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To: Local Elected Officials
From: Mark B. Liedl, Land Services Director
Date: October 3, 2011
Re: **Land Services Department - 3rd Quarterly Update for 2011**

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Below please find our quarterly report to keep you up-to-date on the activities of the Land Services Department. Any questions or suggestions, please let us know. Thank you for your partnership!

Office of Environmental Services

Chris Pence, Land Services Supervisor

Land Use Map

Crow Wing County is in the process of revising the land use map. Many individual changes to the land use map have occurred over the last 40 years, but it has never been updated to reflect current and desired future development patterns. Recent updates to the Crow Wing County Land Use Ordinance revised the County's land use districts, necessitating a revision of the land use map. The map revisions are consistent with the County Comprehensive Plan and Township comprehensive plans where available.

On September 21, we sent out a letter to all township officials explaining the process as we move forward with the proposed land use map. The 30 day period for written comments is in process and will end on October 24, 2011. In addition to viewing the proposed changes via the County website and the opportunity to submit written comments during the public comment period, we are hosting four Open House forums in Meeting Rooms 1 and 2 of the County Land Services Building for residents and elected officials to review the updated land use maps. This will be an opportunity to meet with staff, review maps and address questions. The Open House Forums will be on the following dates:

- October 3, 2011 - 9:00 am to 12:00 pm
- October 4, 2011 - 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm
- October 25, 2011 - 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm
- October 26, 2011 - 9:00 am to 12:00 pm

Following the Open Houses, the Crow Wing County Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on the proposed map changes in November. Check local newspapers and the County website for hearing dates and times. For more information or to view the proposed county-wide map, see the Environmental Services page on the Crow Wing County website at: http://www.co.crow-wing.mn.us/planning_zoning/index.html.

Well Testing Provided at County Fair

In partnership with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), we offered a free nitrate water-testing clinic at the Crow Wing County Fair August 3-5, 2011.

Shallow aquifers beneath sandy soils in central Minnesota are highly susceptible to nitrate contamination. Nitrates are the most common contaminants in Minnesota's groundwater, and in some areas of the state a significant number of wells have high nitrate levels. With that in mind, experts recommend that private well owners who get their drinking water from wells should test their water regularly.

Well water samples were provided by citizens and analyzed on the spot - the process usually took less than five minutes - and results were given directly to the homeowner. If the nitrate level in a sample was elevated, staff referred the homeowner to certified labs that will retest the water.

Approximately 150 water well samples were tested for nitrates during the clinic with only one sample exceeding 10 parts per million (ppm). Nitrate levels less than 10 ppm are considered safe according to the U.S. Drinking Water Standard.

Due to the success of the clinic, the MDA has agreed to provide the testing equipment to the Land Services Department on a permanent basis to continue testing well water in Crow Wing County. Please direct citizens to the Land Services Department if they want to get their well water tested.

Land Use Workshops

We conducted four workshops designed for citizens to have a better understanding of what the County Land Use Ordinance requires for permits. Workshops were held on September 12, 2011 at the Ideal Town Hall from 9:00 am to 11:00 am and at the Lake Edward Town Hall from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm and on September 16, 2011 at the Deerwood Town Hall from 9:00 am to 11:00 am and at the Maple Grove Town Hall from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm.

The primary change in the law is the creation of performance standards for lake lots that need to be adhered to as a condition for receiving land use permits from the County. These site-based performance standards apply practical approaches based on the actual characteristics of a property and are designed to achieve measurable results in achieving the goal of keeping our lakes healthy. Rather than a one size fits all approach to land use, site specific performance standards such as stormwater management, vegetated buffers and septic system maintenance are part of the new ordinance.

