



Wisconsin Conservation Congress
 Environmental Committee
 Meeting Minutes

WCC Meeting Minutes
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ORDER OF BUSINESS	9/11/2021	9:00 A.M.	Virtual (Zoom) Meeting
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I. ORGNIZATIONAL MATTERS

A. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order by	Meeting called to order by Chair Mary Ellen O'Brien at 9:00 A.M.
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B. ROLL CALL

ATTENDEES	There are 18 members on the Environmental Committee; 13 people were present, representing a quorum: Chair Mary Ellen O'Brien, Secretary Scott Pitta, Douglas Kurtzweil, Ed Peters, Claude Bovi, Roger Roehl, Nathanael Brown, Thomas Johnston, Allan Balliet, Sara Kampf, Mitch Baker, Ryan Lee Schutte, and Barbara Dahlgren. The following DNR staff and WCC liaisons attended the meeting: Kari Lee-Zimmerman, Madi Johansen, and Paul Hartrick. Tara Bergeson was not able to attend due to a last minute conflict; she provided information to the committee ahead of time regarding the Green New Deal resolution.
EXCUSED	The following members were excused due to other commitments: Co-chair Julie De le Terre, Lester Ryder, Jason Shelley, and Michael Grimm.
UNEXCUSED	Marc Schultz
GUESTS	The following resolution speakers and visitors attended the meeting: Janice Penn, Ashland County, Bobbi Rongstad, Iron County, Jadine Sonoda, Sierra Club, and Gail S. (last name not recorded), Bayfield County.

C. AGENDA APPROVAL/REPAIR

DISCUSSION	None
ACTION	A motion was made by Ryan Schutte and seconded by Roger Roehl to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

D. REVIEW COMMITTEE MISSION STATEMENT

DISCUSSION	Scott Pitta read the mission statement into the record: The mission of the Environmental Committee of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress is to review citizen resolutions, rules, policies, regulations, and legislation affecting the air, land, and waters of the state of Wisconsin. The committee's purpose is to ensure that the ecosystems of Wisconsin are fully protected with every effort taken to support Wisconsin's native flora and fauna and educate the citizenry. The committee will work with DNR staff and the citizens of the state to effectively protect the health and integrity of Wisconsin's natural ecosystems, utilizing the best available knowledge, technical resources, and keeping a balance for all interested stakeholders.
ACTION	A motion was made by Ed Peters and seconded by Claude Bovi to approve the mission statement. Motion carried.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

DISCUSSION	In preparation for the meeting, Kari Lee-Zimmerman sent out the meeting agenda to authors of 32 resolutions assigned to the environmental committee. Four people contacted Kari or Mary Ellen about attending the meeting, providing input on the resolutions, or to obtain information about the resolution process. No other public comments were received.
ACTION	None

