

# Wisconsin Invasive Species Council Meeting

Thursday, June 5, 2014

9:00 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.

DNR Science Operations Center – Northwoods Conference Room  
2801 Progress Road, Madison

## Meeting Notes

**Present:** Danielle Johnson (Tourism), Jim Kerkman (Council on Forestry), Brian Kuhn (DATCP), Greg Long (Needles & Leaves Nursery), Todd Matheson (DOT), Pat Morton (The Nature Conservancy), Paul Schumacher (Wisconsin Lakes), and Jack Sullivan (DNR).

**Others Present:** Jerry Doll (UW), Jennifer Feyerherm (DNR), Gary Kohlenberg (citizen), Mark Renz (UW-Extension), Christa Wollenzien (DOT), and Dreux Watermolen (DNR).

### **Call to Order and Introductions**

The meeting was called to order by Schumacher. Meeting attendees introduced themselves.

### **Approval: January 30, 2014 Council Meeting Minutes**

Sullivan motioned to approve the minutes of the January 30, 2014 meeting, with minor editorial corrections. Second by Kuhn. Motion carried.

The Council reviewed the status of tasks listed in the minutes.

### **Invasive Species Program Updates**

An “Invasive Species and Issue Updates” document was distributed prior to the Council meeting (attached). Highlights included the discovery of white-nose syndrome in Wisconsin, the response to New Zealand mud snails, and updates on the First Detectors Network and a multi-state public service announcement. It was noted that there was a minor typographical error on page 2 of the Updates document. In describing control efforts, the document referred to “birch bark disease.” This should read “beech bark disease.”

**DNR Staffing Update** – Watermolen and Sullivan provided updates on DNR staffing. Available federal funding for the Invasive Species Coordinator project position dries up at the end of June. The Bureau of Science Services did not receive approval to convert that project position to a permanent position. The current Invasive Species Coordinator, Jennifer Feyerherm, has accepted a permanent grant administrator position in the DNR’s Bureau of Community Financial Assistance and is transitioning to that new role. The Bureau of Science Services has received agency approval to reallocate a vacant, general purpose revenue-supported position to serve as the Invasive Species Coordinator. This will provide a permanent staffing solution. Science Services will begin the recruitment process as soon as possible, but it is unclear how long the recruitment process will take given vacancies in the DNR’s human resources program.

DNR staff are also working internally to secure support dollars for a halftime, limited-term employee (LTE) Invasive Species Educator position. If the request is not successful in the short-term, staff are exploring the possibility of including the position and support dollars in a larger biennial budget request.

Question: When the Invasive Species Educator position was originally filled, it was filled as a halftime position. Wasn't additional funding secured to make it fulltime? Is that a possibility going forward? The halftime position was originally funded through the department's federal Pittman-Robertson (Wildlife Restoration) grant. After the Invasive Species Educator was hired, the Invasive Species Coordinator and collaborators secured an additional Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant that provided funds for an additional halftime position. The same individual was hired into that second position and worked fulltime.

**State Budget Process Updates** – Sullivan and Kuhn provided updates on the State Budget process. Within the DNR, preliminary budget requests have been well received by agency leadership. Staff have heard that invasive species was high priority issue for the administration and came close to receiving significant funding in the last budget cycle. Agency staff will be preparing more detailed requests over the next couple of months. Development of “long narratives” provides an opportunity to reach out and coordinate with other agencies, which staff will try to do.

Within DATCP, conceptual ideas have been collected within agency. The Bureau of Plant Industry submitted a couple requests related to the plant industry programs. These included fee increases or additional allocations to fund regulatory staff for inspections. The direction from administration, however, was for no new positions and no new funding.

It was noted that one significant challenge is that several DNR accounts are projected to be strained or in the red (e.g., the Water Resources and Environmental accounts). So, if Council members have suggestions for new revenue sources, agency staff will be willing to work with folks to find viable options. At some point, the Council may want to weigh in on state agency processes.

