

**Kickapoo Reserve Management Board  
Meeting Minutes for December 18, 2025**  
Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center

**Board members present:** Travis Downing (Chair), Dan Catherman, Scott Lind (via Zoom), Reggie Nelson, Bill Quackenbush, Kelly Rueckheim (via Zoom), Barb Sarnowski, Damian Thundercloud (via Zoom), Lyndsey Winchel, Luke Zahm

**Board members absent:** Kjetil Garvin

**Staff members present:** Jason Leis, Amy Dvorak, Jackie Leis, Jesse Haney, Amber Burch

**Others in attendance:** Marcy West, Danielle Schmidt (via Zoom)

Chair Downing called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Downing read the Land Acknowledgement Statement.

Sarnowski made a motion to approve the agenda, and Winchel seconded. The motion passed with all ayes.

Leis confirmed the agenda was properly posted.

Downing introduced Dan Catherman, the new Kickapoo Reserve Board Member. He is the president of the Friends of Wildcat Mountain State Park and lives in the area. Board members and staff introduced themselves.

Thundercloud motioned to approve the minutes from the November 2025 meeting. Sarnowski seconded the motion, and it passed with all ayes.

**Chairperson and/or Executive Director report:**

Neither Downing nor Leis had a report.

**Budget Report:**

The Appropriation Summary and Revenue and Expense Summary from December 1, 2025 were shared on the screen and explained as needed. Leis said the FY2026 operation budget has not been entered yet. The WI DOA BFM accountants are not concerned about our balances. Lind suggested we find a strategy to populate the budget reports on our own so the KRMB has an idea of the balances.

**Friends of KVR Update:**

No Friends of KVR member was present to provide an update.

**Public appearances:**

Marcy West spoke about her new role as the Landscapes Initiatives Advisor with the Natural Resources Foundation. The goal is to bring organizations together to get work done on the ground such as prescribed fires and invasive plant removal.

Jackie Leis addressed the agenda item regarding a voluntary donation for bikers, equestrians, skiers, and possibly hunters. She disagrees with singling out user groups because they appear to do more harm to the trails than others. She suggests using data driven user information and outreach.

**Voluntary donation for bikers, equestrians, skiers, and possibly hunters:**

Downing suggested a donation request on the homepage of the website. There was discussion on the cost of Wisconsin State Park passes and the itemized cost associated with various types of use. Lind agrees that there should be a data driven approach to how the property is managed. He would like the land management committee to always think about what data exists to guide decisions on how to manage the land.

Catherman initiated a conversation about how the Wisconsin State Park pass system works and whether it should be applied at the KVR. Quackenbush asked if there were alternative ways to generate funding, such as mailings and grants, rather than raising fees. He does not feel the KVR should be a money-making business. Quackenbush also suggested better education to the public on how the funds are being used.

Rueckheim asked why the annual pass fee was increased. Leis said our budget from the State seems to decrease each year. He also said it makes people appreciate the property more when they are paying more. Rueckheim asked how the budget is decided each year. Leis said the budget is on a biennial basis. We know what our budget is for the next two years, and it is currently \$40,000 less each year due to staff vacancies during the budget snapshot in 2024.

Downing made a motion to put a voluntary donation button on the website for all users. Catherman seconded the motion.

Zahm asked Lind about educating the public on user impacts to the trails and if the donation button would satisfy his desire for that education component. Lind said it doesn't, but before he is ready to talk more about the topic, he needs to further educate himself on it.

Quackenbush asked if the donation would be limited to online. Downing said the button would only be on the website.

There was no further discussion. The motion passed with all ayes.

**Nuzum Grant proposal from UW Grad Student to put kiosk in exhibit:**

Leis said Danielle Schmidt is a UW-La Crosse student who is applying for a Nuzum grant. Schmidt has been putting together a deep map, which is an interactive map of historic property locations and interviews of landowners in the area. The grant proposal includes putting a kiosk at the Visitor Center with the interactive map on it.

