Governor's Council on Minnesota's Coastal Program Draft Meeting Minutes

Date:	10/2/2024
Minutes prepared by:	Marcia Cardone-Mohar
Location:	Hybrid Meeting – Teams and In Person at Carlton County Transportation Building, Cloquet
Approved:	January 29, 2025

Attendance

- Governor's Council on Minnesota's Coastal Program Members: Peder Otterson (In-Person), Bill Majewski (In-Person), Dan Belden (In-Person), Jim Ericson (In-Person), Don Schreiner (Virtual), and Erik Peterson (Virtual).
- Minnesota's Lake Superior Coastal Program Staff: Amber Westerbur (In-Person), Cynthia Poyhonen (In-Person), Julie McDonnell (In-person), Marcia Cardone-Mohar (In-Person), and Clinton Little (In-Person).

Decisions Made

- MOTION by Jim Ericson to accept the October2, 2024, agenda Seconded by Dan Belden. AFFIRMATIVE All. MOTION ADOPTED.
- MOTION by Bill Majewski to accept the May 29, 2024, meeting minutes as written, Seconded by Dan Belden. AFFIRMATIVE All. MOTION ADOPTED.
- MOTION to adjourn the meeting at 2:30pm.

Agenda

- Welcome and Opening
- Group Discussion: Summary of One-on-One Conversations with Members
- Program Sharing: ABC's of MLSCP
- Member Sharing
- Meeting Wrap-up
- Adjournment
- 3:00 – 4:30 pm: 25th Anniversary Open House

Meeting Notes

Opening

Meeting called to order by Peder Otterson, at 11:15 am. There was no quorum until 11:25 am, so the minutes and agenda were voted on at 11:25 am, when a quorum was established.

Peder welcomed everyone. Amber invited members to share answers to: "What is putting a smile on your face today?" Everyone participated and gave their thoughts.

Group Discussion: Summary of One-on-One Conversations with Members

Peder: Commended Amber for visiting with everyone (9 of the 10 members) and getting it all down in writing.
Amber: We received a lot of great feedback, but one question we would like more information is regarding the responsibilities of this Council, what would be the responsibilities of your 'dream' council?
Amber then called on Erik, as he had to sign off in about 10 minutes.

- Erik: The summary was really helpful/great. He is a bit agnostic but will be a team player. Feels like there are two choices 1) sunset council and develop a system to do grants; 2) the council forms in a new way. He doesn't think the way the council is currently going is useful. If it sunsets, he's fine. But he does think there is a role for citizens to review grants/proposals.
    - If the council reconfigures, he likes the suggestions put forth by the other members. He likes the regular check of a term, and a more expanded role of recommendations so the Council can debate/discuss recommendations.
    - There is an obligation of the DNR to heed the role of the Council. 12 is a nice number. The City Councils might be more responsive to appointments than the County.
    - If we do choose to reformat and make it more energetic, there is still a role for public input on grants (overall direction, thoughts).
- Bill: Is the way the Council established in state legislation? (Answer: It is established via executive order and must be reestablished with every governor. Any recommendations we make are just that; ultimately the decision rests with the governor.)
- Peder: So it's up to the governor, and they could decide to transfer the authority to the DNR? (Answer: yes) This is a really big decision and needs a lot more thought. There is some distrust about the DNR 'doing things'. This needs more work.
- Dan: One of the suggestions is that there is still an advisory board/committee, that would be acceptable. NOAA is still doing their reviews to ensure the DNR is doing what they need to do.
- Bill: Does NOAA have prescribed things/activities that need to be in place for a program to exist? (Answer: not in this regard; states can set up their 'structure' to best fit their needs/work. Most of the programs that have councils, have regulatory authority. We do not.)
    - Don: In Sea Grant, they have more advisory committees.
    - Bill: If the Council disbands, will everything fall back to the DNR? (Answer: see Cynthia's closing thoughts.)
- Don: This is an interesting conversation; I wasn't around when it was started. But I recall when it was started, the Council was started because they didn't want to have a program in the DNR. If it is all DNR decisions, there could be a lack of transparency. If the Council could make recommendations as to how the program is run. Also - there is some real expertise on the Council that we could lose.
- Julie asked how they represent their area of appointment. Bill and Dan both said they use more of their experience (work/life) in their role.
- Don: Nobody is appointed, the people here are amazing. They are volunteering and showing up because they care. Nobody has been appointed for two years. The bigger issue is only two proposals last year. This meeting is just a discussion, it's not a working meeting.
- Bill: If the current Council was sunset, what would happen? (Answer: at a minimum we need a process to review grant applications. Amber gave examples of other DNR grant programs and how they facilitate review.)
- Don: Another grant program is the Lessard-Sams Council. They give away millions of dollars through a council and elected officials. How is the Coastal Council different than an advisory council?
- Dan: What are the next steps? Do we (the program) give feedback and to who? (Amber said she would answer that, but wanted to call on Jim, who had not yet talked.)
- Jim: I'm just taking it all in, this is interesting. If activity is limited to reviewing grant applications, you do wonder what is the purpose? But the question could be how do people feel about the DNR making appointments rather than the governor? Would that help speed up the process and give us a more active/engaged council? Would the same mistrust exist? I think the Council serves a good purpose and gives public input into the (grant) process. But maybe there is another way to do that.