Question: Are all the agencies on the same page in terms of promoting issue? Each agency has a slightly different budget development process. Some agencies have to present their budgets for board approval prior to sending to DOA. Others do not. Deputy Secretaries do talk across agencies, but invasive species does not seem to be on their radar at the moment. The Council could encourage agency secretaries to coordinate on budget initiatives. The Governor would likely look favorably upon a coordinated approach.

It was noted that it will be important to “make the case” to urban legislators as invasive species management is not just a rural issue. Getting businesses (utilities, pulp and paper, etc.) engaged in advocating for priorities would also be helpful.

## **Council Committee Reports**

**Education Committee** – Matheson and Feyerherm provided updates on the Education Committee's recent work. There have been lots of meetings and lots of work going on “behind the scenes.” The Invader Crusader Awards will be presented following the Council meeting. All nominees and past winners have been invited to attend the ceremony, winners will be given a chance to speak about their efforts/projects, and certificates will be presented to nominees. The committee appreciates the help from Council members in reviewing nominations, assisting with logistics, etc. A record number of awards will be presented and we expect very good attendance. Mark Renz has agreed to serve as Master of Ceremonies. The Sea Grant-coordinated video competition did not receive a lot of responses, but the organizers learned a lot about the process. Contest winners will be announced at the Invader Crusader Awards ceremony. The committee recommends trying the contest again next year.

The Invasive Species Education Summit will take place at Beaver Creek Preserve near Eau Claire in mid-June. Registration is still open. Council members are invited to attend. One highlight of the event is a series of “hands-on” stations. About 50 people have already registered.

DOT prepared a poster for Invasive Species Awareness Month. Copies will be available at the Invader Crusader Awards ceremony. We will also make it available for use at rest areas, parks, etc.

**Interagency Committee** – Kuhn provided an update on the Interagency Committee. The committee has not met since the last Council mtg. Watermolen provided an update on the state agency planning exercise. Agencies with the biggest roles in invasive species management have completed their reviews and provided results to the DNR. The DATCP and DOT have given pretty comprehensive reviews. DOA and Tourism are providing feedback as well. Staff are close to having the analysis packaged and hope to be able to share it soon.

Mark Renz, Assistant Professor/Extension Weed Specialist, University of Wisconsin provided an update on Wisconsin’s First Detector Network as part of the most recent Interagency Committee meeting. Dr. Renz provided a similar update for the Council. He distributed a packet of handout materials with background information (attached). The goal of the First Detectors program is to develop a network of individuals that can assist with detecting invasive species in Wisconsin. A second goal is to educate the public about invasive species.

Since Extension has limited resources, it is important to be strategic in building and adapting the network. Initial efforts have focused on master gardeners and master naturalists. The next step will be to expand to other volunteer groups and interested audiences. Also, the current effort focuses on plants because they are mostly easy to identify. In the future, the program will be able to expand. Organizers are trying to leave it open so folks can focus on what they are interested in.

Sullivan noted that hunters and anglers, a group of several million people, might be a good target audience as they spend a considerable amount of time outdoors. It was also noted that one question at the Conservation Congress’ spring hearings was about controlling movement of invasive species by gravel companies. Of all the questions considered, that was one where the majority said “do it.” That suggests that the hunting and fishing public are aware of invasive species issues, so we need to look at how we can further make that connection.

**Research and Regulations Committees** – Long provided an update on the committee. The SAG review letter has not yet been sent out due to staffing changes at DNR. Hopefully, by next Council meeting, the letter will be sent and we will have some response back.

#### **Action: Endorsement of NR 40 Rule Revisions**

The Council discussed the current status of NR 40 and the public comment period. In April, the Natural Resources Board authorized the DNR to take the rule out for public comment and public hearing. Watermolen distributed a list of proposed changes to the regulated species (attached). The proposed rule and supporting documents, including the fiscal estimate, may be viewed and downloaded from the Administrative Rules System Web site (<https://health.wisconsin.gov/admrules/public/Home>; search “SS-04-12”). The public comment period opened on May 15. The Council was notified by email. The DATCP provided email addresses for licensed nurseries and the DNR informed the nurseries of the public comment period and public hearings. Public hearings are scheduled for June 17 in Madison and June 18 in Green Bay. Council members are encouraged to attend.

