

# **INFORMATIONAL MEETING WITH LINCOLN COUNTY FORESTRY DEPARTMENT**

## **HARRISON TOWN HALL**

**FEBRUARY 26, 2025**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Concerns were being voiced by Harrison tax payers concerning the degree of logging being performed on county land within the Town of Harrison, mostly the Harrison Hills. The Harrison Hills are viewed by many as a jewel of Lincoln County. In fact, the Lincoln County Board of Supervisors has marketed the Harrison Hills to boost tourism and bring in sales tax revenue. The group of concerned citizens included lake property owners, realty, hikers, bikers, ATV/UTV users, snowmobile users, and citizens that enjoy the forest in general. The main concern was with large tracts of clear cutting in hardwood stands. Dean Bowe, Lincoln County Forestry, Lands and Parks Administrator, agreed to come to the Harrison Town Hall to explain the current forest management plan in Harrison, and to listen to concerns, and answer questions. Brian Hanson (Harrison Town Chair) and Ken Wickham (Harrison County Board Representative) were present and helped coordinate the meeting. Dean also had the other three County Foresters, and his forestry contact with the WDNR in attendance. The meeting went well and Dean and his staff did a good job explaining current practices and answering questions. There were still concerns after the meeting was completed, which may lead to follow-up meetings. But overall, the meeting was well received, very positive, and highly educational.

### **SUMMARY**

Dean went through the current Forestry Plan and explained how they are managing the County Forest to maintain the current mix of species that the County contains. There are separate management techniques for different species. In the Harrison Hills area, they are using techniques for Oak management in many areas. This involves opening up the canopy by leaving some old trees to produce young trees. Once the young trees are established, the old trees are removed. What is being seen in much of the Harrison Hills area currently, is the end of a 100-year oak crop and the creation of a new crop. The County also has different approaches for mixed hardwoods, aspen, red pine, red maple, and other species, which involve a variety of logging techniques. Dean also mentioned that County Forest management brought in close to two million dollars in revenue for the County and provides stumpage payments to the Town of Harrison. This amounted to over \$65,000 to Harrison in 2024.

Concerns brought up by the people in attendance and by forest enthusiasts outside the meeting involved a variety of user interest groups. These interests influence land values in the Town of Harrison (especially around the many lakes in Harrison), affect small business, and provide tourism dollars to the County in the form of sales tax. There are many water frontage owners in Harrison that enjoy the water, but have property in Harrison because they also enjoy the County Forest when they are not on the water. The County will need to balance good forestry practices along with tourism dollars, land values, small business effects, and environmental effects.

Damage to trails (Ice Age, ATV/UTV) from logging equipment as well as DNR scarification was discussed. Dean said that the trails should be left in the same condition as they were before logging. The loggers have to put down a bond, and they do not get their bond back until the site is approved by one of his staff. He will follow up with the DNR regarding damage from scarification. Dean also said that crossing spots on the Ice Age Trail should be minimized when possible. His staff will try to inform the Ice Age Trail Group when logging is being done along the sections of the trail. This will inform people from outside the area that may want to hike a certain section of the trail, and they can hike an alternative part of the trail. If citizens are seeing damage to the trails, they will need to contact Dean.

Lack of buffers along trails was also discussed. Dean said that maintaining buffers takes forest land out of production and causes difficulty with the loggers. An idea from one of the attendees was to change the border of clear-cut areas so that they are more serpentine along trails to improve the aesthetics. Dean and his staff agreed to consider this approach. A representative of the ATV/UTV club preferred lack of buffers along the trail because this decreases the maintenance effort of the trail. This was countered by people that use the trail that would rather see trees than open areas when they ride. The same discussion and viewpoints are shared with the snowmobile group.

A citizen in attendance asked if there was more logging going on in the Harrison Hills now than in the past. Dean explained that could be possible, since some jobs are bid three years in advance and could stack up in any given year.

Another citizen in attendance voiced his support for aspen clear cuts because they are good for grouse and deer hunting a few years after the cut.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the meeting was well received and provided needed information and education to the concerned people of Harrison. Based on discussions during and after the meeting, concerns still exist with:

- large tracts of clear cuts in hardwood stands
- lack of balance between logging and other forest uses
- effects on tourism dollars
- effects on property values in Harrison
- environmental effects
- the risk in managing large tracts for single species due to disease
- lack of buffer zones
- trail damage

The Town of Harrison would like to thank Dean and his staff, along with the WDNR for taking the time to come to Harrison for an evening meeting to discuss forestry management in Harrison.

Brian Hanson

Harrison Town Chair