



Heart of the Continent Quarterly Meeting – October 22-23, 2015

Caribou Highlands Lodge – Lutsen Minnesota

Attendees: Maggie Barnard –Visit Cook County, Trevor Gibb – Ontario Parks, Linda Kratt – Holly Larson – NPS rivers and trails, Sandy Skrien – USDA SNF, Frank Jewell – Chair and St Louis County Commissioner, Lori Dowling Hanson – MNDNR, Mary Somnis – IRRRB, Tawnya Schoewe – NPS, Mary K. Finnegan – IRRRB, Suzanne Cable USFS, Jim Winanen MNICS, Carrie Anderson, Wolf Ridge ELC, Rob Ecklund – Koochiching County, John Cameron – Thunder Bay Tourism, Ann Schwaller – USFS SNF, Shaun Hamilton – Trust for Public Lands, Brenda Halter – USDA SNF, Anne Fluekiger – Parks and Trails Council MN, Bob Hamilton - FF Chamber, Lynn Palmer, Heidi Doo-Kirk –Cook County Commissioner, Bob Lessard MNDNR, Lynn Palmer, Lynda Horman, Katie Willard – Visit Cook County, Chris Stromberg HOCP coordinator.



The meetings started with a welcome from **Linda Kratt** and the history and direction of “*VISIT COOK COUNTY*” Starting from the divided efforts of a number of tourism groups like Gunflint Trail Association, Lutsen Mountains, Grand Marais, and Grand portage – bringing them together and in a joint effort money shared and distributed for promotion and marketing. The success of their campaign has shown a great impact including winning the “Coolest Small Town” award. Linda continued with a great slide show presentation making one want to Visit Cook County in every season. She educated the group on the hurdles they have overcome and some that they continue to face.



Shaun Hamilton from Trust for Public Land, gave a quick talk on the history of the North House Folk School. Since this was our destination for a presentation and supper that night it was appropriate to hear how partnerships

working together and good funding can make something like the North House Folk School come alive and thrive – a hand out article titled “A Grand Vision” was passed out and within it quoted Greg Wright, director of NHFS; I don’t think North House Folk School would have been the same thing without Trust for Public Land’s vision to donate the property or the city of Grand Marais’ vision to take a chance on North House.

Midway into the afternoon meeting **John Cameron** and **Mary Somnis** brought us up to date on the work being done on fundraising for an ambitious marketing plan for the geo-tourism initiative. They gave a brief timeline on the project, and our goals to do a formal marketing campaign for the www.traveltheheart.org site. The target audience is all over the world, expand the advertisement reach, and to create awareness of our region globally. We have engaged with W.A. Fisher Advertising and Printing in Virginia MN and Aim Clear in Duluth to provide these services. Our goal is to raise \$50,000-\$70,000 for year one of the campaign. Mary also gave us a briefing on the webinar was put on to will help us as National Geographic takes the site into the next generation with a new epic refined look.

Holly Larson took a moment to update the group on the volunteer initiative.

At 3:30 pm the group broke out to have separate meetings on the marketing topic and the newly revised science team efforts. At 4:30 – car pooling to Grand Marais for a tour and dinner at the North House Folk School



Trevor Gibb – Quetico Superintendent and Bob Lessard – MNDNR rolling out their pizzas

North House gave a great and entertaining tour and history of the School. Their mission: *to enrich lives and build community by teaching traditional northern crafts in a student-centered learning environment that inspires the hands, the heart and the mind.* They have certainly accomplished that with now holding over 400 traditional skill/craft courses each year.



Evening out front of North House Folk School 
Grand Marais MN



At North House folk school we were joined by Association of Minnesota Counties Region 1 (Northeast Minnesota) County Board members and County Administrators who were also meeting on the North Shore. It made for a huge group of great mingling and conversation. The evening seemed to be enjoyed immensely by all.

Greg Wright, our host and tour guide was fun, animated and did a great job of telling the story of the hurdles and ultimate success of the North House Folk School

Brenda Halter – Forest Supervisor – Superior National Forest – The Superior National forest has always been very supportive of Heart of the Continent Partnership from the beginning and continues to be. We were happy to have Brenda Halter visit with us at North House and present. She kept a captivated audience on the land exchange program in effect within North eastern Minnesota including the BWCAW.

Friday:

Frank Jewell starts the morning with addressing the group talking of the underlying organizations that have helped in the past and steps to take to keep the organization running. The need for funds, and the looking for a broad group of people and organizations to help us move forward.

Mary makes mention our affiliation with VNPA as our fiscal agent and our agreement with them partly because of the cross border collaboration – and to make a note on following up with asking Crown of the Continent how they deal/work with monies

John Cameron makes mention of the need to have the Universities back at our table

Shaun suggests a letter to the Quetico Superior Foundation and/or individuals within the organization- also makes mention

The breakout teams from Thursday report back to the group.

Science team, still in its infancy, is well on its way with a few conference calls. It is being led by Pooja Kanwar SNF and Steve Windell VNP. The plan is to host a science symposium March 11 to create awareness of the HOCP science partnership. The science team was an important arm of the Heart of the Continent in the past and we are on a good path to reviving it to give a venue for public lands people, biologists, scientists, universities etc, a place to sit down together, share information and possibly work on joint projects that will benefit the area.



From the
footbridge at the
mouth of the
Poplar River

Marketing Team: The marketing committee reviewed the marketing proposal from W.A Fisher for promotion of the National Geographic Heart of the Continent website. Linda from Cook Country Tourism gave her endorsement on Aimclear and Fisher working together to deliver awareness for the site. The building of a social media following was the first priority identified to request from Fisher.

The group wants to have at the money in place before directing Fisher on how to proceed with the components of their marketing plan.

Lutsen Mountains

Our presentation on Friday morning was a very interesting talk by **Tom Rider** from Lutsen Mountains ski resort.



Much of Tom's talk was concerning the challenges facing ski resorts, how Lutsen has survived, how they are working with the Forest Service and the MPCA to protect the water in the Poplar River. The resort has partnered with the town and Fire department to provide water from the Lake Superior. His talk of partnerships, water protection, and the time, effort and thought put in, to continue to offer great downhill skiing here in the **Heart of Continent**.