- Bill: My understanding is that we apply to the Secretary of State to be on the Council. A couple of years ago we campaigned to the commissioner to put weight on the Governor. At this point, I would recommend the commissioner get tough with the Governor. None of us have official status.
- Peder: This has gone on for a long time. The executive order was just changed to include Tribes, we might be missing something if we fold up shop now.
    - The issues are attendance; if you're not showing up, you shouldn't be on the council.
    - How do we make it work rather than fold up?
- Don: I know people who applied and were not appointed or got follow up. It gives the Council a bad name. We need to get the applications/appointment process ironed out. We need to get the word that we have grant funds. We need to get the process working.
- Amber: Thank you so much everyone. What happens now - there has already been a conversation between the Governor's and Commissioner's Office. They asked for more information, which was the reason this conversation started with the Council. I need to go back to DNR leadership who will communicate with the Governor's Office. There is a little more information to gather and then I will turn over the raw data and the meeting notes.
- Bill: I do not think we should present alternatives. We should just say they need to fix the process.
- Cynthia closing thoughts: 'sunsetting the governor's council' does not mean there could not/would not be an advisory board, committee, or council that includes citizen input.
    - We still need to distribute our federal grant funds to the communities. There are state policies and procedures that dictate how that is done. A competitive process must have designated scoring criteria and per State Policy 08-02. In addition, we must have inclusion in grant-making (A process that identifies how the grantee community is included in the grant review process.) Per state law, the DNR is not eligible for competitive grant funds.
    - Due to the current status of the Council, I have concerns about how we are going to manage our grant program. I need grant application reviewers in January. I only have six Council members that signed their data sharing agreements, so I have six reviewers.

Program Sharing: ABC's of MLSCP

Amber shared program highlights using the alphabet as the guide. "We've got something for each letter, even Z."

Member Sharing

Peder shared the highlights from a recent CHAOS (Coastal Hazards of Superior of Practice) field trip he attended at the Red Cliff Indian Reservation – specifically the Legendary Waters Resort and Casino erosion enhancements. He enjoyed it immensely and learned a lot. Peder also brought up hurricane Helene' and how it impacted so many other venues and travel.

Bill mentioned that Lanelle Hanson got ahold of him because she is working with the NSMB (North Shore Management Board) plan update and needed his expertise. Lanelle mentioned they will need an extension on their grant, but it can't happen until NOAA releases the extension.

Meeting Closing and wrap-up

Amber mentioned the program's 25th Anniversary Open House that will be from 3:00-4:30pm today, following the meeting, and asked the members present to stay. Only one member stayed.

Meeting Wrap-up/Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 pm.

25th Anniversary Open House

Six members of the Carlton County area attended the open house.