

BLPRD Harvest Committee Meeting Minutes
Thursday, June 18, 2020 – 9:00 AM
Packwaukee Park Pavilion

Present: Gary Kershaw, Bill Lewis, Linda Huggett, Ed Schams, Joe Dion, Jim Barton

Absent: Larry Haygood,

Equipment Review

- a. Major repairs
- b. Minor repairs and service
- c. New transporter

Gary reported that equipment was gone over in the spring. Some of the equipment needed repair. The planetary gear drive was replaced on #5 cutter. A number of hydraulic drive motors were needed and replaced. Welding and belting was completed on the one conveyor. The dash was repaired on the #6 IHC Haul Truck so the speedometer and fuel gauge would work. The forklift was repaired by a dealer and should function for years. This will save the cost of a used replacement of \$10K - \$20K.

Hydraulic oil was changed on the #4 cutter. There were several pillow block bearings that were replaced. Last year, everything took grease and seemed good. We are still working on catch up from the prior past poor maintenance.

The new transporter was delivered on May 7. A minor change was made on the hydraulic control valve to be more user friendly. The control position was different to make it inconvenient for the operator. The interlock system on the transporter needed to be changed to interlock properly on the cutters. It was a different dimension and size. The #6 cutter did not unload properly into the transporter and had a spill problem over the sides as it was being unloaded into the transporter. Shoes were built by Aquarius and supplied at no cost so that weeds could unload into the transporter appropriately.

Fuel Purchases

- a. Sources
- b. Lake site storage tank

Gary reported that we have applied for credit and was approved for diesel fuel purchases at the Oxford Travel Plaza and Marquette County Highway Dept. We have previously been approved by the Holliday. Gary had checked at the Endeavor truck stop and found that fuel was \$0.50 a gallon cheaper. As far as distance, Endeavor is 2-3 miles further each way than Oxford. In 2019, 1900 gallons were used on offroad harvest equipment which equals \$850 in savings. Research will be done to determine if there are savings.

The diesel storage tank at the site is empty and is not being used to avoid liability for fuel spills. The tank will be sold once the board has approved.

Site Maintenance

- a. Repairs and improvements
- b. Tool storage and workshop building

Six yards of dirt were hauled in at the lake site to fill ruts where no mowing could be done. Chris and Steve Meyer volunteered their tractor and labor to level the dirt and get rid of a decomposed weed pile on the lot. Gary paid for the tractor fuel. Grass seed and oat seed will be planted on Friday, June 19.

Gary reported that the district needs to upgrade the semitrailer workshop. The old trailer is rodent infested, is 4 ft off the ground, and is inconvenient. Research is needed for three bids to construct a building for parts storage and workshop building. This can then be presented to the board for approval.

Linda stated that we need to be careful on zoning for a new building facility. Marquette Zoning will be contacted first to find out what is needed in order to replace the trailer and construct a new building.

Weed Harvest

- a. Progress and updates
- b. Low water level impacts

Weed harvesting began June 1 with minor startup problems the first week. The crew ran 9 hrs per day. There were eight employees with 293 total hours and \$460 for fuel.

The second week starting June 8, hours were back to normal with 8 hrs per day. 275 total hours, \$1,375 for miscellaneous parts, and \$400 for fuel.

Expenses and hours were not recorded at meeting time for the third week starting June 15.

Total loads hauled from June 1 to June 17.

108 truckloads east

67 truckloads west

All equipment has had hours and miles recorded at the beginning of the season so that we can determine usage on each machine and piece of equipment plus determine total hours of use at the end of the season.

Low water levels, warmer weather, and sun gave the lake weeds a head start and is hard to catch up on. DNR regulates the start harvest date of June 1 and is now monitoring the lake levels established in 1976. NOTE: See the website for more information.

Buoys

Discussion on buoys. Joe stated that 15 lotus buoys will be put in tomorrow, Friday 6-19.

A statement was made that buoys are not where they should be. Joe had readings last year to compare to. He has requested that a subcommittee be put together to determine where they belong and get them in the right positions. The district is responsible for the navigational markers. All buoys have active permits by DNR.

Linda suggested an identification number on each buoy so that depth can be measured and a foot of chain added to each one. Wind and high water will then not move them for weed cutting.

Joe will be posting for buoy subcommittee volunteers.

