

Wisconsin Invasive Species Council Meeting

Wednesday, September 14, 2016
Wisconsin DNR Science Operations Center
2801 Progress Road, Madison, Wisconsin

Meeting Notes

Council Members Present: Tom Bressner (Wisconsin Agro-Business Association), Tom Buechel (McKay Nursery), Drew Feldkirchner (DNR), Brian Kuhn (DATCP), Greg Long (Needles & Leaves Nursery), Ken Raffa (University of Wisconsin), Paul Schumacher (Wisconsin Lakes), and Hannah Spaul (The Nature Conservancy).

Others Present: Tim Campbell (UW-Extension), Michael Putnam (Wisconsin DNR), Eric Verbeten (staff, Wisconsin DNR), Robert Wakeman (Wisconsin DNR), and Dreux Watermolen (staff, Wisconsin DNR)

Call to Order and Introductions

Chairman Schumacher called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. Council members introduced themselves.

Approval of June 9, 2016 Council Meeting Minutes

Mr. Kuhn moved to approve the minutes of the June 9, 2016 Council meeting. Second by Mr. Bressner. Motion passed.

Council Membership Appointments

Mr. Watermolen reported that the Secretary of the Department of Tourism has indicated that Julie Fox, the agency's new regional tourism representative covering northwest Wisconsin, will serve as her designee on the Council. Ms. Fox begins her work with the Department of Tourism in October and will be stationed in Siren. Mr. Watermolen will introduce Ms. Fox to the Council and provide an orientation.

Chairman Schumacher announced that Christa Schaefer, Wisconsin DOT, will serve as an informal Council liaison to the Invasive Plants Association of Wisconsin (IPAW).

Mr. Watermolen reviewed Council members' terms. Four Council members' appointments expire in 2017: Mr. Bressner, Mr. Kerkman, Mr. Long, and Mr. Schumacher.

Task: Mr. Watermolen will send Council members reminders in March 2017 with information on applying for reappointment.

State Agency Invasive Species Staffing

Mr. Watermolen and Mr. Wakeman provided updates on recent staffing changes within the DNR.

Amy Kretlow has accepted a project position as an AIS early detection and response coordinator in the southeast part of the state. The DNR is recruiting to fill the two limited-term employee positions left vacant by Kretlow's promotion. Applications are due September 21. GLRI funding for the "Organisms in Trade" project is available for another year.

Jenny Seifert has replaced Chrystal Campbell at UW-Extension as an aquatic invasive species (AIS) outreach specialist. She will be stationed in the DNR headquarters.

Fisheries staff specialist Kate Strom-Hjorns recently left the DNR for a position at the DATCP. Another staff person in the fisheries management bureau will likely take over leadership of the department team dealing with bait fish regulations, but a decision as to who that will be has not yet been announced.

Kevin Olson is the DNR's new half-time AIS monitoring coordinator and Aimee Crittendon is the agency's new half-time rapid response coordinator. Both positions are funded with GLRI grants.

The DNR invasive species coordinator position remains vacant. The DNR's strategic alignment will determine the future "home" of the position. In response to several questions from Council members, Mr. Feldkirchner explained that the rollout date for the DNR's strategic alignment is currently unknown, but the agency anticipates announcements later this fall.

Task: Mr. Watermolen will inquire with the Bureau of Fisheries Management to determine what the plans are for moving the current baitfish regulation discussions forward.

Input for DNR's Annual Report to Legislature, Governor, and Council

Mr. Watermolen provided an update on the DNR's legislatively required annual report. A copy of the draft document was distributed to Council members. Following the last Council meeting, the department's invasive species team incorporated suggestions received from Council members into the draft report. Highlights of significant changes include addition of information regarding the economic impact to invasive species introductions, inclusion of a transmittal letter from the Secretary, addition of an executive summary, and clarification of budget/expenditure information. Mr. Schumacher suggested highlighting "program successes" in either the executive summary or the Secretary's letter.