Schmidt said the kiosk would be about the size of an iPad on a stand. It is a living interactive map, so it can be updated in the future. Lind said anything that involves electronics is eventually going to fail. He is concerned about how long the program and electronics will last and what we will do when it inevitably fails or becomes obsolete. Schmidt said she is aware of the concern, and she has chosen a program that is easily managed. She also said the grant proposal includes eight additional years of updates and server management.

Downing made a motion to approve Schmidt's grant proposal to the Nuzum Fund, and Lind seconded.

Quackenbush asked Schmidt where she is gathering her data from. She said her data is collected through ride-along interviews with site visits and personal archives. Quackenbush asked if the data is owned by the KVR. Schmidt said she wants it to stay in the community, and she hopes most of it can be owned by the KVR.

There was no further discussion. The motion passed with all ayes.

**Commercial use fee for Natural Resources Foundation Field Trips:**

Lind said the Kickapoo Valley Dark Sky Initiative (KVDSI) will host two Natural Resources Foundation (NRF) field trips centered around the KVR for dark skies in 2026. Participants will also go to La Farge to view the lighting. Lind said because the NRF charges a fee for the trips, it triggers a potential requirement for a commercial use agreement. KVDSI is charging an additional \$5 fee per participant for their day pass. The issue was discussed at the Finance Committee meeting, and the consensus was the commercial use fee should be charged in this situation. Lind said he was okay with that, and the KVDSI would cover the fee. He said he initially asked for the discussion because he didn't know the cost of the fee and thought it might hinder the ability to host the field trips.

Winchel asked how much money the KVR receives from the NRF in grants and other funding. Leis said the KVR hasn't applied for funding from them for a while. Lind said the purpose of the field trips is to spread statewide the dark sky work being done locally. Winchel expressed concern that this might negatively impact future applications to the NRF for funding. She does not believe they should have to pay the fee because she considers them a partner of the KVR and they are a non-profit organization. Leis explained the commercial use fee is required when someone holds an event on the KVR and charges a fee for the event or service.

A discussion ensued regarding non-profit organizations being charged a commercial use fee. The commercial use fee is \$55 plus \$55 for a Friends of KVR business pass. Each participant must also pay \$5 for a day pass, unless they already have an annual pass.

Lind made a motion to keep the commercial use fee in place for the Natural Resources Foundation trips. Quackenbush seconded, and the motion carried with nine ayes and one opposed (Winchel).

**Education and Tourism Committee:**

There are 18 scheduled summer camps, and registration starts in February. The winter session of Nature Bound begins January 7. Enrollment is lower due to the weather. More instructors are needed for the education programs.

Ice caves are a highlight. We offer snowshoes and cross-country skis for rent. There are nine miles of groomed ski trails.

Winter Festival is coming up on January 10, 2026.

The next Education and Tourism Committee meeting is scheduled for February 12, 2026 at 5:30 PM at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center.

**Finance Committee:**

Zahm said there is a tremendous lag time between the budget and the actual expenses/revenue. The committee discussed creating a spreadsheet to keep track of things.

The committee discussed the commercial use fee for the NRF field trips. There was a discussion about commercial use fees in general. Further research will be done on how other reserves/parks determine the cost of their commercial use fees.

Revenue opportunities were discussed including cutting and selling firewood. The Friends of Wildcat Mountain State Park sell firewood at the park. Their wood is heat-treated. They make a good profit from it.

The next Finance Committee meeting is scheduled for February 9, 2026, at 9:00 AM at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center.

**Land Management Committee:**

There was no committee meeting since the November 2025 board meeting.

The next Land Management Committee meeting is scheduled for January 20, 2026, at 5:30 PM at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center.

**Board Member Matters:**

None.

**Request for future agenda topics:**

None.

**Adjournment:**

Zahm made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Thundercloud seconded, and it passed unanimously with all ayes. The meeting adjourned at 7:34 PM.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 15, 2026, at 6:00 PM at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center.

Minutes transcribed by Amy Dvorak, Executive Assistant