

Minutes of September 14, 2025 Board Meeting, Borah Creek Barn, Fennimore

- 1) Call to order/Roll call: Meeting called to order at 1:20 p.m. by President Becky Fernette. All board members present, except Lynnette Dornak. Guests: Bob Retko, Jan Ketelle, Sue Eisele.
- 2) Approval of minutes from July 12, 2025. Minutes were approved with no changes.
- 3) Treasurer's report was provided to the board. Steve reviewed the most recent balance sheet (July 2025) received from Chapter Support.
  - a) Unrestricted cash balance: \$105,229.76. Restricted cash balance: \$16, 068.16.
  - b) Recent donations - \$40,000 from unnamed donor, \$200 from W. Dundee group, and \$100 from the Grant County Master Gardeners. Board decided to use the \$200 to reimburse Steve for the used 250 gal. fuel tank he was able to purchase earlier this year. The \$100 will be used for loppers & pruners for Eldred Prairie work parties.
- 4) Chapter Support Representative report - No meeting since last update (next mtg 9/16. Branded merchandise will be available once the updated logo is approved.
- 5) Committee updates
  - a) Land Management – Jack
    - i) Kussmaul property update - Culvert is in for the access road and a survey is scheduled. The proposal will go before the TPE Board at the 9/16 meeting.
    - ii) Some Land Management Plans need updating. Jack to review and notify the appropriate stewards.
  - b) Events
    - i) Reports given regarding recent events. Successful tours at Iris Drive, the Kussmaul & Bennett properties, and the Master Gardeners' tour of Eldred Prairie.
    - ii) Upcoming events – Jack & Lynnette to be notified of all events. Bat presentation at Southwest Tech, Nov. 6 at 6:30 p.m.
  - c) Scholarship – Becky reported for Lynnette that the \$1000 scholarship was awarded to UW-Platteville sophomore Brady Radtke. The Platteville Journal is doing an article on the scholarship recipient.
  - d) Barn – Becky reported that the kitchen still needs finishing work. Given that we have panels left over, the exterior walls of the other two rooms on the east side of the barn will be enclosed. Next priority is to find a contractor to repair the foundation. Becky is

following up on some leads. It was suggested that we obtain a metal cabinet(s) to keep mice out of supplies.

6) Site steward updates

- a) Borah Creek- Gravel fill used in low area of the driveway by the creek. Weevils dispersed in August. Crew continues to mow invasives and fire breaks. Plan to continue work on removing the plum thickets.
- b) Bush Clover- Fire breaks will be mowed Monday, September 15.
- c) Double Oak – Walter Mirk is stepping down as site steward. Becky and a potential steward are meeting on Sunday, Sept. 28 to walk the property.
- d) Eldred – Jack Kussmaul has stepped down as site steward. Ross Shrago is his successor. George Riffin has been hosting weekly seed collection. Ross indicated a need to burn brush piles prior to a spring burn. Steve reminded him that the chapter has a grapple to consolidate existing brush piles.
- e) Feist- Seed collected Friday, Becky will schedule work parties to address woody invasives. The ongoing goal is to open the entire site for prairie and oak savanna.
- f) Iris Drive- Seed collecting weekly. Possibility of sharing seed among TPE sites to be discussed at the Land Management meeting. Consensus was that seed should come only from SW TPE sites.
- g) Sylvan Road-
  - i) WQT update- Water Quality Trading agreement with Town of Hollandale is tabled at this time. The Town is working with area landowners.
- h) Thomas Wet- Becky agreed to act as proxy site steward to schedule a work party to cut burn breaks. Property is too wet to use the tractor. Kristin conducted crayfish survey – species is Devil crayfish.

7) Other business

- a) Review of 2025 goals & 3 year plans- Article about seed collecting at Iris Drive published in Gays Mills newspaper. Becky is setting up a meeting with the REC club at UW-P to recruit volunteers.
- b) Collaborative work parties with Coulee Region. There is some overlap as Coulee Region now manages Marowski Bluff which is technically in SW Chapter. There are SW Chapter members near there and Iris Drive as well as Coulee Region members near both areas. The consensus was to have Bob Retko and Justin Nooker work out the information about work days, etc. for those 2 areas which should be shared among both chapters. Advised to come up with a plan and move forward.
- c) QR CODES on signs. Chapter support has control over signage and will take suggestions.
- d) Member & volunteer recruitment - 144 current members. Some discussion about engaging High School and College age groups through presentations, tours, etc.

- e) Scheduling of work parties- Bob Costanza is the contact to arrange work parties. He will keep a central calendar. All work parties need to go through Bob to insure we are not doubling up and conflicting with our own group.
  - f) Wish list report out – Becky – requests for prescribed fire and land management equipment, more volunteers, fundraising for burns and endowments.
    - i) Training may be needed as we acquire more sophisticated equipment.
    - ii) Discussion about high school assistance. Start in the classroom by offering classes, then get them on the prairie, then see if they want to volunteer.
    - iii) Is there a possibility that Chapter Support can help develop endowments for any of our sites?
  - g) Discussed the need for a centralized list of equipment and a method for borrowing equipment. Decided to table any action until we acquire more equipment.
  - h) Burn Crew Development- James Haas is attending Burn Boss training for 1 week on Sept. 22. Keeping the Burn Crew list updated annually and doing the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of Burn Training in March, right after the Annual Conference, are all part of this plan.
- 8) New business - Discussion/Decision
- a) Kay is scheduling volunteers for tabling at Applefest on 9/27. Let Kay know about tabling events that may come up.
  - b) Gary Eldred doing a talk at McIntosh Library in Viroqua on Nov. 5 at 2:15 pm regarding his book. Promotion materials will be there for TPE as well.
  - c) Chapter Support wants to make a chapter specific window shade type banner for us for \$82. Jack moved, Steve second. Passed. Will ask Martha to select photos for the banner.
  - d) Site Monitor changes: Maggie McGarry - Eldred or Double Oak, Steve Querin-Schultz - Bush Clover & Feist, Bob Costanza - Sylvan Rd, Sime Bald, Borah, & Thomas Wet, Jessica Bizub - Iris Drive, Becky – Eldred or DOS.
  - e) Steward photos & brief bio: Becky requests each Site Steward submit a photo of themselves by the site signage with a very short bio (sentence or 2) for use to advertise work days, etc.
  - f) New board member(s) –We anticipate the need for a Secretary when Lynnette permanently relocates to Milwaukee. Looking to fill another slot.
- 9) Action items:
- a) Land Management committee to schedule a meeting date. Review site management plans, discuss seed sharing.

10) Before adjournment, Jack thanked Becky for the great job she has done. Seconded by Gary Eldred. Everyone agrees. Gary Adams made the motion to adjourn, Ross seconded.  
Meeting adjourned at 3:36 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Kay Wienke, edited by Becky Fernette

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#### 2025 Goals

1. We will continue to make improvements to the barn at Borah Creek to make it suitable to hold events there and to safely and cleanly store Chapter equipment.
2. We will investigate having joint work parties with other groups.
3. We will apply for and be awarded two grants this year.
4. We will publish 2-3 articles in local or online publications. (MET)

#### Three-year Plan

1. Holding 6 events/programs per year.(will be met in November)
2. Getting 2-5 new members at each event.
3. Adding QR codes on our signs.
4. Holding fundraising events.

#### Upcoming meetings:

- November 19 via Zoom at 6 p.m.
- January 21, 2026 via Zoom at 6 p.m.
- February 18-20, 2026 via Whova: Annual Conference: Biodiversity from the Ground Up
- March 18 via Zoom at 6 p.m.
- May 9 - location TBD