found the area beautiful on a moonlit night, and would hate to have headlights too close to the edge.

Reinhold asked if it would be possible to run gravel along the existing two-track to the existing road shoulder. Langhorst stated that even though the two-track is existing, permits are required to work in the ROW. He said that once the group knows more fully what it wants to do, it should call Rise Rasch at the Traverse City TSC to see what she will require. He would view that there are some existing rights

that would go with the rudimentary existing drive. It would be important to prevent any gravel from being carried out into the roadway.

Langhorst also stated that townships can receive an annual blanket permit to work within the state rights-of-way (or place the radar trailer). Then, they would call a brief period of time prior to any planned activity to advise MDOT what is planned.

Guntzviller asked if ground up asphalt from the old cherry processing area on Yuba Road a filler for pits or for substrate for a new driveway; Langhorst says there is no problem from his perspective with reuse of the material in either manner. The group discussed seeing if the milling machines that will be used for the US 31 repaving over the next few weeks could be brought by our site to see if they would help us out. Guntzviller stated that he received an estimate of \$20/yd to remove the asphalt from the Yuba Road parking area. The group discussed some ideas as to the township volunteering storage sites for the heavy equipment in trade for getting some work done.

Malaski asked if the township would be required to create a barrier-free overlook. Corpe will research this. Carstens believes that this was not a requirement for this property, although it was for the Petobego Natural Area.

- C. Yuba Creek Restoration: Mr. Steve Largent, Grand Traverse Soil Conservation District & Trout Unlimited:** Morrison, Reinhold and Guntzviller walked the creek with Steve Largent a few days ago that was very informative. They identified uses for the autumn olive brush piles from the clean-up project. Reinhold stated that the goal would be to reclaim the stream bottom and banks to make it a better habitat for trout again. Largent pointed out ways to speed the creek current, causing the silt to be scoured away and narrowing the stream naturally and catching silt deposit in strategic areas such as bends. The narrowing would in turn keep speed current up. Hullman asked what data exists regarding creek temperature. Guntzviller stated that Largent pointed out vegetation and algae growing in warm, flat, sunny meadow spots, and areas where shade vegetation could be planted to counteract these effects. It may be possible to plant willow branches right along stream edges and have them re-root. Hullman recommended that other species be used as well, as willows could really interfere with flycasting. Guntzviller mentioned that there are several types of root stock that could be planted with some special products to encourage their growth. Hullman stated that evergreen varieties would also be poor choices because they would make the area too acidic. Red Osier Dogwood would be good choices. The main goal is to cool the water again.

Using the autumn olive cuttings, anchored to the stream banks would catch the silt. As more silt builds up, the autumn olive rots.

Reinhold said that Largent stated that one reason that there are few colonies of smaller-types of fish such as brook trout is because of a dip in a culvert associated with US 31 at Yuba Park Road. Larger fish can make the leap, but smaller fish can't. One idea would be to create a concrete apron that would serve as a slope the fish could manage, allowing them to re-establish colonies higher upstream. Corpe stated that this roadside turnout was turned over to the County Road Commission by MDOT several years ago, so that would be the group to approach. Unless this situation is resolved, fish from the lake will not be able to generally travel to the YCNA.

Before cuttings could be bundled and placed, a DEQ permit would be required. The Soil Conservation District has materials that would assist in creating an acceptable plan to submit. The next question would be where to start and how to divide up the work. Hullman stated that using the autumn olive as close to where it is now as possible to avoid too much work

dragging it, and using as much windfall materials as possible in other areas would be ideal. Morrison see that the old beaver dam, near the current eagles' nest, was the key problem for the creek. He would favor starting with areas where there is clear silt build-up, and on public property or sections on properties owned by members of the committee who are committed to the project, rather than other private properties.

Reinhold is concerned about using autumn olive for this project until we are sure it is really "dead;" several months at least, or perhaps after it has wintered. Morrison has received some comments from people asking when the piles of cut materials will be moved. Reinhold suggested that the cuttings can be baled, the number of bales needed for a particular section of the creek can be assessed and the bales can be dragged down. The bundles would be anchored with aircraft cable. Perhaps the group could borrow a Christmas tree baler for the bundling process. Additionally, some snags would be selectively cut to add to the project, leaving some for wildlife habitat and fodder.

- D. Update on Autumn Olive removal project and tree planting – David Milarch, Champion Tree Project:** At some point the group needs to discuss which species of trees to plant. Morrison heard Milarch on the radio saying that he wanted to find a place in the local area to plant clones of some of the champion trees. Morrison sent him an inquiry by fax and received a response that he's willing to take a look at the YCNA. It might be good to take soil samples and find out what types of trees would be most compatible with our soils. There are areas that might be good for white pines, but it might be wise to avoid trees such as oaks that would drop acorns that would feed deer that would cross US 31 and potentially cause accidents.
- E. Bluebird houses installed:** One chickadee was seen to have been moving into one of the boxes with a smaller entry hole, although there have been some "lookers" at the other boxes. Bluebirds have generally nested already but may relocate to our boxes later in the season if we keep track and keep the boxes cleaned out between broods. Swallows may move in as well. There are 15 boxes. The ones near Ken Engle's property seem to be generating more interest.
- F. Meadow: burning vs. mowing:** Guntzviller spoke with someone from Wisconsin who works with The Nature Conservancy. They are trying to promote education about how to safely and effectively conduct controlled burns. Local resources in TC recommend having someone disk and rye the perimeter of a field to be burned in the fall. In the spring the rye will green up first, and the interior area can be burned off and contained by the green perimeter. Burns could be conducted every five years, or less often with interim mowing. The group hopes that Henkel will become a leading force on this issue. Some of the benefits of burning would be to help eliminate exotic species and enhance native ones. It is important to try to get Henkel on board and to properly educate the public. Burning small areas would be a good way to start. Guntzviller, Morrison and Carstens are all interested in attending local natural burn training.
- G. Parking area off Yuba Road:**
- 1) Black top removal:** Some ideas for asphalt removal were discussed when David Langhorst was present earlier. Reinhold will contact Rise Rasch to see who the contractor for the US 31 mill and fill will be and if we can work out a trade.
 - 2) Electric pole removal:** Cherryland Electric will be contacted to see if they will come and remove all but the two poles closest to the building (in case electric service to the building is desired at some point in the future.)

Carstens asked the group what items should be included in an article for *The Outlook*. Hullman suggested that the names of the donors to the area could be highlighted in a call-out box. Carstens will use the draft minutes to assemble the article.

The question of what to do with the brush piles from the autumn olive removal remains.

Reinhold asked if the committee would authorize him to take any information he receives from MDOT that could help us get the asphalt in the parking lot milled and/or removed and address the Board directly at their next meeting for their approval. He will keep everyone on the committee informed by e-mail.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.