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Day program

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Report: Change or end SFIA program

Dill says program needs mid-course corrections

BY LAUREL BEAGER
Editor

The Sustainable Forest Incentive Act program has spent \$44 million since it began in 2001 and should be changed or ended, says a report by Minnesota Legislative Auditor James Nobles.

The report was provided to law-

makers Tuesday and is a part of an push by Gov. Mark Dayton for the 2014 Legislature to focus on eliminating old, unneeded laws and programs.

The program requires forestland owners to agree for eight years to practice sustainable forestry and keep the land open to the public in exchange for



**Rep. David
Dill**

payments of \$7 per acre.

In Borderland, Molpus Timberlands Management has about 128,000 acres enrolled in the program.

Minnesota Rep. David Dill, DFL-Crane Lake, said it's good to review programs from time to time.

"I am not upset about the auditor's report, not at all," he said. "This is a set of recommendations that will lead to a blueprint to a

better, stronger program."

Dill discussed the report Wednesday as he traveled to St. Paul to discuss another resource-related bill on whether it's feasible to allow wetlands disturbed by development in one part of the state to be mitigated by creation of a wetland in a part of the state where it is needed — not Koochiching County, he said.

Meanwhile, the SFIA program will be supported by Dill "because it's a good program and we need it. I will say it's likely to see some mid-course corrections. The program is more than 10 years old and has not been visited a lot

and there have been changes in formulas."

Dill said lawmakers should consider the program's goals and accomplishments. He said he sees shortcomings in the way the program has handled landowners with fewer than 1,920 acres enrolled.

"A forest stewardship plan has to be done on the parcel, but enforcement and continued enforcement as land changes hands during the agreement concerns me," he said.

Dill said large industrial land

SFIA to A7 ➤

READY FOR WINTER



STAFF PHOTO BY EMILY GEDDE

A black-capped chickadee is perched in a crab apple tree last week. The songbird is notable for its capacity to lower its body temperature during cold winter nights, its good spatial memory to relocate the caches where it stores food, and its boldness near humans.

SOS continues to evolve

Organization moves forward with apartment, nonprofit status

BY LAUREL BEAGER
Editor

Servants of Shelter has reached a turning point or two.

Established in 2009, the local homeless advocacy group is working toward its nonprofit status and has just signed a lease for an apartment to better serve the needs of the community.

Coinciding with the apartment and a national week of hunger and homeless awareness, SOS will receive the proceeds of a Nov. 30 luncheon at the Backus Community Center during the Backus Arts and Crafts Fair.

The luncheon to raise money for people in need of shelter could become an annual event.

SOS, which is guided by a board, began by rotating overnight shelter services among Evangelical Covenant and Faith United churches and KOOTASCA Community Action, Amy Mortenson of KOOTASCA and SOS said.

"It was a great idea, but we ran into issues," she said. Those

SOS to A7 ➤

With a little help, a home

A home means many things for Cindy Nash.

It means her granddaughter can spend a sick day from school with her. It means her dogs have a safe place to live. And it means she knows each day where she will wake and where she will sleep.

Nash is one of 90 people who have used the services of the local Servants of Shelter, a group seeking nonprofit status that assists the homeless in the community, since it began in 2009.

Situations in Nash's life resulted in no place to call home last year. She told The Journal as she was getting ready to end a relationship in Marshall, Minn., she got arrested for drinking and driving.

"It was a very hard time," she said. She had a previous DWI conviction and was still on probation when she got her second — a case of what she calls "idiotitis"

After spending 60 days in jail in southern Minnesota, she was returned to

Home to A7 ➤

Falls School Board could consider wrestling co-op

Student proposes increasing age of prom attendees

BY EMILY GEDDE
Staff Writer

The Falls School Board next month is expected to consider entering into a high-school level wrestling cooperative with North Woods High School in Cook.

Pete Benedix, who coaches the local youth Mighty Mustangs wrestling team, told the board offering the sport for high school students will not only keep kids in his program, it may put more students in desks at Falls High School.

"There are about 12 wrestlers from Fort Frances who wrestle through the rec department," Benedix said Monday. "Their

parents have stated to me that if there is a high school program that co-oped with North Woods... under the immigration laws... those kids would be put in our school to continue wrestling under what's called the F1 status."

An F1 status is the official U.S. government designation and authorization of a student's stay in the U.S. as a non-immigrant student.

As the school district deals with a declining enrollment, Superintendent Nordy Nelson told The Journal he was unfamiliar with the process of Canadian students enrolling in an American school and couldn't comment on whether implementing the wrestling program would be beneficial to student enrollment.

Meanwhile, Benedix said officials at a recent North Woods School board meeting unanimously voted to establish a wres-

ling program with the option for other schools to co-op.

But Nelson said nothing would happen on the local level until at least next school year.

"Really, it takes a good deal of time," he said of two schools forming a co-op. "You need to get the school boards together, the athletic directors together and the superintendents together for sit-down time to work out all the different arrangements. I would think it takes several months...It doesn't happen overnight."

Benedix said a growing concern among the local wrestling athletes and their parents is that the children are competing from 4 years old into eighth grade and, without continuation of a wrestling program must stop their involvement in the sport.

"I've already lost several kids," he said, adding he sees potential with the wrestlers he coaches.

During the last five years, Benedix said the Mighty Mustangs program has attracted about 50 kids who have a significant number of wins opposed to losses under their belts.

"We've had a pretty high success rate," he said. "Last year, I had five state champions and the year prior to that, I had six state champs."

And cost, Benedix said, would be minimal.

"I have not been and will not be compensated for (coaching) the youth program," he said. "As far as the sport of wrestling goes, it's pretty cost effective."

In addition, Benedix said North Woods coach Marcus KnifeChief has waived fees "as far as being paid for the next two or three years. That's not even an issue for us because we have a passion for the sport."

But Nelson said a coach's sal-

ary is a decision made by the board.

"Individuals can not just decide on their own that this is the way it's going to be," he told Journal staff.

Board Chairman Darrell "Boxer" Wagner asked Benedix how transportation would work should the schools join in a co-op.

"I have about \$6,000 in our account right now, and whatever is needed to help out with the program on getting (students) down (to North Woods), we'd help out with that," Benedix said.

He added practices can be held off-site and he owns a facility to accommodate that.

"I just want to give these kids an opportunity," he said.

Wagner told Benedix the issue would be on the next month's meeting agenda and Benedix said

School to A7 ➤