

Minutes for January 21, 2026 Board Meeting over Zoom

1. Call to order/Roll call – 6:01p.m.

X	Jack Kussmaul	X	Gary Eldred	O	Ross Shrago
X	Gary Adams	X	Becky Fernette	X	Roger Smith
X	Bob Costanza	O	Steve Querin-Schultz	X	Kay Wienke
X	Lynnette Dornak				

Guest Attendees: James Haas, Bob Retko

2. Approval of Minutes from November 19, 2025

- Jack moved to approve minutes with a title correction from "Agenda" to "Minutes," second by Roger.
- Motion carried.

3. Treasurer's Report

- Presented by Becky in Steve's absence (report available in Google Doc).
Financial Summary
 - Ending cash balance reviewed: \$95,222.01
 - Restricted cash balance reviewed: \$9,542.90
 - Restricted funds spent: income \$3,021 (equipment donation)
 - Endowments increased by approximately \$11,000 (\$544,911 (Nov) to \$556,231 (Dec))
 - Review of expenses outstanding (Borah Creek & Eldred burns)
 - Review of proposed 2026-27 budget (submitted to Chapter Support on 1/8/26)

4. Chapter Support Representative Report

- Becky reported for Kay.
- Summary of 11/25 Board Meeting
- Discussion about the annual meeting
 - Board retreat scheduled for February 15-16, before the conference. Agenda includes board succession planning and recruitment of new board members
- Personnel changes at Chapter Support
 - Kay and Becky are volunteering at Chapter Support, assisting until additional staff are hired.

5. Committee Updates

- a. Land Management – Jack
 - i. Sime Bald/MVC Update
 - Transfer of Sime Bald property completed on 1/29/25
 - Potential UTV donation and funds for water tank:

- UTV gift on hold – Chapter Support will contact donor on Friday
- Donated funds for water tank can be redirected to fire equipment if UTV cannot be acquired

b. Events

- i. Holiday Gathering – January 31, 2026
 - 20 attendees have RSVP'd
 - RSVP deadline: Monday, January 26
 - Buffet-style homestyle food will be served
- ii. "Turn that Patch into a Plan" Report – Kay
 - Sunday event: 20 registered attendees, plus 5 walk-ins for workshop on planning yards for native plantings
 - Generated \$50 profit above payment to Gays Mills venue at \$5 per person
- iii. Other events - Kay
 - Next talk: Helen Voss on neonicotinoid pesticides and pollinator impacts, at Boscobel Library, geared toward land/prairie owners (\$5 per person)
 - Arranging Part 2 of burn school with Rob Schubert from Empire Sauk Chapter. Would include small area burn. Will coordinate separately from SW Chapter activities.
- iv. Prairie du Chien Meet-up – Becky
 - Scheduled for Feb. 1 at Margie Bennett's home
 - 23 invitations sent
- v. Upcoming Events – Kay/Jack
 - Jack commended Kay on the quality of her presentations
- vi. Summer activities planned:
 - Two site tours: Marty Grell (date TBD); August 2 in Potosi area with Richard Graft
 - Donna Richter has agreed to lead a butterfly workshop in late August/early September (Saturday) at Borah Creek
 - Other: New volunteer: Roger Reynolds has expressed interest in joining the Events Committee

c. Scholarship – Lynnette

- Mark Leonhart agreed to join the committee
- Lynnette will determine timeline and requirements
- Need to follow up with last year's scholarship recipient

d. Barn – Becky

- Still trying to arrange for a contractor to repair the foundation
- Upstairs work continuing: plastic installation, finishing, and painting. Heavy construction work is complete.

6. Site Steward Updates

a. Borah Creek

- Gary E. reported for Steve: No work days since October
- Contracted forestry mower cleared 10 acres of plum thickets
- Ongoing maintenance required for cleared areas
- Site looked good in fall; increase in grassland bird species observed
- Unexpected positive results from burns: hundreds of compass plants, purple coneflowers, and white baptisia emerging

- b. Bush Clover
 - Gary A. completed brush clearing and mowed firebreak around perimeter
 - Neighboring landowner received county permit to open sand pit; no action from Land Protection Committee at hearings
 - Burn plan exists but requires signature and approval from Dan Wallace
 - Gary or Dan can supervise burn; plan needs amendment to allow Jeb Barzen to conduct and supervise burn

