

**Kickapoo Reserve Management Board
Meeting Minutes for April 9, 2026**
Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center

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

Board members absent: None.

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

Others in attendance: Jen Oium, Marcy West, Christian Malanka, Jay (via Zoom), Emily Schendel (via Zoom)

Chair Downing called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.

Downing read the Land Acknowledgement Statement.

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

Leis confirmed the agenda was properly posted.

Quackenbush motioned to approve the minutes from the March 2026 meeting. Catherman seconded the motion, and it passed with all ayes.

Chairperson and/or Executive Director report:

Leis reported flooding on parts of the Reserve Friday and Saturday of last week. Staff have been cleaning up mud and replacing gravel. He anticipates many trees down on the trails from the ice storm and other windstorms. Zahm asked if staff could identify downed trees that volunteers could cut. Winchel asked if we could have volunteer days to assist volunteers with firewood transport. Leis said he doesn't want to do that because he doesn't want to undermine local firewood sellers and the Friends of KVR don't want to manage a firewood program. Catherman shared how the program at Wildcat Mountain State Park works where firewood is delivered by a company, and campers purchase it through the honor system. Thundercloud asked if KVR staff do tree removal on Ho-Chunk land and if staff collaborate with the Ho-Chunk for tree removals. Leis said yes.

Downing had nothing to report.

Budget Report:

The KRMB Appropriation Summary from March 30, 2026 was shared on the screen. The 12400 Law Enforcement account comes out of Tribal Gaming Revenue. When Leis started his job over 20 years ago, 25% of his salary came from the 12400 account. The budget has remained the same even though the percentage of his salary coming from the account increased over the years, and

Jesse Haney's position is now 55% law enforcement. Thundercloud said he would help work on getting an increase in funding for this account. There was a discussion on how timecards work when charging to this account.

The Revenue/Expense Summary from March 31, 2026 was shared on the screen. Leis explained the balances in each account.

Lind confirmed that \$90,000 has been set aside for the roofing project and does not show in any of these balance reports. Leis said yes. Lind said the Board should expect additional costs for the project.

Friends of KVR Update:

There was no representative from the Friends of KVR to provide an update.

Public appearances:

None.

Assign authorized people to KVR bank account in La Farge:

Leis said it was learned that none of the three authorized signers on the Farmers State Bank account work for the Kickapoo Valley Reserve anymore. The bank needs minutes indicating who should be the authorized signers. In the past, it was the Board Chairman, Executive Director, and Executive Assistant. A discussion ensued about why the signers were not changed yet.

Leis explained how the account works. A deposit is made into the account by Reserve staff. The State of Wisconsin immediately sweeps the money out of the account and into their US Bank account.

Lind made a motion to replicate the previous arrangement with Travis Downing as Board Chair, Jason Leis as Executive Director, and Amy Dvorak as Executive Assistant being the three people licensed or eligible to sign the checking account. Zahm seconded the motion, and the motion passed with all ayes.

Revisiting the future of the outdoor classrooms and update from Damian:

Thundercloud had a meeting with the Ho-Chunk Nation legislature about this yesterday. He reviewed the timeline of the buildings at the meeting. There were three recommendations:

1. Both buildings go to the Kickapoo Valley Forest School (KVFS) because that was the initial intent of the buildings,
2. One building should stay at the Reserve and the other building goes to the KVFS, or
3. Both buildings get transferred to the Ho-Chunk Nation.

A letter will be drafted by the legal department and signed by the president and vice-president to be sent to the Board indicating the recommendations.

The Ho-Chunk Nation felt the initial intent of the buildings was for the KVFS. Since Prairie Springs: The Paul Fleckenstein Trust Fund is a friend of the KVR, donated other funds, and are willing to donate more in the future, it is best to continue to foster that relationship.

Leis asked Thundercloud if he told them what the law is regarding the sale or disposal of the buildings. He said yes.

The Board decided to wait until they receive the recommendation letter from the Ho-Chunk Nation before further discussing the topic.

Hiring update:

The Education Coordinator position has been posted. The deadline to apply is April 19, 2026 at 11:59 p.m. Other jobs have been posted including instructors for the education program, field crew positions, and part-time law enforcement officers.

Education and Tourism Committee:

Sarnowski reported on the meeting that occurred directly before this meeting.