II. INFORMATION & ACTION ITEMS

A. Citizen Resolutions

<p>1. Imposing Stricter Regulations on PFAS Chemicals (resolutions 680921, 400221, 370721, 130721, 180421, 260221, 520721, 370621, 300421, 041321, 170421, 500921, 411721, 370721, 300421, 041321 and 020421) See Attachment 1 – representative resolution #680921</p>	
DISCUSSION	<p>Ryan Schutte read the resolution into the record. Seventeen identical or nearly identical resolutions were submitted at the on-line statewide spring hearings. Supplemental information provided in the committee's resolution packet included excerpts from Wisconsin's December, 2020 PFAS Action Plan.</p> <p>DNR liaison Madi Johansen reviewed DNR's ongoing initiatives related to PFAS and water quality in Wisconsin. See Attachment 2 – Memo from DNR with links for additional information.</p> <p>Bobbi Rongstad, Iron County, requested to speak on this resolution. She stated that one of her main concerns is that not enough wells are being tested for PFAS contamination. There is no statewide mandate or funding for testing community wells, and any testing of private wells has to be initiated and paid for by the owner.</p> <p>Committee discussion included these key points: Doug Kurtzweil expressed concern about PFAS being found in Lake Superior smelt and accumulation in the food chain. Scott Pitta stated his contacts with DNR scientists who do PFAS sampling indicated there is no evidence of food chain accumulation at this time. Barbara Dahlgren asked whether DNR's proposed actions concerning PFAS are in response to the Governor's Executive Order and resultant PFAS action plan. Madi Johansen stated that the Wisconsin Department of Health Services has a key role in PFAS regulation and is working with DNR to promulgate administrative rules. Scott Pitta noted there is considerable resistance in the legislature to deal with PFAS contamination, but the public is making PFAS contamination in groundwater a priority.</p>
ACTION	A motion to advance this resolution was made by Scott Pitta and seconded to Claude Bovi. Motion carried.
<p>2. Avoid all New Fossil Fuel Infrastructure (resolutions 520221, 400121, 320121, 130621, 500821, 260121, 041221, 411621, 180321, and 020321) See Attachment 3 – representative resolution #520221. Proposed revisions are shown.</p>	
DISCUSSION	<p>Ryan Schutte read the resolution into the record. Ten identical resolutions were submitted at the on-line statewide spring hearings.</p> <p>Janice Penn, Ashland County, and Bobbi Rongstad, Iron County, requested to speak on this resolution. Key concerns included the effects of fossil fuel carbon emissions on climate change and the potential for environmental contamination due to pipeline construction, spills, and other impacts.</p> <p>In general, committee discussion centered on whether this resolution was reasonable. It isn't practicable to avoid all fossil fuel infrastructure construction. Fossil fuel will continue to be a primary energy source for the foreseeable future. As currently written, the be it resolved paragraph of the resolution makes the assumption that the Natural Resources Board and DNR have the authority to regulate and limit the construction of fossil fuel infrastructure. This is not the case. DNR's authority would be through issuance of permits for construction of fossil fuel infrastructure such as pipelines and other facilities that could cause adverse impacts to the natural environment. There was general consensus that the issue and message is important enough to carry forward to the District Leadership Council and to ultimately be included in the spring hearing.</p> <p>After further discussion, it was recommended that the resolution be revised to reflect a more realistic and achievable outcome within DNR's authority (permit issuance), and to clarify that the resolution is intended to address construction of new fossil fuel infrastructure, and not elimination of existing fossil fuel infrastructure.</p> <p>Proposed revisions to the resolution are shown in Attachment 3. The resolution authors present at the meeting had no objections to the revisions.</p>
ACTION	A motion to advance this resolution as amended was made by Barbara Dahlgren and seconded by Ed Peters. Motion carried.

<p>3. WCC shall take an official position on a Green New Deal (resolutions 411821, 132421, and 020921) See Attachment 4 –representative resolution #411821. Proposed revisions are shown.</p>	
DISCUSSION	<p>Ryan Schutte read the resolution into the record. Three identical resolutions were submitted at the on-line statewide spring hearings.</p> <p>Supplemental information provided in the committee’s resolution packet included the status of the Green New Deal federal legislation and key objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieving reductions in greenhouse gas and toxic emissions to stay under warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius. • Securing clean air and water, climate and community resiliency and a sustainable environment • Investing in infrastructure, ensures economic stability • Promoting justice and equality <p>Additional information was provided by DNR liaison Tara Bergeson in a memo sent to the committee on August 31, 2021 (see Attachment 5). Tara’s memo provides links to several Wisconsin efforts that are underway to address climate change, clean energy and related issues.</p> <p>Environmental committee member and resolution author, Barbara Dahlgren, requested an opportunity to speak on this resolution. She stated that the idea of a Green New Deal is 10 years old. This resolution represents a general and broad initiative, not a specific piece of legislation. Environmental issues cannot be divorced from economic issues. Natural resources always impact the economy. This is not the same as the Green New Deal legislation being proposed at the federal level. It has different components, and as reflected in the title, it refers to a green new deal, not the federal legislation. The benefits of a green new deal cannot be measured only by dollars or reduced carbon.</p> <p>Other committee member discussion included these key points: A green new deal can be the impetus for a war on climate change. A green new deal is expensive and multifaceted; some scholars have predicted that the return on investment would be 11 cents on the dollar. A suggestion was made to change the resolution title slightly to make it clear what is being asked of the WCC and to change 2021 Convention to 2022 convention in the be it resolved portion of the resolution. Proposed revisions to the resolution are shown in Attachment 4. Resolution author Barbara Dahlgren had no objections to the proposed revisions.</p>
ACTION	<p>A motion to advance this resolution as amended was made by Ryan Schutte and seconded by Ed Peters. Motion carried.</p>
<p>4. Support the Green New Deal – Arctic warming is releasing methane that can warm planet rapidly See Attachment 6- representative resolution #133021</p>	
DISCUSSION	<p>Ryan Schutte read the resolution into the record. Two identical/nearly identical resolutions were submitted at the on-line statewide spring hearings. Mary Ellen O’Brien noted that although the title of this resolution made it appear to be similar to the Green New Deal resolution in item #3, it is different enough in terms of the “be it resolved” language that it needed to be considered separately.</p> <p>No one asked to speak on this resolution.</p> <p>Committee discussion included these key points: The resolution as written does not clearly identify the problem or course of action that could be reasonably taken by the WCC or DNR to address climate change or CO₂, emissions. Further, it was noted that the legislature is not in a position to move the public to a plant based diet.</p>
ACTION	<p>A motion was made by Scott Pitta and seconded by Roger Roehl to reject this resolution because it does not present a reasonable or achievable course of action that is within the mission or jurisdiction of the WCC or DNR. Motion carried.</p>

