

Wisconsin Invasive Species Council Meeting

September 27, 2017
9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

DNR Science Operations Center, Northwoods Conference Room
Madison, Wisconsin

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Meeting Minutes

Council Members Present: Tom Buechel (Green Industry), Brian Kuhn (DATCP), Drew Feldkirchner (DNR), James Hughes (DOT), Lauren Leckwee (DOA), Ken Raffa (UW-Madison), Julie Fox (Tourism) via SKYPE, Greg Long (Needles and Leaves Nursery), Tom Bressner (Wisconsin Agri-Business Association)

Others Present: Tara Bergeson (DNR, staff), Christa Schaefer (DOT), Bob Wakeman (DNR)

Call to Order and Introductions

Chairman Buechel called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m.

Approval of June 8, 2017 Council Meeting Minutes

Several corrections to the Council meeting minutes were pointed out, including the following: 1) Mr. Long called in to the June 8 Council meeting; 2) Ms. Leckwee was not present at the June 8 Council meeting; 3) Check dates listed on header of June 8 Council meeting minutes; 4) Change Ms. Leckwee's affiliation from DOT to DOA.

TASK: Ms. Bergeson will make the above corrections to the June 8 Council meeting minutes.

Mr. Raffa moved to approve minutes with the above corrections. Mr. Feldkirchner seconded. Approved.

Future Council meetings (location, format)

Chairman Buechel opened a discussion about where the Council will meet in the future. Moving the meeting locations strategically around the state might help the Council's visibility.

The Council discussed the benefit of using benchmarks and timelines to help track progress of the Council's work. See Council Operations Direction document provided by Chairman Buechel.

Chairman Buechel encouraged the Council to “think big.” For example, fifty percent of Wisconsin residents purchase a fishing license. They are an important audience for invasive species issues. How can we reach them with key messages?

Chairman Buechel asked Council members to review his document and provide suggestions back within 4-6 weeks.

Mr. Raffa noted that he believes the Council can do a lot to improve visibility, including strategically linking with other organizations on common issues. Linking up messages with a various organizations’ meetings could be helpful. The Council should be strategic about partnering with groups and targeting its messages. He added that planning ahead based on topical areas allows for the people with the most relevant knowledge experience to be present.

Mr. Long noted that one reason we kept meetings in Madison was because most Council members are located in the Madison area. Agency travel budgets are another factor to consider. Mr. Long agreed with the idea of linking with other organizations for meetings/events.

Mr. Kuhn noted that it has been a long time since the Council has traveled around.

Mr. Wakeman noted that there is a very well established Aquatic Invasive Species family that meets throughout the year. He asked if the Council would prefer to travel as a Council or whether individual Council members would be interested in participating in meetings with other organizations.

Chairman Buechel responded that both are possible and good ideas.

Mr Raffa noted that some areas of invasive species are not steeped in much controversy (e.g. EAB). In those cases, having one person spread the message can work well. On other topics, it can be helpful for the public to see the debates/discussions that occur within the Council.

Mr. Kuhn stated that from an interagency standpoint, there could be some work at connecting dots between agencies that are not currently as well connected and this could result it broadening perspectives.

Mr. Feldkirchner doesn’t think that it would be a limitation in terms of travel from a DNR perspective. All Council members would have to commit to putting in an elevated level of coordination.

Mr. Raffa provided the example of the Minocqua Brew Pub, which hosts a *Science on Tap* event. Topics range from pollinators to bats etc. The Council could offer an open mic session on invasive species.

Ms. Leckwee suggested that the monthly Conservation on Tap events in the Madison area are another possible venue for the Council to increase its visibility. These events are hosted by the [Wisconsin Chapter of the Society for Conservation Biology](#). The Department of Administration has an annual grant program – Coastal Management Program – that offers some opportunities for making connections, too. Their Council has community members come in and present to them (e.g. Regional Planning Commissions). Helps get the community involved in the Council. Makes them feel as if they have a voice.

Mr. Kuhn pointed out that it will be important to consider how other people (agency staff maybe) can get involved and help. We all want to do these things, but already have so much going on. This may also be a way to provide opportunities for others.

TASK: Ms. Bergeson will send an electronic copy of the *Future Directions* document that Chairman Buechel shared during the meeting.

Status of Council Member Terms

Mr. Feldkirchner has asked the DNR's Secretary's office to check with the Governor's office on the status of the Council applications. He has not gotten a response yet.

TASK: Chairman Buechel will send a letter to the Governor's office requesting action on the Council appointments.

Mr. Raffa indicated that he will most likely not re-apply for his Council seat when his term expires in 2018.

State Agency Invasive Species Staffing

Ms. Bergeson provided updates on recent staffing changes within the DNR.

