

## 8. Agency Coordination and Public Participation

### 8.1 Background and Approach

This section covers Elements 7 and 8 of the eight required elements for State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs) as they have been addressed in this revision to the Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan.

(7) State's provisions for coordination during the development, implementation, review, and revision of its Strategy with Federal, State, and local agencies and Indian Tribes that manage significant areas of land or water within the State, or administer programs that significantly affect the conservation of species or their habitats.

(8) State's provisions to provide the necessary public participation in the development, revision, and implementation of its Strategy.

The USFWS requires agencies to engage with the public and partners as part of the process for updating the Wildlife Action Plans. Elements 7 and 8 direct each state to develop, review, implement, and revise SWAPs in coordination with conservation partners and with broad participation from the public. Although state fish and wildlife agencies are responsible for the development and overall implementation of the plans, the goals of the plans cannot be achieved without coordinated action undertaken in partnership with others. Working with partners elevates conservation to a broader landscape scale, which avoids imposing political boundaries on natural systems. It also brings along the benefit of ensuring that issues are considered from multiple perspectives. An additional benefit of broad participation beyond the state agency is the ability to leverage diminishing resources and targets for undertaking conservation actions through effective partnerships.

In Wisconsin, the WAP represents an important piece of the Department's overall strategy for fish, wildlife, and habitat conservation and management over the next ten years. As such, it is our responsibility to listen to and consider the views of the citizens of the state to the degree possible while also meeting the intent of the federal program (SWG) that funds the Plan. In keeping with this, Wisconsin's approach to public involvement with the WWAP has been to hear and engage the diverse ideas, experience and knowledge of as many citizens and organizations as possible. Compared to many other states, Wisconsin goes above and beyond traditional methods to get input from outside of the agency.

For the purpose of revising the Wildlife Action Plan, public participation is defined in the broadest sense and includes all input for the plan revision, regardless of the source of the input. In other words, all input into the revision is "public participation," whether the input comes from a conservation organization, an agency employee, or a retired schoolteacher. For purposes of organizing the many specific tasks required for the plan update, the public input process was broken down into technical and non-technical methods. Those who provide technical input have expert and professional knowledge about the subject of the revision (e.g., SGCN, natural communities, conservation

actions, etc.). This may include federal and state agency representatives, DNR staff, stakeholders, individuals or organizations that generally have a balanced interest in the goals of the WWAP.

Within these two categories, participants had multiple opportunities through a variety of methods and venues to provide input for the plan revision. In some cases, individuals may have provided both technical and non-technical input. For example, federal, state and tribal agencies provided input through technical teams as well as through non-technical means (e.g. Conservation Cafés and online survey). Because of the overlap between public participation and agency coordination we have chosen to combine Elements 7 and 8 in this Section.

Public input was sought from the very beginning of the revision process by providing opportunities for participation using a variety of methods selected to meet the needs of different audiences<sup>1</sup>. After the WWAP revisions are approved the technical teams will be reorganized and their membership will be renewed to fit with periodic updates and continued improvements to the WWAP throughout the next ten years. We also hope that the public participation methods described herein will be repeated at regular intervals to gain better insights into conservation trends, interests and concerns in our state.

## **8.2 Importance of Public Participation**

Wisconsin citizens and visitors to the state are incredibly lucky to have a wealth of exceptional natural resources to enjoy. Our state lands like Wildlife Areas, State Natural Areas, Fishery Areas, Forests, and other properties offer many benefits...like exceptional hunting, fishing, hiking, wildlife watching and other outdoor recreation opportunities. They provide important habitat for fish and wildlife – like prairies, wetlands, streams and forests. They also contribute to clean and healthy air and water and to the economy of the state. Keeping these lands and the fish and wildlife that depend on them in good condition requires planning and management. That planning and management needs informed input from the citizens and visitors who benefit from these lands and resources.

Reaching out to citizens across the state is consistent with the Department's mission, vision and values, which place high importance on partnerships and in listening to and working with the citizens of the state. We can't provide excellent service to our customers (i.e. all citizens of Wisconsin) unless we know what is important to them. Reaching a broad, diverse public is especially important when participation in many traditional outdoor recreation activities is declining.