Task: Council members to submit any additional suggestions regarding major gaps in content to Mr. Watermolen by September 21, 2016.

2017-2019 State Budget Process

The Council discussed the State Budget development timeline and process. The Governor's July 23, 2016, letter to state agency heads and "Major Budget Policies 2017-2019" document were distributed with the Council's meeting materials. The letter directs agencies to "maintain their overall fiscal year 2017-18 and 2018-19 GPR budgets at the fiscal year 2016-17 adjusted base." The zero-growth targets also apply to segregated fund appropriations. In addition, 2015 Wisconsin Act 201 requires each agency to submit proposals for: 1) a 0 percent change from the agency's base budget in each year (across most funding sources), and 2) a 5 percent reduction of the agency's base budget. State agency budget requests are due to the Department of Administration (DOA) on September 15, 2016. The DOA will post all budget requests on its website.

An overview of the budget development process and timeline was distributed with the Council's meeting materials. Following submittal of agency budget requests, the executive budget proposal will be developed by the DOA's State Budget Office and presented by the governor to the legislature in January or February 2017. The legislature's Joint Committee on Finance will then address the budget through hearings and executive sessions throughout the spring and early summer, with the intention of having a final budget adopted by July 1, 2017. Each step in the process includes opportunity for public input.

The Council discussed budget initiatives submitted by the DNR's Invasive Species Team during the previous biennial budget process. The team's proposals, distributed with the Council's meeting materials, called for a "One DNR" approach which combined priorities from across different bureaus/divisions. The proposals were vetted by the bureaus and submitted to the administration. The proposals were not funded in the last budget. The Invasive Species Team was not directed to submit requests during the DNR's current internal budget development process due to the requirements for 0 percent growth and 5 percent reduction proposals for all state agencies.

Chairman Schumacher asked what hypothetically the department's Invasive Species Team would recommend if money were to appear/proposals were to be requested. Mr. Watermolen indicated he would ask the team to review the previous proposals to see if anything has changed and identify what needs remain to address implementation of the statewide strategic plan adopted by the Council. Mr. Watermolen commented briefly on each of the initiatives submitted during the previous budget process. He indicated outreach and education on NR 40 would likely continue to be a priority. There remains a need to develop and share information on alternatives to recently regulated species, such as water lettuce and water hyacinth. The phase-out period for restricted herbaceous plants will end during the next biennium and the phase-out for woody species ends the following biennium. There is a need to ensure compliance with the phase-outs. Mr. Feldkirchner noted that efforts related to white-nose syndrome are currently being funded with federal grants. Additional (currently unfunded) white-nose syndrome work is anticipated. Funds have not been available to support installation or deployment of decontamination equipment at boat landings. The federal government is taking the lead on feral swine removal but the state has had limited resources for detection/verification efforts. Interest in leveraging the volunteer work of the First Detector Network remains high among staff members in several programs. The DNR's Lakes and Rivers program is exploring alternative ways of allocating grant funds to counties and local partners to offer more flexibility and stability in funding. Funding to help these partners address terrestrial invasive species remains elusive.

Mr. Long asked if other state agencies have included invasive species needs in their budget requests or have identified means of alternative funding. Mr. Kuhn and Mr. Feldkirchner indicated they were unaware of any such efforts as all agencies received the same budget instructions (i.e. the requirements for 0 percent growth and 5 percent reductions).

The Council briefly discussed concerns about the continued reliance on grant funding and a need to move to a more sustainable, long-term funding model, particularly for addressing terrestrial species.