Jodie Ellis has been hired as an outreach and education specialist with DNR's Forest Health Team (Colleen Robinson's replacement). She will be a member of the department's Invasive Species Team and will participate on the Communicators Group. She will also serve on the Council's Education Committee. She begins on October 2 and will have an office in the Natural Resources State Office Building in Madison.

Jeanne Scherer has been hired as DNR's new Aquatic Invasive Species Outreach Specialist. She will be working with Tim Campbell to complete the objectives from the UWEX/WDNR contract that generally includes coordinating the Wisconsin AIS Partnership, developing AIS prevention messaging for new stakeholder groups, and bringing outreach perspectives to statewide AIS working groups. She is currently coordinating waterfowl hunter outreach efforts. Jeanne is also working half-time for UW-Extension. She will spend most of her time at the Natural Resources State Office Building in Madison.

Kristina Femal has been hired by DNR's Water Quality Bureau to manage intake of aquatic plant management permits.

A Forest Invasive Plant Coordinator position has been approved for hiring. This is the position formerly held by Tom Boos. It is not known yet when the hiring process will begin.

There is a vacant position in the DNR's Forest Health position. There is no indication that this is going to be filled anytime soon.

Chelsey Blanke is the DNR's new AIS Rapid Response Coordinator. She works in the Bureau of Water Quality.

Feedback from Council on Chairman Buechel's Survey

Chairman Buechel summarized feedback from Council members in the document that he shared today. The Council discussed the feedback.

Mr. Bressner noted that he brings a unique role to the Council as he is a registered lobbyist. He is also on the Advisory committee for Discovery Farms. They produce an annual report every year, which Mr. Bressner shared with Wisconsin legislators. He would be happy to do the same for the Invasive Species Council.

TASK: Mr. Bressner will share the Discovery Farms report with Ms. Bergeson and she will forward to the Council.

Team building/new member onboarding discussion

Mr. Feldkirchner said that he was briefed by Mr. Dreux Watermolen (DNR staff to the Council at the time) when he joined the Council. He asked how other Council members have received onboarding in the past.

Mr. Long noted that when ch. NR 40 was being developed, that was the primary focus of the Council and it served to draw people into the Council. There was a lot of non-Council participants in the NR 40 process as well. There were combined committee meetings. Participants brought information back to their organizations. Mr. Long also reminded members that there are documents that define the role and scope of the Council, including Statute and Biennial Goals. The Council's webpage is a good resource for new Council members.

Mr. Raffa observed that this is an opportune time to put in writing the purpose of the Council and the role of Council members. The Council is an advisory group to the Department of Natural Resources.

Many current Council members have learned as they have gone along.

Mr. Long noted that the Council's committees help to bring folks together.

Mr. Kuhn suggested that it would be important to have a transition discussion between outgoing and incoming members from the same industry/organization.

New members could be given an introductory binder with relevant background information.

Mr. Raffa said that the Council can really look at what responsibilities come with addressing a vast array of Invasive species simultaneously. There are commonalities among the issues and management approaches across species and topics. For example, Mr. Raffa knows little about white-nose syndrome in bats or mammals in general, but he can still recognize similarities in the invasive fungus and other invasive species issues.

Ms. Leckwee asked what the DNR's process is for funding invasive species work.

MR. Wakeman responded that for AIS, the department's funding comes from the Wisconsin gas tax. The thinking was that since some gas is burned in boats, some should go back to addressing aquatic issues. Some goes to fisheries, law enforcement, and others, too. The department's water program gets about \$4.5 million each year. They give away about \$4 million of that in grants each year.

Ms. Leckwee also asked whether the Council advises the DNR on how those funds are awarded? Mr. Wakeman replied that they do not. The Council probably reviewed the criteria for awarding grants rather than spending their time actually reviewing and ranking individual grant applications.

Ms. Leckwee stated that the Council has a role in connecting the public to government and in providing input on funding for invasive species. Picking focus areas and supporting the groups that DO the work is something the Council can do.

Mr. Feldkirchner noted that there are multiple programs within the DNR that are working on various aspects of invasive species. The department has an Invasive Species Team. Perhaps we could work to strengthen the connection between that group and the Council.

Mr. Hughes pointed out that the DOT invests millions of dollars on right-of-way management, including invasive species management. It is important that DOT is linked in with the Council to ensure that the goals and priorities of the two groups are aligned. The DOT has been building another fund with revenue from - cutting 2-inch trees in rights-of-way. The funds are being used to develop pollinator corridors.

Ms. Schaefer noted that when she started attending, the Council was in the middle of a strategic planning process. During that time, she heard a lot of presentations and learned a lot about invasive species. She encourages members to revisit the strategic plan.

TASK: Create a written onboarding process.