The workshop was an opportunity for folks to learn and understand the new rules and regulations for developing and improving their property. Due to the success of the workshops, plans are in place to hold further workshops in 2012. The workshops were generally well attended as listed below:

- Deerwood Township - 18 Citizens
- Lake Edward Township - 13 Citizens
- Ideal Township - 13 Citizens
- Maple Grove Township - 0 Citizens

Permits Issued in 2011

2011 -- Permit Data by Township													
*As of 9-21-11									*2Date				TOTAL
Township	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Permits*
Bay Lake	1	1	2	5	6	3	9	2	6				35
Center	0	1	1	5	5	4	1	4	0				21
Daggett Brook	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0				2
Deerwood	0	0	1	1	5	5	9	5	5				31
Fairfield	0	1	1	1	1	0	2	4	2				12
Fort Ripley	0	0	0	2	4	4	2	4	0				16
Gail Lake	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1				2
Garrison	0	0	1	3	5	7	6	3	4				29
Ideal	1	1	6	11	17	8	13	10	11				78
Jenkins	0	0	0	2	2	6	0	2	0				12
Lake Edward	2	2	1	6	8	13	8	5	3				48
Little Pine	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0				2
Long Lake	0	2	0	5	1	1	2	2	4				17
Maple Grove	0	0	3	1	1	3	4	5	1				18
Mission	1	1	0	4	7	4	5	8	2				32
Nokay Lake	0	0	3	3	2	7	1	3	3				22

2011 -- Permit Data by Township - Continued													
*As of 9-21-11									*2Date				TOTAL
Township	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Permits*
Oak Lawn	1	0	0	1	5	6	2	4	1				20
Pelican	0	0	2	3	4	4	3	6	3				25
Perry Lake	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	0	0				4
Platte Lake	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0				3
Rabbit Lake	0	0	0	1	3	1	0	1	0				6
Roosevelt	0	0	1	2	2	1	3	5	4				18
Ross Lake	0	2	0	1	1	0	5	1	1				11
St. Mathias	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	3				7
Timothy	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1				2
Wolford	0	0	0	3	0	1	1	2	0				7
1st Assessment	3	3	2	7	15	13	13	16	10				82
2nd Assessment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				0
City of Jenkins	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				0
Breezy Pt. Septic	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	4	0				7
TOTAL	9	14	24	74	100	92	91	100	65*				569

Office of Property Valuation and Classification

Gary Griffin, Land Services Supervisor

Quintile and Permit Follow up – the 2012 Assessment

State statute requires us to physically examine all improved property parcels in the County, approximately 41,000 during a five-year period, so each year we examine 20% of the parcels, or approximately 8,200 parcels, which we call our “quintile” work. Our goal is to have this completed by the end of September. After the quintile is completed we will move onto campground reviews checking on all personal property travel trailers and park models. We need to verify that no changes have been made and if the tabs on the trailers are current. If they have current tabs they are not taxed but if they do not, the trailer is placed on the assessment rolls. We will then start reviewing all land use permits issued this year. Currently we are aware of 890 permits issued county wide. We are a few weeks behind in receiving permits from some areas so this number is expected to increase a bit. Last year a total of 2,027 permits needed review. Also we have 900 follow up issues that need review from last year. The majority of these are from permits that were issued and not started or construction that was not complete by January 2, 2011. Both the permits and follow ups will be completed near the end of the year.

Sales Ratio Study Ending

Each year we review all sales of property in the County and determine which ones are good indicators of the market to be used in our sales ratio studies. State statute requires us to value property at 100% of market value. We can be between 90% – 105% of market and still satisfy this statute. Sales that have occurred October 2010 through September 2011 will be used in the studies that will set values for the 2012 assessment. Currently we have had a total of 1,678 sales in the County for the 2012 assessment. Last year there were 1,945 sales, of which 703 were accepted as appropriate “arms length” transactions and used in the ratio studies. Sales between family members, foreclosures, and payoffs are examples of sales the state requires us to reject. So far the median ratio for all of the residential and seasonal properties countywide is 103%. Therefore, we expect to reduce values on these classifications for the 2012 assessment.

Improving Customer Service

Our top priority is excellent customer service. We took deliberate steps in making sure we get feedback from our customers to help us improve our service. We sent out two surveys to property owners during property inspections for the quintile and during the valuation appeals process. The responses to the surveys came back very favorable to the office. 100% of surveyed customers responded that they were treated with respect and professionalism, and we received 90% or higher approval ratings for our service in other key areas.