Five-year AIS/Lakes Monitoring Effort

Mr. Wakeman provided an update on the DNR's recently completed 5-year study to evaluate the rate of aquatic invasive species (AIS) spread in Wisconsin. The goal of the effort was to answer the question, "Are Wisconsin's AIS prevention efforts slowing the spread of AIS?" More than 150 staff and volunteers spent approximately 3,000 hours over five years collecting data to answer this question. No other state has completed a comprehensive AIS study of this scale and detail. The primary finding was that the rate of spread, overall and for any individual species, did not increase over the 5-year project period. It remained

the same. Theoretically, invasion rates should increase, stabilize, and then decrease over time. As more lakes become invaded, there are more opportunities for spread and the rate increases until suitable habitat is saturated. A constant rate suggests something is preventing that rate from accelerating. As a result, AIS staff members believe that outreach, education, and related prevention efforts are being effective. The study results included about 500 new detections of invasive species, but most were of purple loosestrife (for which there is an effective biocontrol agent) and mystery snails (for which negative impacts are not as readily apparent). The survey methodology and additional results are summarized in an article in a recent issue of *Lake Tides* newsletter, a link to which was provided in the written “Invasive Species and Issues Updates” document provided to the Council. Mr. Wakeman acknowledged the many DNR staff and external collaborators who were involved in the 5-year effort.

AIS Strategic Planning Process

Mr. Campbell and Mr. Kuhn discussed current efforts to update Wisconsin’s AIS strategic management plan. The plan is intended to frame issues and the current environment, clarify the AIS program mission, goals, and values, and identify strategies for achieving the mission and goals. The planning effort began with a look at similar plans from throughout the Great Lakes region and a review of Wisconsin’s existing plan (developed in 2003). The current draft plan adopts approaches used elsewhere and focuses on introduction pathways including recreational activities, transportation corridors, organisms in trade, management activities, maritime commerce, locks and dams, and non-recreational fishing. It also includes methods for monitoring and response as well as control activities. Mr. Campbell highlighted priorities identified in the current draft, which was distributed with the Council’s meeting materials. The plan will be subject to public review and comment prior to being submitted for DNR and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force administrative approvals. Several Council members questioned the level of detail included in the plan, noting that “strategic” plans generally take a higher level approach to issues. It was noted that the plan needs to meet certain content requirements in order to secure needed agency approvals.

Task: Council members to provide feedback/input on the draft AIS strategic management plan to Tim Campbell by September 28, 2016.

Giant Hogweed Response in Southeast Wisconsin

Dr. Putnam provided an overview of responses to the recent discovery of populations of a prohibited species, giant hogweed. Giant hogweed is native to the Caucasus Region in central Asia. It has been introduced to a small number of U.S. states where it outcompetes native plants in riparian zones, leads to soil erosion and impaired water quality, and poses a threat to human health due to phytophotodermatitis. The large plants (8-20 feet tall) produce as many as 20,000 seeds, which enable it to spread to new sites. To date, four populations of giant hogweed have been detected in Wisconsin. Some of these plants have been present for 10 years or more.

Control efforts have been undertaken at all four sites. Ottawa National Forest and county Land and Water Conservation Department staff members have worked together to control a population detected on private land in Iron County. The county AIS coordinator and landowners are working together to address populations at several small sites in Manitowoc County. A private landowner has taken steps over the past five years to control a population in Portage County. The most recent population discovered occurs in Sheboygan County where the Southeastern Wisconsin Invasive Species Consortium (SEWISC) has used DNR suppression grant funds to contract with a private ecological consulting firm to control and monitor populations. Control includes flower removal and herbicide applications in late June and again in July,

followed by a third herbicide treatment in September. A press release issued by SEWISC in summer 2016 resulted in hundreds of “sightings” being reported to the DNR, SEWISC, UW-Extension, county conservationists, Wisconsin Emergency Management Authority, and Minnesota DNR. Most reports turned out to be other plants with a similar appearance, but one resulted in discovery of an additional population in Sheboygan County. A DNR suppression grant covered the costs of control at the newly detected site. Dr. Putnam noted that these efforts underscore the importance of developing good cooperative relationships, the value of investments in cooperative invasive species management areas and county AIS coordinators, and the flexibility inherent in the small suppression grants program. Dr. Putnam concluded his presentation by acknowledging the DNR staff and external collaborators who were involved in the control efforts.