Information Item: Bsal & the Lacey Act (Tara Bergeson)

Chytridiomycosis is a fungal disease caused by members of the genus *Batrachochytrium*. Scientists recognized *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* (sometimes referred to as *Bd*) as a pathogenic organism in 1998 (Berger et al. 1998) and described it as a new species of chytrid in 1999 (Longcore et al. 1999). Since then, this chytrid has been found on every continent except Antarctica and has been implicated in declines in wild amphibian populations worldwide, affecting more than 500 species (see Fisher et al. 2009 and Olson et al. 2013). This pathogen infects frogs, salamanders, and caecilians and has been found to be one of the most common pathogens related to diseases in captive amphibians. A second chytrid species, *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans* (*BSal*) has also recently been described (Martel et al. 2013).

The eastern United States has the highest diversity of salamanders in the world, with “hot spots” in the southern Appalachians. Scientists have expressed concern that *B. salamandrivorans* could be introduced to North America through trade in exotic pets. Based on its close phylogenetic relationship with *B. dendrobatidis*, wide host range, and high pathogenicity, introductions of *B. salamandrivorans* to this continent could threaten North American salamander biodiversity.

Although preliminary testing of salamander specimens from museums and native salamander populations has failed to detect *B. salamandrivorans* in the United States, only a fraction of North American species have been tested (185 individuals from 7 of 191 species). It also is unknown whether *B. salamandrivorans* has alternative hosts such as crayfishes, fishes, or waterfowl that may aid in its persistence and dispersal.

Distribution of *B. salamandrivorans* – *B. salamandrivorans* appears to have originated in Asia where it is prevalent in Asian salamanders with no evidence of disease effects. Researchers have shown that *B. salamandrivorans* migrated, likely via imported amphibians, to Europe where it is killing endangered salamanders. To date, *B. salamandrivorans* has been found only on these two continents.

Surveys in North America – Neither the *B. salamandrivorans* pathogen nor the resulting disease have been found in North America. However, relatively minimal survey work to detect *B. salamandrivorans* in North America has been undertaken. The survey by Muletz et al. (2014) detected no *B. salamandrivorans* occurrences in *Plethodon* populations in national parks and forests or from archival collections in four eastern states (Maryland, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia). Similarly, the survey by Bales et al. (2015) detected no *B. salamandrivorans* occurrences in eastern hellbender populations in four eastern

states (New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Virginia). Surveillance for *B. salamandrivorans* has not been conducted in Wisconsin or the Midwest.

U.S. Federal Agency Response – Federal agencies have been taking a lead in addressing the emerging threat posed nation-wide by *B. salamandrivorans*. In June 2015, Scientists with the U.S. Geological Survey hosted an international meeting with participants from various federal agencies, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and academic research institutions in Australia, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. A “U.S. *Bsal* Task Force” was formed with various working groups (see attached Figure 2) to help prevent and manage cases that might occur in North America. Other workshop outcomes are summarized in the report by Grant et al. (2016). These include creation of an initial influence diagram to aid in identifying effective management actions in the face of uncertainty, and production of a list of potential management actions and key research uncertainties. Additional products under development include a *Bsal* Strategic Action plan, an emergency response plan, a monitoring and surveillance program, a standardized diagnostic approach, decision models for natural resource agencies, and a reporting database for salamander mortalities.

Import Ban under Lacey Act – Steps have been taken to ban the import and transport of salamanders. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published an interim rule earlier this year to list 201 salamander species (of the approximately 681 species of salamanders that exist worldwide, and including 67 native species) as injurious wildlife under the Lacey Act. Under the Act, a species of wildlife can be listed as “injurious” when it has been demonstrated to be injurious to human beings, to the interests of agriculture, horticulture, or forestry, or to the wildlife or wildlife resources of the United States. The listed salamanders have been identified as carriers of *B. salamandrivorans* and are thus considered injurious. Species that are listed by this rule are identified at www.fws.gov/injuriouswildlife/pdf_files/List-of-Salamander-Species.pdf. The rule prohibits importation into the United States and all interstate transportation of injurious species between states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico or any territory or possession of the United States. The interim rule took effect on January 28, 2016. The Service is currently evaluating all public comments that they received on the rule.

Pet Industry Voluntary Moratorium – In November 2015, the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) recommended that all exporters, shippers, importers, and buyers of firebelly newts (*Cynops orientalis*) and paddletail newts (*Pachytriton labiatus*) newts immediately establish a voluntary moratorium on importing them into the United States. These species have been identified as potential reservoirs for *B. salamandrivorans*. PIJAC further recommended that all non-retail businesses engaged in the salamander trade regularly sanitize their facilities as a prophylactic measure, as treatments are developed, out of an abundance of caution.