- c. Double Oak
 - James: Saturday 1/24 work party was cancelled
 - Next work day scheduled for January 31

- d. Eldred
 - Report from Ross (via Becky):
 - Three work days completed:
 - Work party with three students and Chris Baxter to burn brush piles
 - A second day burning brush piles. Worked on fire breaks 1/14
 - Preparing site for spring burn

- e. Feist
 - 2nd Annual “Burning of the Brushpiles” on 1/3 - 12 attended
 - 1/17 work party burned additional brush piles and felled more trees

- f. Iris Drive
 - Neighbors Bob & Connie Howard selling 11 acres adjacent to ID
 - Realtor will assess the property and determine sale price
 - Dan Carter and Becky contacted; Dan gave preliminary evaluation; will visit in spring to determine acquisition value given adjacency to existing site
 - Bob invited attendees at Gays Mills event on 1/18 to visit ID
 - Recruited 5 people for seed spreading – excellent entry-level volunteer opportunity
 - Awaiting favorable weather for upcoming seed spreading event

- g. Sylvan Road
 - Report from Tom (via Becky):
 - Bush cutting over 2.6+ acres and removal of scattered barbed wire
 - Thinning invasive species

- h. Thomas Wet
 - No report

7. Other Business

Review of 2025 Goals & Three-Year Plans / Establish New Goals

- New year begins April 1
- One-year plan discussed tonight; 3-year plan to be discussed at March mtg

Discussion of 2025 Goals:

- Goal #1: Continue barn improvements at Borah Creek for events and equipment storage – retain this goal (Jack)

- Goal #2: Joint work parties with other groups
 - Ross and Jack recommend removing this goal due to capacity constraints
 - Bob R. agrees: focus on existing sites and volunteers in proximity
 - Kay suggests including guidance in newsletter on how to decide where to volunteer
 - Bob R. agrees to remove as annual goal but emphasizes need for communication
 - Motion: Jack moved to remove Goal #2, Gary E. seconded. Motion carried.

- Goal #3: Apply for and receive two grants annually
 - Tom Hunt receives 2 grants per year for Sylvan Road independently
 - Jack suggests increasing target number
 - Becky suggests rewording to make goal broader
 - Bob C. inquired about types of grants Tom Hunt receives; Becky will follow up
 - Fundraising Ideas
 - Becky considering music-based fundraiser, will collaborate with Events Committee
 - Jack and Kay suggested Folklore Village as potential venue

- Goal #4: Publish 2-3 articles in local or online publications – goal met, retain for next year
 - Additional Goal Considerations:
 - Continue working on membership engagement
 - Better track members: distinguish between financial-only members and active volunteers
 - Current status: 173 paid members, some lapsed
 - Becky will follow up with lapsed members
 - Consider two separate goals: (1) increase membership and (2) increase member involvement (e.g., one volunteer day every three months)
 - Kay: increase burn capacity

Other Business, continued

- Board encouraged to actively promote service opportunities.
- Membership is currently around 160–165.

8. New Business

- a. Prairie Discovery Event(s) – Summer 2026
 - Becky met with Mary Penn, UW-P to plan event featuring campus prairies
 - Tentatively scheduled for June; official date TBD
- b. Prairie Tours - see Events above
- c. New Board Member(s)
 - Need: Treasurer position (Steve wishes to transition role to another member)
 - Kay suggests sending solicitation with specific needs and job duties
 - Bob C. suggests advertisements in newsletter; Becky will explore options with Cassidy and Sarah at CS

- Kay notes disadvantage: long publication timeline for newsletter submissions
- d. Schedule May and July Meeting Locations
 - May meeting: Gary A. will host
 - July meeting: Roger S. offered to host
- 9. Action Items Review
 - (Action items summarized throughout minutes above)
- 10. Adjournment
 - Jack moved to adjourn, Roger seconded. Motion carried.

Upcoming meetings:

- January 31, 2026 Holiday Gathering - Muscoda Sportsmen's Lounge - 4:30-8 p.m.
- February 18-20, 2026 via Whova: Annual Conference: Biodiversity from the Ground Up
- March 18 via Zoom at 6 p.m.
- May 16 - 1 p.m. Gary A
- July 18 - 1 p.m. Roger Smith
- Sept 19/20? - BC Barn - Annual Gathering/Board Meeting
- Nov 18 via Zoom at 6 p.m.