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<sup>1</sup> Public participation for revisions to the Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan were undertaken in conjunction with the Department's 10-Year Fish and Wildlife Habitat Management Plan to improve the public's understanding and response to the Department's overall wildlife and habitat management and conservation strategies.

### 8.3 Public Participation Methods

The Department's Fish and Wildlife Management Team (FWMT) is responsible for management and decision-making related to the Wildlife and Sport fish Restoration Program and the State Wildlife Grant funds. This team also has oversight and provides guidance for the revision and implementation of both plans. Past updates to these plans have relied on more traditional methods of getting input from the public – for example, public meetings and open houses throughout the state. These approaches did not reach the desired diversity of individuals and organizations. As a result, the FWMT recognized a need to try new approaches to connect with citizens on the topics relevant to these two plans. Multiple options were considered for engaging with the public and the conversations included expert input from the agency's social scientists and staff who have had extensive experience with public participation. Ultimately, the FWMT approved two new approaches to engage the public for the 2015 plan updates – Conservation Cafés and an online survey.

#### Conservation Cafés

*World Café-style* community meetings, coined Conservation Cafés, were held at eight locations around the state between mid-October and early November 2014. The World Café is a public participation method that blends elements of focus groups, coffee chats, and planning meetings. The technique is designed to bring together people with differing viewpoints for discussion of pre-determined questions. The technique emphasizes an open discussion (i.e., there are no “right” answers), with a goal of identifying common ground in response to each question. This set-up also creates a warm, friendly, non-threatening environment in which individuals have an opportunity to talk with one another. The planning team adopted this technique in an effort to engage people beyond the usual department partners (i.e., hunting and fishing representatives), specifically to reach non-consumptive wildlife recreationists and outdoor enthusiasts. Working in small groups, participants are assigned to a table that has a single question for discussion; participants rotate through the tables so that everyone is given an opportunity to discuss all of the questions. The table discussions are kept on topic by a table host and documented by a note-taker. The outcome of these discussions led to an increased understanding by the department of public desires and concerns for the management of the state's fish and wildlife and their habitats.

The objective for the Conservation Cafés was to identify broad priorities and issues of concern among state residents regarding wildlife conservation and management efforts over the next decade.

For these Cafés, we chose to target organizations and individuals to get participation by a broad cross-section of the state (i.e. differing backgrounds, views, issues of concern etc.). To achieve this goal, we mailed printed invitations rather than making an open call for participation. This allowed us to specifically invite a wide spectrum of citizens and also to control the numbers, which was necessary for this type of discussion format. This approach is consistent with the department's commitment to provide outstanding customer service to the public and our conservation partners. It was also

designed to contribute to meeting the federal requirements for engaging with a diverse public.

Local Café Teams, led by department District Land Program Managers were formed to help execute the Cafés. The local teams performed several tasks, including the following:

- identified potential invitees;
- identified specific Café locations and venues and secured those sites;
- arranged for snacks and drinks;
- ensured the Cafés met department public notice requirements;
- served as local hosts for the individual events (welcomed participants, facilitated overall Cafés); and
- acted as table hosts (facilitators) and note-takers at each Café table.

Cafés were held during a three-week time period in fall 2014 (October 20 - November 5, 2014). A pilot Café was also held with the WI Conservation Congress 10-Year Plan Ad Hoc Committee. This was used as an early test of the Café format and questions. Cafés were held in the following locations: West Allis (October 21), Madison (October 22), Woodruff (October 22), La Crosse (October 22), Eau Claire (October 27), Green Bay (October 30), Stevens Point (November 3), Spooner (November 5), Madison - DNR Secretary Stepp's Conservation Roundtable (October 27).

The questions asked at each Café were the same:

- Keeping in mind the DNR's Mission Statement (posted and reviewed), what do you think the DNR does well when it comes to the management of the state's fish and wildlife resources? What could be improved?
- What are the current issues facing fish and wildlife and their habitats, and outdoor recreation that concern you the most? Why are these of concern to you?
- Consider the last section of the DNR's Mission Statement that says 'And in this partnership consider the future and generations to follow.' As you think about the future of Wisconsin's fish and wildlife, their habitats (including plants) and associated outdoor recreation opportunities, what do you think the DNR should be aware of and be thinking about planning for now?