There is a need to incorporate GPS lateral in the buoy subcommittee. Buoys are not where they were in the past. Joe stated that the buoy program asked about it earlier. Supposedly buoys were placed where laterals come out. Not what I remember from last year. This ties back into the whole buoy thing. Buoys are the only landmark that cutters have. This gives more incentive to get buoy program together because there is a need to go back to the same spot each year. Darrel Unsinn stated he would like more consistency. Water level is 3 ft in front of him. It took twice as long to cut the lateral. Gary stated the reason is the flow of the water to pull debris away.

Bill Lewis asked if it would be better to start at the lateral instead of shoreline. Joe stated that there is no reference in the center of the lake. Bill asked if a straight line could be lined up with same house. Joe suggested to estimate center point. Bill stated that the GPS coordinate laterals don't intersect 17 or 18 laterals. Half a dozen houses use the same lateral.

Gary stated that what the cutters are trying to do is manifold laterals so that half a dozen houses on each side can use the same lateral and hopefully, keep the shoreline clean enough to use the same lateral. Ed Schams stated he has to travel ½ mile for lateral. Gary suggested to mark the shoreline with flags at lateral points. Currently, the lateral is being eyeballed each spring.

Darrel asked where Rich Brefield's GPS unit was. Joe will make an inquiry to get it.

5-Year Plan

a. Suggestions and ideas

Gary stated that the 5-year plan could be the lake site, harvest and equipment needs, employee needs, etc. There are a lot of things to improve on. Gary asked for district members to write down and present ideas at the next harvest meeting.

Question was asked whether there was a 5-year plan in the past? There has been in the past and appears there is no written plan. Joe stated we need feedback on website, equipment needs, site needs, and employee needs. Please offer suggestions and ideas to discuss.

Darrel stated that the 5-year plan will be important. However, the blue machine may have been beneficial this year. Gary stated that it was 7 ft wide and would require more personnel to operate. We did not get push from winter this year as the snow melted into the ground instead of flowing into the lake causing lower water levels as well as DNR regulating the dam. The water was deeper until the silt filled in.

Operations

- a. Lake segment division
- b. Weekly breakdown of costs (See Weed Harvest)
- c. New hire
- d. New employee handbook review

Joe stated west end divided into as three parts as done in the past. There was undated work on putting together property lines with no markings at any given time. Goal would be to utilize for offline points. Where is 50% point? Haven't seen anything in writing. The goal is to cut transporter goals by 50%.

A new employee started June 17 and will be fill in. A thermometer has been purchased to take temperatures for COVID 19 as employees enter the lake site each morning.

Linda talked about a new employees' handbook. Drug testing could be done at the Portage clinic. Pat has a couple of forms. Darrel suggested to contact Quest Diagnostics that has all the documents and forms that are needed. Approval was made by the harvest committee to present the employee handbook to the board at the July 11 board meeting.

New Business

Linda stated that labor law posters should be posted at the lake site. Pat Frank provided a website to purchase the posters for \$29. The laws do change and the posters can be replaced and are included in the price. Approval was made and seconded by the harvest committee to purchase the posters. Linda will follow up with purchasing the posters.

Linda stated that we need volunteers for lawn mowing. We currently have one volunteer. Mowing has been completed 4 times already. A riding mower is provided by the lake district. Contact Linda if you are interested in volunteering. We also need a volunteer to seed area where fill dirt was placed to fill in ruts.

Jim Barton stated that he felt that there was good communication on email, website, and facebook

District Member Questions

Question was asked if the crew worked on Fridays during the harvest season? Cutting would be done only for makeup days when rain, wind, and lightening occurred during the week. Linda stated that if a day was missed, the committee has the option to require the crew to work Friday and is stated in the Work Rules presented to the employees at the beginning of the season.

The crew is limited to work 32 hours per week. The reason is operating money. More hours would need to be budgeted by the district board. The budget is set up to spend x numbers for labor and would be up to the board to make any changes.

Linda stated that part of the reason the crew doesn't work on Fridays is that people want to use the lake that day. Traffic on the west side increases on Thursday. Jim stated that there have been a lot of complaints from landowners and requested no work on Friday regarding harvest machine disturbing boaters.

Al Rosenthal stated boat traffic is up. Tourism is up more as of mid June this year than the last 2 years after July 4th. The coronavirus is allowing more people to take day trips and this increases boat traffic.

