Form 1100-001
(R 2/07)

NATURAL RESOURCES BOARD AGENDA ITEM

Item No. 3.B.5

SUBJECT: Approval of Fish, Wildlife and Habitat Management Plan

FOR: JUNE **BOARD MEETING**

TO BE PRESENTED BY: Todd Ambs, Administrator Water Division
Laurie Osterndorf, Administrator Land Division

SUMMARY:

This request is for the Board to approve the Fish, Wildlife and Habitat Management Plan - which has been revised as required to receive federal Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration funding. We will provide an update on actions taken to finalize revisions to the plan since the informational briefing in February - including a summary of the comments received from the Fish and Wildlife Service, an overview of the public opinion survey, and our response to key comments.

The Fish, Wildlife and Habitat plan is required to receive funds under the federal Sport Fish & Wildlife Restoration Acts. The scope of the plan is on projects and activities eligible for funding under these acts - priorities related to sport fish, wild mammal and wild bird conservation and management, and on boating and hunter education activities - along with state matching funds (mainly from fishing and hunting license fees.) These funds are generated from an excise tax on fishing and hunting equipment and from a portion of the federal gasoline tax attributed to motorboats. Funds are apportioned to the states based on the number of people purchasing a hunting or fishing license and based on the size of the state, and Wisconsin receives approximatedly $18 million annually. Given the source of the funds, the primary affected parties include anglers, hunters, recreational boaters, and hunter education students - although conservation organizations and members of the public with interest in fish and wildlife conservation in general, have interest as well. This plan is one of a portfolio of plans that establish overall priorities and direction for fish and wildlife conservation.

Attached is a background document summarizing the results of the public opinion survey, along with a draft version of the Fish, Wildlife and Habitat Management Plan.

RECOMMENDATION: Approve the Fish, Wildlife and Habitat Management Plan

LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS:

No	☑	Fiscal Estimate Required	Yes	☐	Attached
No	☑	Environmental Assessment or Impact Statement Required	Yes	☐	Attached
No	☐	Background Memo	Yes	☑	Attached

APPROVED:

Mike Stepp / Tom Hauge — 5/23/07
Bureau Director — Date

Laurie Osterndorf — 5/23/07
Administrator — Date

Scott Hassett — 6/21/07
Secretary, Scott Hassett — Date

cc: Laurie J. Ross - AD/5

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

State of Wisconsin

DATE: May 21, 2007

TO: Natural Resources Board

FROM: Scott Hassett, Secretary

SUBJECT: Fish and Wildlife Public Opinion Survey Results

Background

As part of the on-going efforts by the Department to be responsive to our publics, we solicited opinions from hunting and fishing customers and other interested citizens on issues of importance to the future health and management of fish, wildlife and habitat in Wisconsin. The primary purpose of this public outreach effort was to maintain and enhance our ongoing relationship with Wisconsin citizens interested in how the Department manages its Fish and Wildlife programs and funding and to ask our customers to look ahead to the next six years of fish, wildlife and habitat management and tell us what issues they think we will face in managing their resource.

Earlier this year a public opinion survey was developed and reviewed by the Science Services Bureau, to poll citizens on the importance they place on issues the Department has identified as fish and wildlife areas of concern and priorities for the next six years and to share their thoughts on natural resource issues. The scope of this public opinion survey was very broad, well beyond the specific scope of the Fish, Wildlife and Habitat Management Plan we are required to have in place to remain eligible for federal Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration funding. However, because many of the issues covered in the survey overlap with the work under that plan, this public opinion survey, along with past and future public outreach efforts, will also be used to help guide fish and wildlife work under the scope of the plan.

The survey was made available on the DNR web site and as paper handouts. Press releases and a fact sheet informed the general public of the survey, which was available for 60 days and featured on several program Web pages. Paper copies of the public opinion survey were distributed at the Milwaukee Sports Show, Dane County Deer and Turkey Expo, annual Conservation Congress Spring Hearings, as well as to various conservation groups and organizations. In some parts of the state, department-sponsored local public input meetings were held.

In the public opinion survey, respondents were asked to rate their level of concern on issues resource managers are likely to face during the next six years. These included:

- Loss of natural habitats
- Continued funding for conservation
- Conflicts among different outdoor recreation users

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- Growing scarcity of places to hunt and fish
- Invasive species
- Fish and wildlife diseases
- Wildlife damage to agriculture crops

We also asked them to tell us what issues we missed on our list.

The second part of the survey listed possible priorities for the Department's fish and wildlife programs, and asked respondents how important they thought each will be during the next six years, including the need to:

- Replace old fish hatcheries and game farm facilities
- Monitor sport fish and wildlife populations
- Protect and improve fish and wildlife habitat
- Provide a variety of fishing and hunting opportunities
- Pass along a conservation ethic to children

Respondents also had the opportunity to add their own priorities to the survey list.

Respondents were asked if they had purchased a hunting and/or fishing license during 2006 or 2007 and what county they lived in. A majority of the respondents had purchased a license in the last two years (73.3 % bought a hunting license and 81.3% purchased a fishing license). With the exception of Menominee County, we heard from people in every county in the state.

General Findings

A total of 2664 surveys, in both paper copies and electronic on-line formats, were submitted and tabulated. The responses to the questions and the comments submitted affirm Wisconsin citizens, the Department and the Natural Resources Board share common values and priorities for Wisconsin's natural resources and agree on the challenges to protecting these for the next six years and for future generations. The responses from this public outreach effort are in sync with the direction specified in the Draft Fish, Wildlife and Habitat Management Plan.

The top issues of concern for the respondents, and those they rated as priorities, are passing along a conservation ethic to children; protecting and improving wildlife and fish habitat; combating invasive species in water and on land; and funding conservation programs and efforts.

The topics noted below show the percent of respondents who were concerned or very concerned about the issues resource managers are likely to face during the coming six years:

- Loss of natural habitats – 91%
- Invasive species in lakes – 87%, and invasive species in forest and prairies – 77%
- Continued funding for conservation – 83%
- Wildlife disease – 72%, and fish disease –78%
- Conflicts among different outdoor recreation users – 68%
- Too few places to fish along streams and river – 53%
- Wildlife damage to agriculture crops – 34%

The survey presented respondents with a list of priorities and were asked to rate how important they thought each would be for the next six years. The priorities listed below show the percent of respondents that rated each as important or very important:

- Pass along a conservation ethic to children - 93%
- Protect and improved wildlife habitat - 89%, and protect and improve fish habitat - 87%
- Combat invasive species - 86%
- Protect fish populations from disease - 80%, and protect wildlife populations - 77%
- Monitor wildlife populations - 80%, and monitor sport fish populations - 74%
- Provide a variety of fishing opportunities - 67%
- Replace inadequate fish hatcheries - 61%, and inadequate game farm facilities - 44%

Over two-thirds of respondents wrote additional comments and many of these expanded upon issues and priorities ranked highly in the standard questions. Many of the comments related to current issues being addressed by the Board through administrative rules, budget and other policies. The most frequently mentioned hunting or fishing priorities included: CWD and deer management, baiting and feeding, public access to hunting and fishing, habitat, building a conservation ethic among current and future resource users, and wolves).

Wisconsin
Department of Natural Resources

Fish, Wildlife and Habitat Management Plan

Guidance for fish and wildlife conservation, management and recreation related activities in the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources funded under the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act and the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act

July 1, 2007 - June 30, 2013

Draft: May 2007

To view the Plan, please go to the DNR website:
http://dnr.wi.gov/invest/fwhplan/