During the discussions, the table hosts kept the discussions focused, managed time, and assisted with a table summary of the discussion. The note-takers captured the main points of the discussion (on pre-prepared note-taking sheets that included tips and reminders) and when possible, provide detailed notes for further context. Participant names and group affiliations were not associated with any comments. Discussion notes were later transcribed by the note-takers and forwarded to the department's social scientists for content analysis. Content analysis is a standard technique that analyzes qualitative data for recurring themes and their supportive examples.

As a method of collecting data, qualitative approaches, like the Conservation Cafés have their limitations. They generate narrative rather than numerical data and insights rather than statistical generalizations. The findings from these Cafés apply only to those

who participated and not to all the residents of the State of Wisconsin. For this reason the Cafés were held in different parts of the state where opinions and recreation participation may vary. This is a standard caution that should accompany any review of qualitative data. Definitive answers and statistical projections depend on the conduct of survey research. Still, it is true that certain themes and concerns recur in ways that suggest they may be widespread and, therefore, invite serious consideration.

### Online Survey

In an effort to reach a wide audience and engage a larger number of citizens, we developed an online survey from draft questions generated by members of the Fish and Wildlife Planning Team. The final questions were the result of extensive feedback and changes from team members and administration. The survey focused on questions to help identify issues of concern related to wildlife and habitat conservation and management in Wisconsin. It was available in three languages – English, Spanish, and Hmong and was widely publicized through a variety of mechanisms, including the following:

- direct emails;
- news release;
- DNR's webpage for the two plans;
- DNR's Facebook page – posted on October 16<sup>th</sup> (46,608 views; 289 likes; 236 shares; 39 comments; 546 people clicked on the survey link);
- DNR's GovDelivery (email) system (reached approximately 290,000 subscribers)

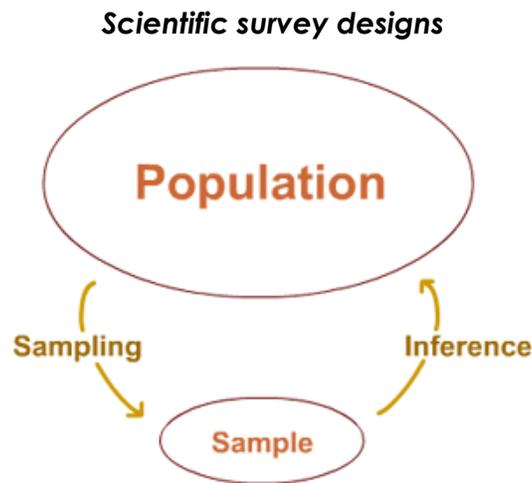
The questionnaire was open to the public for 30 days, between October 16<sup>th</sup> and November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014 from a version that was programmed into Select Survey, the survey development tool used by the department. There was no limit to the number of times a respondent could take the questionnaire, and people were encouraged to send the link to others who would be interested in participating.

The online survey generated 9,730 complete responses, and 1,823 incomplete responses. In terms of volume, the large number of responses constitutes a successful example of public involvement and highlights the strong interest in natural resource management in the state. As the profile of respondents below will show, the response pool is dominated by those who participate in traditional outdoor recreations. This is not a surprise given that sportspersons have a keen interest in how fish and wildlife are managed in the state and were most likely to receive notification of the opportunity from lists and organizations to which they subscribe. Efforts to reach out to Hmong and Spanish respondents with translated version on the online questionnaire were not successful with less than 5 surveys completed among both translated versions.

### The difference between our online "survey" and a true Scientific Survey

All surveys use questionnaires, but not all questionnaires are surveys and the difference is more than a matter of semantics. A survey starts with a defined, closed population and applies a randomly selected sample to measure or represent that population. The

accuracy of sampling is a function of sample size (relative to the population), sample response rate and the quality of questionnaire items. Sometimes a low sample response rate can be mitigated with a follow-up investigation of survey non-respondents.