Summer camp registration is going well. Twenty camps have been scheduled; five are full and five are nearly full. School groups are visiting. Applications for new education program instructors have been received. We currently have 13 instructors.

The KVR will host a Master Naturalist training from April to September.

The Creative Communities project and student art experience went well. The Ephemeral Art Series was a success.

The Ralph E. Nuzum Kickapoo Valley Reforestation Grant was awarded to the Reserve for the Driftless Dialogue series. It will start in July and lasts for two years.

There will be many activities during Earth Week. The Driftless Dialogue during Earth Week will be the Wisconsin Poet Laureate.

Trails will open on May 1, 2026, weather dependent. National Trails Day is June 6, 2026, and there will be activities.

Paul Smith with the Native American Tourism of Wisconsin attended the meeting. He discussed ways to incorporate indigenous peoples events at the Reserve.

The next Education and Tourism Committee meeting is scheduled for June 11, 2026 at 5:30 p.m. at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center.

Finance Committee:

Zahm reviewed the summaries of the four main appropriations (12100, 12200, 12400, 16100). The 12100 account is our revenue account. The 12200 account is for gifts and grants. The 12400 account is for law enforcement and is funded by Tribal Gaming Revenue. The 16100 account is from the segregated conservation fund.

Zahm summarized the shared services tab from the Wisconsin Department of Administration's webpage, including performance measures for the Kickapoo Valley Reserve.

Funds remaining in appropriation 12100 at the end of the fiscal year can roll over as can funds in appropriation 12200. Funds remaining in appropriations 12400 and 16100 cannot roll over. Zahm suggested referring to the different appropriations in the following ways:

- 12100 = checking account
- 12200 = savings account
- 12400 = law enforcement
- 16100 = allocation from State of Wisconsin

Winchel asked if someone was reconciling the checking account. Zahm explained the Wisconsin Department of Administration manages the finances for the Reserve and meets with Leis and Dvorak monthly to review. He said he would return in one month with a review of the checks and balances of the accounts.

Lind asked Winchel to join the Finance Committee because she went to school for accounting and finance. Winchel declined because she is on the Education/Tourism and Land Management Committees. Downing said there are too many people on the Land Management Committee.

The next Finance Committee meeting is scheduled for June 1, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center.

Land Management Committee:

There was no committee meeting since the February 2026 board meeting.

Downing returned to the topic of too many Board members on the committee. Lind removed himself from the committee.

Catherman asked how staff count the number of visitors to the property. Thundercloud suggested QR codes at the trailheads for visitors to record their visit. Winchel asked if the canoe liveries could provide counts for customers who paddled the river. Thundercloud suggested providing documentation on the report indicating there are many factors that cannot be counted but should be considered when looking at the number of visitors to the Reserve.

Zahm suggested a voluntary quiet zone between Landings 14 and 18. If canoe liveries drop customers off at Landing 14, they would be able to collect better usage data.

Rueckheim said he does not think QR codes would work because there is limited cellphone service on the Reserve. He suggested electronic counters at landings and/or trailheads to count the number of visitors. Winchel said there are too many entrances and exits on the Reserve to count everyone.

The next Land Management Committee meeting is scheduled for May 12, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center.

Board Member Matters:

Lind said the controls for the lights are on order.

Quackenbush said on April 18, 2026, at 11:00 a.m., there is a tree planting on tribal trust lands in collaboration with some non-profit organizations and the Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation.

Request for future agenda topics:

The future of the outdoor classrooms will be discussed.

Closed session:

Catherman made a motion to convene in closed session pursuant to Wis. Stat. 19.185(1)(c): Considering employment, promotion, compensation or performance data of any public employee over which the governmental body has jurisdiction or exercises responsibility. The purpose is for discussion of personnel and employment issues. Thundercloud seconded the motion, and the motion passed with all ayes. The meeting was convened into closed session. All members of the public and non-Board members left the room and Zoom.

Sarnowski made a motion to reconvene into open session, and Lind seconded. The motion passed with all ayes.

Adjournment:

Rueckheim made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Catherman seconded, and it passed unanimously with all ayes. The meeting was adjourned at 8:36 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for May 21, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center.

Minutes transcribed by Amy Dvorak, Executive Assistant