Response Plan – With leadership from the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, representatives from federal and state resource agencies and academia have developed a draft rapid response plan that can be customized by state and local management agencies as needed should *B. salamandrivorans* be detected in wild or captive North American salamander populations (similar to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s national plan for assisting states, federal agencies, and tribes in managing white-nose syndrome in bats and the Chronic Wasting Disease Task Force’s plan for assisting with managing chronic wasting disease in wild and captive cervids). The draft plan includes considerations for both *in situ* containment and establishment of *ex situ* populations.

The Council had a brief discussion on the topic.

Mr. Raffa noted that when reaching out to retailers on issues like this, it is helpful to have some suggested branding options for them (e.g., “we sell fungus free salamanders.”).

Council Research and Regulations Committee Report (Greg Long)

Mr. Long described progress on the Species Assessment Group (SAG) review process and the timeline going forward. The group has a nearly final set of discussion questions that will be used for a group discussion with the 2012 SAG team leaders. A date for the group discussion will be set soon.

Council Education Committee Report

Ms. Schafer provided the Council with a report on behalf of the Education Committee. The Education Committee met on July 27. They discussed the recently completed Invasive Species Awareness Month activities and Invader Crusader Awards. The committee is looking toward the future of these events and beginning to discuss plans for 2018. Dougal Walker (DNR) organized the video contest in past years. He is no longer able to do this work. The committee needs to identify how they will manage this aspect of the ICA next year. The committee has spent some time re-evaluating its focus and goals. Participation on the Education Committee has tapered off over the past year or more. The majority of committee members are now DNR staff. Ms. Schaefer asked if the Council could help identify additional individuals who would be interested in participating on the Education Committee. This is something to think about as the Council revisits its goals and Standard Operating Procedures. In the past, the committee has had some grant funds to help accomplish some of its work. There are opportunities for partnerships in the future. The Committee will be meeting again within the next few weeks. They will have some new participants from DNR, including Jodie Ellis and Jeanne Scherer.

Mr. Wakeman asked whether there would be a benefit to holding the committee meetings following Council meetings?

Ms. Leckwee indicated that she is interested in joining the Education Committee.

Mr. Long commended Christa for her work with the Education Committee. ISAM and ICA are important *local* connections. Council members could help make connections with others.

Mr. Kuhn mentioned the Education Summits that had been coordinated by the Education Committee in the past. Ms. Schaefer stated that there hasn't been an organized summit for the past few years because of lack of capacity to coordinate the event and conflicts with scheduling and other events. The Committee is comprised of people with already full plates.

Mr. Feldkirchner asked how IPAW is currently connected with the Council and whether there are additional opportunities for more connections in the future.

Ms. Schaefer replied that IPAW is currently updating its by-laws and Standard Operation Procedures. There are opportunities for either individual or Council-level connections.

TASK: Council members will share ideas for Education Committee members with Ms. Bergeson, who will forward them to Ms. Schaefer.

Discussion: Ad Hoc Committees

The Council discussed the need for clearer understanding of the goals and specific tasks for each of its committees.

Mr. Kuhn suggested that Council members all review the biennial goals and provide comments.

Ms. Leckwee would like to see a list of committee memberships.

Mr. Raffa suggested bundling the ad hoc committees under the most appropriate standing committees. The three ad hoc committees seem to fit best under the Regulations Committee. Each ad hoc committee could be charged with specific tasks and deadlines.

Mr. Buechel stated that each ad hoc committee should also connect somehow with the Education Committee because there is an education/outreach need for each of the ad hoc committees.

Mr. Feldkirchner said that it would be helpful to know what has already been done by the ad hoc committees.

TASK: Council members will review the Aug 28, 2014 Council minutes to understand the thinking behind the 2015-2017 Council goals.

Council Member Updates

Mr. Kuhn (DATCP)

- DATCP has been working with Mary Bartkowiak (DNR, OIT) on nursery issues. One issue, in particular, is water spinach, which is listed as a federal noxious weed. During the last round of NR40 updates, all federally listed noxious weeds were listed as Prohibited species. Water spinach has been found at farmer markets around the state. It is an important food crop for some groups. When it was included as a Prohibited species in NR 40, it was due to concerns about the species invasiveness in aquatic environments. The federal noxious weed program allows for permitting processes by the states. This would be a workload issue for Wisconsin. It's not feasible to do this right now with current staffing levels. It is unlikely that the species could survive winter in Wisconsin.
- Gypsy moth infestation reported in the Eau Claire area with intense defoliation. It is affecting a relatively small area. DATCP has plans to treat the area next year.
- Five new counties with EAB detections were reported within the last month. Traps are coming down now.

DNR

- The statutorily required interim report to the legislature will be submitted within the next week. It will be shared with the Council.
- The department continues to work on an invasive species management priority-setting process. Ms. Bergeson is leading the team that is working on this project.

Other Business Allowed by Law

No other business was discussed.

Adjourn

Mr. Kuhn motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Long seconded the motion. Motion passed. Chairman Buechel adjourned the meeting at 12:23 PM.