Open-access web questionnaires (our online survey) are inexpensive ways to gather public input and allow anyone to weigh in on issues. Both of these features are attractive. They are not scientific surveys, however, because there is no way of defining the population and the sampling is not random; we have no way to know whether all citizens or even citizens with an interest in wildlife had an equal chance to participate. Consequently, the resulting response pool is comprised of a “mash-up” of individuals reflecting different interests in fish and wildlife management. We have no way of knowing the extent to which input participants responded in proportion to their occurrence in the overall adult population, or even within various stakeholder segments (e.g., anglers, wildlife viewers, hunters, etc.). Bearing this in mind, a large number of respondents generally cannot overcome the shortcoming of non-probability sampling. However, the large number of responses generated from the online input forum does serve as an indicator of some broader trends that a representative sample could potentially substantiate. Nonetheless, we consider the findings of our online survey in the same light as looking at a long-range weather forecast — it gives us a rough prediction of what time a weather event might happen, but its actual accuracy is not known.

#### **8.4 What We Learned from the Conservation Cafés**

While we can send invitations and encourage participation, we cannot compel participation. Attendance at the Cafés varied by location, and while the numbers were lower than what we hoped for, they were similar to what we would have expected for a more traditional open house or public meeting on this topic. The Cafés provided a friendly, welcoming format where attendees had an opportunity to discuss topics in small, facilitated groups. Participants were overwhelmingly positive about the Café format (as measured by Café evaluation forms at the end of each event). One

participant described the Café format as “ground-breaking for the DNR.” Other responses to specific evaluation questions were:

- *Did you learn something new?* | “The department is working on outreach and this type of meeting is good.”
- *Which aspect(s) of the Café went well?* | “Open ideas and good cross-section of interests – not just hook and bullet.”
- *What could be improved?* | “Just have more.” “Allow more time for discussion on each topic.”

Content analysis revealed nine recurring general themes and numerous explanatory sub-themes. While the nine themes do not represent every topic offered by Café participants, they capture the topics that were most frequently mentioned and that had breadth to include sub-themes. All of the themes represent issues that Café participants believed were in need of the department's attention. Four of the themes were identified as possible *approaches* to address the other five themes. For example, while “funding” is a broad theme in need of attention, it is also an approach to resolve issues of “habitat protection” and a “new world partners.”

#### Themes (and sub-themes) identified by the Conservation Cafés

- Habitat protection
  - development
  - wildlife on private lands
  - invasive species
  - land acquisition
- Environmental quality (emphasis on water quality)
  - Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) and agricultural practices
  - mining
  - hi-capacity wells
  - wetlands
  - phosphorus
- Climate change
  - adaptation
  - impact
- Future of hunting and shooting
  - youth involvement
- New world partners
- Non-traditional partners
- Shifting demographics
- Emerging recreations: impact on habitat / land accessibility / land acquisition

#### Approaches to address issues

- Promote connections through education and programs
  - non-consumptive groups
  - youth
  - social media



- Engage people and groups
- Youth
- Tourism
- Private landowners: access / management / habitat / agriculture runoff
- Regional perspectives
- Funding
- Alternative options: to do more/ to provide greater breadth of constituency groups (new partners)

### 8.5 What We Learned from the Online Survey Responses

#### Demographics

In comparison to census demographic data from Wisconsin, the pool of people who responded to the online input opportunity (i.e., survey respondents) appears to substantially over-represent males (79%), white ethnicities (96%), older-aged citizens, and rural residents (46%) These demographic traits are more consistent with typical characteristics of people who fish and hunt (see below).

	<b>Respondent Demographics</b>	<b>WI Census Demographics</b>
% Males / %	79 / 21	51 / 49
% White	96	88
Median age	56 (of adults)	38.5 (includes under 18)
% Rural / % Urban	46 / 54	30 / 70

The average age ( $x=54$ ) of respondents skews old. Due to the fact that census data for the state of Wisconsin does not provide an indication of “average age” of adults in the state, we instead compared median ages. This is inherently a mismatched comparison, because the survey data only includes adults over 18 years old. The WI census data calculated median age including those under 18. Despite this discrepancy, the survey likely still over-represents an older demographic in the state.

