

**MINUTES**  
**SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**PLANNING AND RESEARCH COMMITTEE MEETING**

Tuesday, February 4, 2025

1:30 p.m.

Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission  
Commissioners Conference Room  
W239 N1812 Rockwood Drive  
Waukesha, WI 53187

Meeting Occurred in Person and Virtually via Video and Telephone Conference

**Present:**

**Excused:**

Commissioners:

Jeffrey Schleif, Vice Chairperson  
Donna Brown-Martin  
Katrina Hanson  
John Holloway  
Brian Holt  
Dewayne Johnson  
Trevor Jung  
Mary Knipper  
Tom Kramer  
Joe Messinger  
Robert Pitts  
Eric Stelter  
Donald Trottier

Priscilla Coggs-Jones  
Charles Colman  
Michael Crowley, Chairperson  
Paul Decker  
Michael Maistelman  
Amy Maurer  
Natalia Minkel-Dumit  
David Stroik

Staff:

Stephanie Hacker  
Benjamin McKay  
Zachary Kron  
Alina Panasiuk  
Thomas Slawski

Executive Director  
Deputy Director  
Senior Specialist  
Accounting/HR Specialist  
Chief Specialist-Biologist

## **ROLL CALL**

Vice Chairperson Schleif called the Planning and Research Committee meeting to order at 1:35 p.m. Roll call was taken, and a quorum was declared present. Vice Chairperson Schleif indicated for the record that Commissioners Coggs-Jones, Colman, Crowley, Decker, Maistelman, Maurer, Minkel-Dumit, and Stroik had asked to be excused.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 5, 2024, MEETING**

Vice Chairperson Schleif asked if there were any changes or additions to the November 5, 2024, meeting minutes. There were none.

On a motion by Mr. Pitts, seconded by Mr. Stelter, and carried unanimously, the minutes of the November 5, 2024, Planning and Research Committee Meeting were approved.

## **REVIEW AND CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT CHAPTERS 1 THROUGH 6 OF THE REGIONAL NATURAL AREAS PLAN**

Vice Chairperson Schleif asked Mr. Slawski and Mr. Kron to provide an overview to the Committee of Draft Chapters 1 through 6 of the Regional Natural Areas Plan Update. Mr. Slawski and Mr. Kron provided a presentation that included key information from the draft chapters, which include:

- Chapter 1, Introduction
- Chapter 2, Background
- Chapter 3, Implementation Status
- Chapter 4, New Sites Identified Since the 2010 Amendment
- Chapter 5, Changes in Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern Species Status
- Chapter 6, Changes to Site Boundaries and Ranks

During the presentation the following comments and questions were made.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Holloway, Mr. Slawski stated that the archaeological sites that are identified in the plan are on the National Register of Historic Places.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Schleif, Mr. Kron stated that Commission staff will visit a natural area or critical species habitat site for an assessment at the request of a County or local unit of government. The property owner must agree to the site visit.

In response to an inquiry from Ms. Brown-Martin, Mr. Kron explained that a potential natural area or critical species habitat site can be excluded from documentation in the plan at the request of a property owner or Technical Advisory Committee member.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Holloway, Mr. Kron explained that sites may degrade over time. Degradation may result in a lower ranking or removal from the plan as plan updates occur. Mr. Holloway then asked if there may be opportunities for grassland restoration in coordination with developing solar energy installations. Mr. Kron responded it could be possible if the area is large enough. Mr. Holloway noted that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency requires seeding of solar installations when they are developed.

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In response to an inquiry from Mr. Messinger, Ms. Hacker stated that the Regional Natural Areas Plan provides preliminary information to decision makers in the Region regarding preserving natural area and critical species habitat sites, even as rules and programs may change over time. Mr. Messinger then suggested that Commission staff be prepared to provide tailored presentations on the plan. Mr. McKay agreed with the suggestion and noted that it has been the long standing practice of Commission staff to present relevant information about regional plans at the request of any party. Mr. Slawski noted that the new Natural Areas Explorer Webtool is also a good source of data for those interested in an individual site or unit of government.

In response to an inquiry from Ms. Knipper, Mr. Kron stated that Commission staff does record why there may be changes in site rankings or removal from the plan through methods such as field visits and input from the Technical Advisory Committee. He noted that these changes are mapped as part of the plan update. Mr. Johnson suggested including a statement in the plan regarding whether the overall preservation of natural area and critical species habitat sites has improved or declined since the last plan update.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Holloway, Mr. Slawski stated that the Commission has received grant funding from Wisconsin Coastal Management for plan implementation. Specifically, Commission staff received funding to develop site specific management plans for select natural area and critical species habitat sites identified in the regional plan and to conduct biological inventories within the four counties along Lake Michigan to inform regional ecological restoration and management planning. He also noted that the Commission is working with the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) to identify potential project opportunities for the MMSD Reforestation and Wetland Restoration Program and to provide technical recommendations for several wetland restoration projects for the Greenseams Program. Mr. Holloway asked if the Commission could partner with private entities to help implement the plan. Ms. Hacker responded that it is permissible under *State Statute*.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Holt, Mr. Kron stated that Commission staff receives information from conservation organizations regarding possible natural area and critical species habitat sites that should be assessed.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Jung, Ms. Brown-Martin stated that the Commission's Environmental Justice Task Force was provided with an opportunity for input on the plan update.

Mr. Pitts expressed his appreciation to staff for the presentation.

There being no further questions or comments on a motion by Mr. Stelter, seconded by Mr. Holt, draft Chapters 1 through 6 were unanimously approved by the Committee.

## **NEXT MEETING**

Vice Chairperson Schleif stated that the next meeting of the Planning and Research Committee will be held on May 6, 2025. Mr. McKay stated that the remainder of the Regional Natural Areas Plan Update will be presented to the Committee at a future meeting, at which the Committee may take action to recommend adoption of the plan update to the full Commission.

## **CORRESPONDENCE/ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Vice Chairperson Schleif asked Mr. McKay if there were any correspondence or announcements. Mr. McKay noted that the next Executive Committee meeting will be held on February 20, 2025, and the next Quarterly Commission meeting will be held on March 5, 2025, at a location in Walworth County.

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**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Committee, on a motion by Mr. Stelter, seconded by Mr. Jung, and carried unanimously, the meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie Hacker  
Executive Director

SH/BRM  
#2769995