Recent Non-native Insect Discoveries in Furniture and Wood Imports

Mr. Kuhn discussed three recent instances where minimally processed wood products were imported from overseas and were found to contain non-native insect pests. In the first instance, pet chews—essentially small bundles of sticks—containing live beetle larvae were shipped from China to several large pet supply stores. The insects completed their development in the sticks and later emerged from the wood. These chews generally have little to no packaging which would help contain the insects. APHIS staff tracked the shipments and were able to halt future shipments. A company recall was enacted and extant merchandise was destroyed. DATCP inspectors visited several pet stores statewide to inspect bundles available for sale, but found no pests in Wisconsin stock.

In the second case, a company sold rustic furniture that contained live beetles. The furniture was sold in 21 states. Wisconsin had 10-12 homeowners who had purchased this type of furniture. DATCP staff worked closely with APHIS staff to investigate and remove and destroy/incinerate the furniture.

The third case involved a northwestern Wisconsin cabin owner who had furnished their home with 21 pieces of rustic furniture that contained beetles that later burrowed their way out of the furniture. The beetles appear to have been contained within the cabin. Mr. Kuhn noted that the DATCP had been in contact with the owners and would be removing and destroying the furniture in the coming week.

These and related situations were discussed recently at the National Plant Board’s meeting. State and federal regulators are aware of the problem and have identified holes in the system which allow these types of wood products to be shipped into the U.S. The National Plant Board is finalizing a resolution addressing the concerns. One Council member asked if there are no regulations to require wood to be processed before shipping internationally. Mr. Kuhn indicated that craft products must be treated to be shipped to and sold in the U.S. He further noted that the original overseas vendors are the ones who must certify that products were treated in various ways prior to shipping. Enforcement of the regulations takes place in the home country by the applicable local agencies.

Motion by Dr. Raffa to send a letter from the Council to federally elected officials expressing concern regarding this issue. Second by Greg Long. Motion passed.

Task: Mr. Kuhn and Mr. Watermolen to develop a draft letter for Chairman Schumacher’s signature based on National Plant Board resolution.

Local Noxious Weed Management Ordinances

The informational presentation by Mr. Watermolen was postponed until the next Council meeting due to time constraints.

Upper Midwest Invasive Species Conference

Mr. Watermolen provided an update on the Upper Midwest Invasive Species Conference (UMISC), which will be held October 16-19, 2016, in La Crosse. The Council is one of the conference's host organizations. The Wisconsin DNR, DATCP, DOA, and DOT are conference sponsors. The goal of UMISC is to strengthen management of invasive species by sharing innovative and practical solutions. The conference draws a diverse audience of researchers; land managers; natural resource professionals; university personnel; landscape, nursery, agriculture and forestry professionals; environmental specialists; lake association members; landowners; government agencies and non-governmental organizations; and others interested in managing the spread of invasive species from across the region. Attendance is expected to exceed 600. Multiple Wisconsin state agency staff members are involved in conference presentations, workshops, and field trips. Additional information, including a complete conference program, is available online at <http://www.umisc.net/>.

Council Questions and Feedback on Written Invasive Species Updates

A written "Invasive Species and Issues Updates" document was distributed to the Council with the meeting materials. See that written report for additional details and staff contact information.

Public Comment

Mr. Buechel and Mr. Long reminded the Council about the upcoming "Where Ecology Meets Economy" event to be held in southeastern Wisconsin.

Task: Mr. Watermolen to provide Council members with information about the "Where Ecology Meets Economy" conference via email.

There were no additional comments from the public.

Adjourn

Mr. Kuhn moved to adjourn the Council meeting. Motion was seconded by Mr. Feldkirchner. Motion passed. Chairman Schumacher adjourned the Council meeting at 4:08 p.m.

Note: PowerPoint presentation slides and handout materials from several of the meeting presentations/discussions were distributed to Council members via email following the meeting.