Statement was made that an observation was made and the cutter made four passes without changing the height. The cutter was not getting any weeds the second, third, or fourth times. He felt that the sickle blade should be lowered. Gary stated that he will ask the foreman. The lake level bottom cannot be disturbed and is regulated by the DNR. The machine cutter blade can only go down 3 ft max. Once you get the hydraulic system to the lake level, cutting a foot of weeds does not help much on the cutting depth. Capacity is a guess.

Statement was made that this year when they got in front of owner's place, the cutter made multiple passes. Floaters were picked up the next day and did not happen before. Cutting was done much better this year.

Question was asked whether we can get a gauge to measure lake level. There is one on the east side of the causeway. Joe stated that it is white with black colors approved by DNR. There is no recorded history to try to establish that 8.5 is realistic. Tracking levels are currently being done at the Montello dam and Packwaukee causeway to have some reference.

Question asked when the new buoys are put in, will they be changed and the laterals recut? Joe stated that not this year, but we will be in position for next year. We know that some of the buoys are not placed correctly in the channel.

Question asked are you going to move some buoys this year? Joe stated not in the channel and will need to be moved. This is the reason to have them numbered. A program needs to be put together with somewhere around 54 buoys with accurate GPS settings. Cutting on the same spot every year keeps it clear and cutting in the same path.

Question asked if have they cut in main channel? Joe stated that no they have not.

Question asked what is the cutting plan? Cutters are working their way west on the west end and cutters are working east on the east end. Joe stated that they are just short of launch of Buffalo Lake Lodge. The lodge has allowed us to put the conveyor in at their launch. They do request the conveyor be pulled on Thursday afternoon. Joe stated that they will be at the dredge bank landing next week. Gary stated that the volume of weeds is preventing faster progress.

Question asked has this been going on since last draw down? Lake member had bought last July and the lake looked good. Gary stated that the DNR regulation came up last fall. DNR had land owner 1976 petition complaint and went back to 1976 rules. Pat Frank stated that Buffalo Lake really is a river, not a lake. The west end is a flooded river.

Darrel stated that he saw improvement this year. The cutter was meeting the transporter half way. This cut time waiting by meeting the transporter. Time was not wasted sitting and waiting. Joe stated the cutters are doing a great job. The problem is traveling 45 minutes to offload.

Question asked do we have another transporter that we could put in the water to speed up cutting? We do have with an old steel hull one that was purchased in 2001. It would take one more person and increase labor costs. Plans are not in place to staff the old transporter and was not budgeted. There was discussion last year to sell the old transporter and the decision was made to keep it for this year. The new transporter replaces this old one.

Joe stated that the district applied for a grant which was 35% of cost of the new transporter. On the previous Monday final paperwork and payment was made on the new transporter.

Jim stated that there was always a plan to go to all stainless steel for the equipment to last longer. This will help cut down on maintenance. Detailed process takes time and lot of involvement with a lot of different ideas.

Darrel stated that cutter in Packwaukee, transporter sitting on land, not enough crew, not enough money tells there is a need to look at financing and budget and look at what we need to do. If dues are raised, what do you get for the increase? Take hard look and if we want things to be better, need to get more money to operate. Gary stated that we need to have efficiency first to gain progress. We need to get

more involvement of people and we cannot think about the past.

Al stated we had summers like this before. If conditions are right, crew is doing a good job. May need to budget more for labor to get things accomplished.

Question asked what kind of weed has a long stem on it? It is duckweed and cleans the water. Linda read some cities use it for water purification. Most people don't want it.

Darrel asked about the GPS units on cutters. Joe took one for a week and tried to work with it. What Joe was after was to get points of GPS to reposition buoys. It is an agricultural-based type of GPS unit. The software was loaded on the district computer which was wiped out last year and data cannot be read. Darrel asked if he could take one unit and drive to Ziegler's for evaluation. He will be doing this next week.

A suggestion was made by Bernie Sosinsky for a fund raiser. Once a project has been determined, we will incorporate a fund raiser to help in the cost. Gary stated that needs are to be created first.

Question was asked where the laterals can be found. Joe stated to look at the website as there is a map to look at there.

NOTE: BLPRD website has a FAQ section to refer to for more answers to questions.

Establish Next Harvest Committee Meeting

Next meeting will be held, Thursday, July 16, at 9:00.