

## **PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING NOTICE & AGENDA**

**Tuesday June 24, 2025, 5:30 p.m.**

**Iron County Courthouse, Commissioners Meeting Room  
2 South Sixth St. Crystal Falls, MI 49920  
Ph. 906-875-3301, [www.ironmi.com](http://www.ironmi.com)**

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag**
- 3. Roll Call**
- 4. Approval of the Agenda**
- 5. Approval of Meeting Minutes of February 3, 2025**
- 6. Old Business:**
  - a. Cooks Run**
    - 1. Mission Statement**
    - 2. Whitewater Study**
    - 3. Old Growth Forest**
- 7. New Business:**
  - a. Board of Commissioners Possible Grant Match for Pentoga Park 2026 - Mark Stauber**
- 8. Iron Belle Trail**
- 9. Public Comment**
- 10. Member Comments**
- 11. Next Meeting Date**
- 12. Motion to Adjourn**

Iron County Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Monday, February 3, 2025 6:30 pm Iron County Courthouse

Commission Members Present (Roll Call): President Dan Hinch , Ron Frailing, Mark Stauber, Dan Germic, Seth Miatech, Brian Fabbri, Jake Conery, Brock VanOss , Rich Sloat

Absent: Ean Bruette

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all.

The agenda was approved on a motion by VanOss, seconded by Miatech. All approved.

The minutes of the September 26, 2024 regular meeting were presented to members. VanOss made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Frailing and all approved.

Old Business: Stauber updated the group on the lack of return correspondence originally sent to legislators and the DNR Property Division about Cooks Run. Sloat mentioned that some groups are interested in possibly utilizing the cabin there and he will get a key if needed. Stauber will check on legalities and insurance if groups were to utilize the cabin. Hinch will send out appeals to state legislators again to tour the property this spring or summer. Germic offered to stop by the DNR Real estate office in Lansing when he travels there for Road Commission business. The barricade on Cooks Run on the property will need to be reinstalled.

VanOss gave a slide presentation of his findings on GIS of real estate owned by the County. He will present a forest management plan to the County.

New Business: Conery moved, seconded by VanOss that the current slate of officers be retained by acclamation. All approved.

Stauber gave an update on Board of Commissioners possible funding for grant matches.

Public Comment: None

Member Comments: Fabbri gave out some price ranges on a boat wash. Hinch reported that there have been new initiatives for bike and hiking trails by the Iron County Trail Club

No future meeting was set at this time until we can confirm security details for after-hours meetings at the courthouse.

VanOss moved, seconded by Conery that the meeting be adjourned. All approved.

Submitted by Dan Hinch, President

### Mission Statement—Cooks Run, Iron County, Michigan

The County of Iron seeks organizations or non-profit corporations who would be interested in managing and preserving this unique property for public access and uses and benefits for a very long term or into perpetuity. This property has multiple historical and natural assets and many potential recreation assets resulting in opportunities of local, regional, and national interest. Cooks Run should be protected and managed for current and future generations.

Besides the obvious and unique historical and architectural values of the Depression-era cabin and remains of the trout rearing facility on the property, other values of the property include educational opportunities, scenery in a unique north woods upland, lowland, and river setting, environmental on a landscape level in its location on a watershed as well as having contiguous United States Forest Service land, trout habitat in a unique cold water stream, wildlife in a largely contiguous habitat, old-growth timber, and local and regional economic impacts.

# Iron County Watershed Coalition

P.O. Box 367  
Iron River, Michigan 49935

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April 4, 2025

Iron County Board of Commissioners  
2 South Sixth St., Suite 7  
Crystal Falls, MI 49920

Dear Iron County Commissioners,

The Iron County Watershed Coalition is writing this letter regarding the Iron County owned property in Section 2 (T.43N.-R.37W.) and the Cooks Run stream where it traverses this property. We are aware that there is discussion of timber harvest on the County property and the comments we make in this letter are germane to that planning activity.

The Iron County Watershed Coalition was a supporter and participant in the 2024-25 assessment of ecological conditions of the Cooks Run in the vicinity of the old fish rearing facility. The project was intended to provide scientifically collected information to inform decision making regarding human activities (for example, stream improvement) that might occur in the future along this stretch of the Cooks Run. In planning this study, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources was consulted and provided questions of particular interest to Fisheries Division.

The Cooks Run project was funded by Wilderness Shores Mitigation and Enhancement Fund. The MEF was established by We Energies and funds projects intended to mitigate, improve and enhance fish and wildlife habitat around Wilderness Shores Settlement Agreement hydroelectric projects, which includes portions of Iron, Dickinson and Menominee counties.

The Cooks Run project was conducted by biologists at White Water Associates. The field work took place in 2024 and the final report (*Ecological evaluation of the defunct Cooks Run Fish Hatchery and its influence on the stream*) was submitted in March 2025. The Iron County Watershed Coalition participated by reviewing project plans, providing historical information, and reviewing project findings and report.

The Iron County Watershed Coalition agrees with the findings of the Cooks Run ecological evaluation and is confident that the evaluation has important and timely application for guiding activities on the County-owned property and in the Cooks Run stream. The following eleven bullets are important statements from the report's concluding chapter.

1. The Cooks Run in the vicinity of the study area is a high quality and productive coldwater stream as evidenced by spawning brook trout, temperature, habitat, and invertebrate community.
2. The wetland area bounded by the Diversion Ditch and Cooks Run historic stream channel contributes cool water to the Cooks Run and is a rich wildlife area that benefits the adjacent terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and should be protected from any disturbance.

3. The concrete abutments that remain from the historic structures are neutral to the Cooks Run channel from an ecological standpoint. Removal of these structures could cause more harm than good.
4. The Diversion Ditch provides the best habitat conditions for coldwater stream organisms within the study area.
5. The unnamed tributary is an important source of cold, oxygenated water for the Cooks Run and is a cool water refuge for fish during periods of extreme heat.
6. Aquatic plants are present in the Cooks Run channel. Even though some of these plants are non-native, all serve to stabilize the sediment and provide habitat for fish and aquatic insects.
7. Chemical composition of the sediment presents no risk to downstream areas.
8. Existing old roadways in the study area form the basis for an excellent walking trail system for better public access.
9. The area has a complex forested riparian area that is critical to the health of the Cooks Run. It provides shade from the sun and contributes woody structure and crucial organic material to the stream. This should be protected from disturbance.
10. The evaluation did not show evidence of thermal impact from beaver dams.
11. From an ecological standpoint no restoration efforts are required for the study area. The wetland complex and broad riparian forest should be protected from forest harvest and other invasive activities.

In addition to being familiar with the Cooks Run ecological evaluation, members of the Iron County Watershed Coalition spoke with the White Water biologists who conducted the Cooks Run study. Although it was not part of the MEF study, these biologists observed high quality forested wetland and riparian habitat at the site over the multiple times and seasons that they visited in 2024. This habitat had diverse tree species and age classes. The biologists report that habitat is ideal for a variety of bird species and is very likely to harbor State of Michigan listed species such as Northern Goshawk (threatened), Merlin (threatened), Evening Grosbeak (threatened), Cerulean Warbler (threatened), and Golden-winged Warbler (threatened). This is also potential habitat for the Northern long-eared bat (threatened) and Little brown bat (threatened). There is also good quality habitat for Wood Turtle (threatened).

We ask the Iron County Board to take our comments into consideration in your deliberations regarding activities at the Cooks Run property.

Sincerely,



Bette Premo, President, Iron County Watershed Coalition

On Behalf of the Following Board Members:

Richard Sloat, Vice President

Maggie Scheffer, Secretary

Doug Felger, Treasurer