#### Respondent Involvement

Respondents were asked about the various hunting, fishing, wildlife related, and outdoor recreation activities that they partake in throughout a typical year. Results indicate that our sample significantly over-represents deer hunters, as 54% of respondents indicated they go deer hunting in a typical year (Figure 3). The actual percentage of residents who deer hunt in Wisconsin is closer to 13% (WDNR ALIS license records). About four out of ten respondents indicated they do not typically participate in any type of hunting or trapping.

Three-fourths of respondents indicated they fish inland lakes in the state during a typical year, and over half of respondents indicate they fish streams and rivers. One in five respondents indicated they typically do not fish.

Majorities of respondents said they view or photograph wildflowers, trees, or natural scenery (63%), watch or photograph wildlife both away from home and at home (61%, 58% respectively), and watch or photograph birds from their home (61%). Close to half are birdwatchers away from home as well. Only 16% of respondents indicated they do not partake in any of these wildlife-associated activities.

A majority of respondents walk on trails throughout the year, and over half of respondents paddle on lakes or rivers. Only 7% of respondents indicated they do not participate in any of the listed outdoor activities.

We asked respondents to indicate the extent to which they personally identified with varying group labels, such as angler, hunter, or conservationist. Response options varied from "This is central to who I am" to "This is not me at all." A majority of respondents (57%) centrally identified as wildlife enthusiasts. Only two percent of respondents indicated that the label did not apply to them at all. Similarly, 42% of respondents identified centrally as conservationists, and only 3% did not identify with the label at all. Trapper had the largest frequency of respondents that did not identify with the label to any degree.

Respondents were asked to indicate their degree of interest in Wisconsin's fish and wildlife and their habitats. Response options ranged from greatly interested to not interested at all. The majority (72%) of respondents said "Wisconsin's fish and their habitats are of great interest to me." Twenty four percent said fish and their habitats are of moderate interest to them, and only 4% of respondents indicated they had little to no interest in Wisconsin's fish and their habitats. When asked about Wisconsin's wildlife and their habitats, 82% of respondents said they were greatly interested, and 15% were moderately interested (Figure 6). Only 3% of respondents said they had little to no interest in Wisconsin's wildlife and their habitats.

### Use of Public Lands

Respondents were asked how frequently they used public lands for outdoor recreation activities, what they think of the amount of publicly accessible land, and about the "usability" of the public lands near where they live. Tests for regional differences in response to the "usability" of public lands found that the regional differences in responses were substantively small

Over half of respondents agreed that there are adequate public hunting and fishing lands near them, but 29% of respondents disagreed that the boundaries of those public lands are well marked. When asked about how public lands are managed, 37% of respondents agreed that they are well managed, and 40% agreed that facilities are well maintained. On both topics, similar frequencies of respondents had neutral opinions on whether the lands and facilities were well managed.

### Sources of Information

Respondents ranked their two main sources of information about fish and wildlife issues. Overall, the top two sources of information were the DNR website and traditional media outlets such as newspapers, television, and radio. One in four respondents indicated

that family and friends were one of their top two sources, and 22% said organizations they belong to were a main source.

Respondents were asked how well informed they felt they were about fish and wildlife issues. About one-third of the respondents (32%) believed they were “well informed.” More than one-half (58%) indicated they felt “somewhat informed” and about one respondent in ten (9%) felt uninformed.

### Management Priorities

A primary objective of gathering public input was to determine people's preferences for management objectives that should be made top priorities in the next 10 years. Respondents were asked to rank the top three issues that are of the greatest concern to them regarding the future of fish and wildlife in Wisconsin. Results show that half of respondents think that habitat loss or fragmentation is a top concern. Water quality was second, with 43% of respondents ranking it in the top three. Third was invasive species, with 34% ranking it as one of the top three concerns. When asked to go through the list of issues and check all that are of concern to them (yes or no options as opposed to rank order), only three topics failed to garner majority support from respondents as an issue of concern. These lower-concern issues were “*lack of public involvement in conservation issues,*” “*declining participation in fish and wildlife related or other outdoor activities,*” and “*environmental stressors (weather, flooding, drought, etc.).*”

Another objective of gathering public input was to determine how citizens would prefer to see department staff and budget allocated to various types of work and projects. Over half of respondents said they think developing fair regulations (62%), conducting scientific research and surveys to monitor species populations (55%), and conducting on-the-ground management projects (54%) should be high priorities. The lowest priorities were “providing improved access to existing public hunting lands” (53% marked it as low or not a priority), “providing more publicly-accessible lands for hunting” (48% marked it as low or not a priority), and “providing improved shore access for fishing” (47% marked it as low or not a priority). Tests for regional differences in management priorities found the differences in frequency of responses between regions were substantively small.