Motion by Kirkman to support, in concept, the substance and process of the proposed revisions to NR 40, including the proposed changes to the species list. Second by Schumacher. Motion carried. The Chair will communicate the Council's support to the DNR via letter.

#### **Discussion: Council Goals for 2014**

Chairman Schumacher circulated a draft listing of Council goals prior to the meeting (see attached). The Council reviewed the handout. Schumacher asked the Council to think of this list of goals as an outline of possible work items.

Morton noted that the recent BIOTIC conference held in Milwaukee provided a wealth of information related to several of the draft goals (bait, pets, etc.) and suggested that the Council invite Tim Campbell, UW-Sea Grant, to provide a synopsis of the information available relative to these topics.

Sullivan suggested another needed piece is the gap analysis done by the agencies. If we could see what we are doing and not doing, we will have good focus for future efforts. Additional information on what others are doing would also be helpful.

These goals, while still broad, are more specific than what we have had to date and they can give the DNR and other agencies something to respond to and can provide direction for staff who support the Council. It was noted that the goals seem to be ordered in a progression. If the Council were to adopt the goals, there will still need to be an effort to prioritize them.

Schumacher noted that the existing best management practices (BMPs) for baitfish are getting dated. The parties who developed the BMPs committed to revise and update them after 6 months, and that was almost two years ago.

Schumacher also commented that it might be better to think of the goals as covering 2014, 2015, and 2016, as opposed to them being just for 2014.

Morton noted the importance of individual efforts and how they might fit into the Council's work. She shared a story of one of the recent BIOTIC meeting presenters who had received a visit from the DNR's Invasive Species Educator. That one visit transformed the individual's outlook and he is now working with pet stores throughout the region to address invasive species issues in that industry.

**TASK:** Council members will review the draft goals and provide comments and suggestions for revisions to the Executive Committee by the end of July. The Executive Committee will review and prepare a final suggested draft of goals for consideration at the next Council meeting.

#### **Work with Pet Industry Update**

Discussion on this topic was deferred due to time constraints

#### **Work with Bait Industry Update**

Discussion on this topic was deferred due to time constraints

## **Invasive Species Updates: White-nose Syndrome**

Erin Crain, Director of the DNR's Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation, provided an update on the recent discovery of white-nose syndrome in Wisconsin. Results from visual inspection and genetic and tissue tests completed earlier this year showed that 2 percent of bats in a single mine in southwestern Wisconsin had the disease. At this time, the discovery appears to be an isolated occurrence. DNR's visual surveys of 85 other mine and cave sites this winter did not find any other signs of white-nose syndrome.

The discovery is not a surprise. White-nose syndrome spreads rapidly bat to bat and bat to cave. With great cooperation from mine and cave owners, Wisconsin took aggressive steps to prevent human spread of the disease to Wisconsin. The DNR believes those steps helped delay the arrival of white-nose syndrome by several years, allowing more time for research and to learn from other states' experiences.

Wisconsin is home to several of the upper Midwest's largest bat hibernation sites and historical estimates have put the population at 350,000 to 500,000 bats. Most caves that serve as bat hibernacula have already been seasonally closed to the public for several years as part of the measures DNR has taken to give hibernating bats the best possible chance. Several have been closed to all access to delay introduction of the disease to Wisconsin and to slow its spread. Voluntary prevention plan agreements are in place with private and public owners of caves and mines open to human access, including all commercial caves and mines. Recreational cavers also have followed decontamination procedures that prevent transmission of disease between sites.

DNR will be meeting with its external white-nose syndrome science and stakeholder teams to discuss the finding and how best to proceed based on data collected this winter. The teams are advisory and will forward management recommendations to DNR for consideration.

**TASK:** Watermolen to provide copies of recent articles on economic value of bats in agriculture and white-nose syndrome in European bat populations to Council members.

## **Public Comment and Adjourn**

**TASK:** Watermolen to conduct a Doodle poll of Council members to set late summer/early fall Council meeting date.

There was no public comment.

Meeting adjourned at 11:45.