We also held two educational seminars – in Ideal and St. Mathias Townships - for property owners on the eligibility and benefits of the green acres, rural preserves, managed forest, and sustainable forest incentive act programs. Public response to them was very positive. We will host more educational seminars for property owners in the near future.

We look forward to providing the customer service you expect from us. We know that everyone will not always agree with us, but we are committed to professional, respectful service to all. Please contact our office with any questions you may have. Thanks and have a great autumn!

Office of Public Land Management

Kirk Titus, Land Services Supervisor

Forest Certification Surveillance Audit

The Minnesota Counties Sustainable Forestry Cooperative successfully completed the annual Sustainable Forestry Initiative and Forest Stewardship Council certification audits. Crow Wing County, along with Beltrami, Carlton, Clearwater and Koochiching counties are members in the forestry cooperative. This unique partnership has resulted in lower costs, increased efficiencies and the sharing of best practices.

The County had a very successful audit. The audit concluded with four minor corrective actions requests (CARs) and two observations for improvement. Improvements to policies, procedures and increased training will satisfy the corrective action requests and enhance the overall sustainable forest management system. The result is our County Forest lands continue to be managed in an environmentally sound and sustainable manner, according to the world's top two independent certifying entities! The next audit is scheduled for January 2012

National Park Service Designates Milford Mine as Historic Place

The National Park Service in Washington DC has announced that Milford Mine Historic District is officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register of Historic Places is the formal record of the Nation's historic places and can include districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects. These places must meet strict criteria in order to be listed in the National Register.

The Milford Mine Historic District is the site where forty-one miners lost their lives in the worst mining disaster in Minnesota history in 1924. The site is located on the Cuyuna Iron Range, northwest of Crosby and covers approximately 180 acres of Crow Wing County managed land.

Crow Wing County is currently working on a four-phase project to complete the memorial park. Phase One, which was completed last fall, included the construction of an access road, parking lot and canoe launch. Future construction phases will include walking trails, a picnic shelter and interpretive and educational signs. The County has applied for a Legacy Parks and Trails Grant to complete phases two and three of this project.

Comprehensive Recreation Trails Draft Plan

Crow Wing County is soliciting additional public comments on the draft Comprehensive Trails Plan. Written comments on the draft plan will be accepted by the County Land Service Department during a 30-day period from September 26 to October 25 2011. The plan can be accessed through the County website: www.co.crow-wing.mn.us. Comments may be emailed to: landservices@co.crow-wing.mn.us

The Comprehensive Recreation Trails Plan focuses on the recreation trails and facilities under the direct management of the County. The document reports the outcomes of the plan development process and focuses on near-term priorities for addressing trail management opportunities on these lands. Components of the plan include establishing a trail proposal and planning process, activities for trail monitoring and enforcement, evaluation criteria for trail review, and strategies for improved trail linkages. Following the public comment period, the plan will be revised in response to comments and prepared for review by the County Board. The goal is to finalize the plan before the end of the year.

Timber Auction

The Fall 2011 Timber Auction was held on September 16. Over 99% of the volume offered was sold. Aspen sales with summer access were very attractive to bidders. Tracts were bid up an average of 52% above the appraised stumpage rate. The bid value of all tracts was 1% higher than the spring auction and 40% higher than the 2010 fall auction. A portion of the surplus revenues from these timber sales are returned annually to the Townships, Cities and School Districts.

Other Happenings

- The annual Land Sale Auction is scheduled for November 4, 2011 in the Land Services Building.
- Over 40 miles of non-motorized hiking trails were recently mowed. Fall is a good time to enjoy a walk in the woods and enjoy the fall colors.
- Contractors will apply bud caps or mesh tubes to over 115,000 seedlings this fall to protect the trees from deer browse. A bud cap is a 4" by 6" paper that is wrapped around the terminal bud and stapled. Seedlings are usually bud capped until they reach four feet tall.

Thanks for reading our Third Quarter, 2011 update.
Please don't hesitate to email any feedback you may have to Vickie,
vickie.sullivan@co.crow-wing.mn.us, and she will make sure we hear it.

Enjoy the Fall Colors!