Eighty-four percent of respondents agreed that when it comes to making tough decisions on natural resource management, the DNR ought to be striking a balance between considering the needs of future generations with the needs of today's citizens. A majority (71%) also agreed that the DNR ought to be considering the long term needs of future generations over the short term needs of today when making management decisions. Only sixteen percent of respondents would like the department to consider the immediate needs of today over the long term needs of the future when making decisions.

### Paying for Management

A majority (61%) of respondents indicated they think that all citizens of the state should help pay to manage state-owned properties. Only 11% of respondents thought that

paying for management should be restricted only to those who harvest or use the resources on the properties, such as hunters and fishers.

Both public outreach efforts generated very interesting feedback that can serve as a broad barometer of issues and priorities of our citizens, though the generalization of these results to the overall public or even traditional stakeholders is limited by the design of the methodologies. Given the consistency and strength of the findings, it is clear that participants in the public input processes prioritize habitat work and protection on both public and private lands in the state, and expect the department to take appropriate measures to regulate and safeguard water quality. Numerous other conservation issues also received prominent discussion in the Cafés or were selected frequently by online survey respondents.

### **8.6 Public Involvement and Agency Coordination through Technical Participation**

This subsection describes the teams and other organized means to get technical input for the WWAP revisions. Technical participants included conservation organizations, experts from resource management and use sectors that affect SGCNs and their habitat, academic researchers, tribal representatives, other DNR programs and federal and state agency representatives. After the WWAP revisions are approved participation on the technical teams will be renewed and their roles will be revised to provide input for interim updates, improvements and implementation of the WWAP. The WWAP is intended for internal (WDNR) and external use. Technical teams must necessarily represent the full range of these potential users as well as contributors to the data and information presented in the WWAP.

Technical input for the WWAP revisions was obtained through the Coordination Team<sup>2</sup>, Advisory Team, Taxon (Species) Teams, and Natural Communities Teams (See Figure 1.1) and other internal and external groups with a science or conservation focus. Technical participants were invited based on previous participation on WWAP1 teams and/or whether their research and work qualified them as having balanced expert or professional knowledge in the subject matter of the revision. All invitees were given the opportunity to accept participation, decline, participate as time permits, or suggest other technical participants. The majority of agency coordination (Element 7) also took place through the technical teams. Technical participation was carried out concurrently with the public participation process.

#### Technical Advisory Team

The Technical Advisory Team fulfills the following roles and tasks:

- Highest level of technical support for WWAP development and implementation.
- Comprised of internal and external experts with a policy, science or applications perspective on topics relevant to the WWAP revision.

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<sup>2</sup> Participants on the Coordination Team are internal DNR staff and so this Team is not included in this Section. From August 2013 to February 2014, internal discussion meetings were also held with regional DNR staff from wildlife, water, forestry, fisheries and other DNR programs to obtain their comments, concerns and recommendations for improving the WWAP.

- Fulfills roles and responsibilities of a technical or science advisory group.
- Provides recommendations on the scope of priority revisions to the WWAP.
- Serves as an independent source of scientific data, reports and expertise to the Coordination Team and other teams working on different aspects of the revision.
- Provides peer review of WWAP revisions.
- Communicates directly with the Coordination Team; may communicate directly with the other teams, as necessary, with the knowledge of the WWAP Coordinator or the Coordination Team.