B. Department Information and Updates

DISCUSSION	DNR liaison Madi Johansen stated that the public should stay involved in upcoming department actions regarding PFAS and associated rulemaking. There will be several opportunities for public input throughout the process. Mary Ellen O'Brien thanked the DNR liaisons for participating in the committee meeting.	
ACTION	None	
PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE:		DEADLINE:

C. Future Committee Meetings

DISCUSSION	<p>This item is to allow members an opportunity to weigh in on possible dates, times and agenda items for upcoming meetings. Mary Ellen O'Brien noted that there were a few requests at last year's meeting to hold the environmental committee meeting before September 15 if possible.</p> <p>In general, committee members support having Saturday meetings and would like as much lead time as possible prior to the meetings. DNR liaison participation is important so future scheduling will try to meet their availability while also choosing a date that most committee members can make. A couple of members noted that the Zoom meeting format is good in that it saves a lot of travel time.</p>	
ACTION	None	
PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE:		DEADLINE:

III. MEMBER MATTERS

DISCUSSION	<p>Several committee members thanked DNR for their handling of the Zoom meeting and for participating in the environmental committee meetings. Several members thanked Mary Ellen O'Brien for sending out meeting packets (resolutions, background information, and other materials) in advance of the committee meetings.</p> <p>Specific comments from committee members included the following:</p> <p>Douglas Kurtzweil stated that he appreciates being on the environmental committee and having an opportunity to review and act on resolutions that deal with broader environmental issues.</p> <p>Ed Peters is a new member and stated that the meeting was a good learning experience for him.</p> <p>Claude Bovi expressed concern that the WCC process is being used by the public as a forum to vent their frustrations over environmental issues that should be brought before the legislature.</p> <p>Alan Balliet noted there needs to be conversations about population control – ecosystem balanced is being lost due to too many resource consumers.</p> <p>Sara Kampf noted she is a new WCC delegate and appreciates the learning experience.</p> <p>Mitch baker stated the committee needs to continue being objective in its review of the resolutions.</p> <p>Ryan Schutte agreed that it is important to consider a number of perspectives; he also took a moment to acknowledge that today is 9/11 and that we should stay mindful of the tragic events that occurred on that date in 2001.</p> <p>Barbara Dahlgren appreciates the Zoom meeting format, but looks forward to when the group can again meet in person.</p> <p>Mary Ellen O'Brien thanked Kari Lee-Zimmerman for the excellent job in setting up and conducting the numerous committee meetings; much appreciated.</p>	
ACTION	None	

IV. ADJOURNMENT

MEETING ADJOURNED	A motion to adjourn was made by Nathanael Brown and seconded by Allan Balliet. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 12:10 P.M.	
SUBMITTED BY	Mary Ellen O'Brien, Chair, and Scott Pitta, Secretary.	
DATE	September 27, 2021	