Formation of the Technical Advisory Team began in approximately May 2014. Individuals or organizations were invited based on the WWAP1 Advisory Team participants and if their experience and knowledge were relevant to the revisions being proposed. Invitees were explicitly asked to recommend other individuals and organizations that fit the abovementioned roles and responsibilities and that might be interested in participating. Participants were encouraged to share interim results and ideas presented at meetings with colleagues in their affiliated organizations and convey feedback to the WWAP Coordinator. As of the writing of this section, six meetings have been held with the Technical Advisory Team between August 2014 and May 2015 as well as a specific invitation to provide comments during the public comment period. Information about the revision is placed on an online share site and shared by email for team participants. Table 8.1 provides the list of those individuals that accepted our invitation to participate. It should be noted however, that as with any advisory team actual participation varies.

The membership, roles and responsibilities of the Technical Advisory Team will be updated after the revisions are approved so the team can continue to assist with implementation and improvements to the WWAP.

### SGCN Taxon Teams

The SGCN Taxon teams fulfill the following roles and tasks:

- As individuals with expert and professional knowledge of rare, declining, uncommon or unknown animal species in our state, they provide critical and analytical input on biological and ecological issues needed to identify Species of Greatest Conservation Need as well as Species with Information Needs.
- The level of effort for each member of the Taxon Team will be variable. Members may serve on more than one Taxon Team.
- SGCN Taxon Teams make recommendations pertinent to their respective scopes of work, but also provide input to other teams and the Coordination Team. Taxon Teams serve a science advisory role.
- Participate in WWAP revisions relevant to SGCN as described in Section 2. Approach and Methods.
- Identify and incorporate relevant species guidance, plans and databases to the WWAP.
- Taxon teams are organized into five taxonomic groups: birds, herptiles (amphibians and reptiles), invertebrates, fish and mammals. The invertebrate group will include subgroups based on aquatic and terrestrial invertebrate expertise.

- Integrate decisions and recommendations with other WWAP teams.

Formation of the SGCN Taxon Teams began in approximately December 2013. Individuals were invited based on the notoriety of their research, expertise or professional work and knowledge of SGCNs. Invitees were explicitly asked to recommend other individuals that fit the abovementioned roles and responsibilities and that might be interested in participating. Each taxon team was led by staff from the WDNR-Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation. All participants on the taxon teams were invited to an initial kick-off meeting to explain and answer questions about the scope of work and process for updating SGCN and their association scores following the approach and methods described in Section 2. Thereafter, each SGCN Taxon Team met or communicated periodically over the course of approximately 18 months to update the SGCN list, association scores and develop conservation actions for corresponding threats, including information and research needs.

Table 8.2 provides the list of those individuals that accepted our invitation to participate sorted by taxonomic group. It should be noted however, that as with any technical team actual participation varies.

After the WWAP revisions are approved the SGCN Taxon Teams will continue largely as teams internal to the WDNR-Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation. The teams will continue to call upon external experts and professionals as needed and encourage them to contribute recommendations for interim reassessment of SGCN as new information becomes available from their research, monitoring and surveys.

#### Natural Community Teams

The Natural Community teams fulfill the following roles and tasks:

- Provide critical and analytical input on biological and ecological issues related to Natural Communities and SGCN habitat. The level of effort for each member of the team will be variable. Members may serve on more than one team.
- Natural Community Teams make decisions pertinent to their respective scopes of work, but also provide recommendations to other teams. Natural community teams serve a science advisory role.
- Participate in WWAP revisions relevant to Natural Communities as described in Section 2. Approach and Methods.
- Identify and incorporate/integrate other plans and databases relevant to Natural Community and habitats as indicated in the Implementation Plan (e.g., Land Legacy, various species plans, NHI, SCORP, ATRI, county plans).
- The Natural community team is divided into working groups for specific issues or natural community groups (e.g., northern forest working group, climate vulnerability assessments for each community group).
- Integrate decisions and recommendations with other WWAP Teams.

Formation of the Natural Community Teams began in approximately March 2014. Individuals were invited based on the notoriety of their research, expertise or professional work and knowledge of natural community groups and ecological

landscapes. Invitees were explicitly asked to recommend other individuals that fit the abovementioned roles and responsibilities and that might be interested in participating in working groups. Each team or working group was led by staff from the WDNR-Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation. All participants were invited to an initial kick-off meeting to propose the scope of the natural community and habitat related revisions as well as to get recommendations and opinions about the presentation and analysis of natural communities in the WWAP (i.e., the kick-off meeting served as a general opinion gathering session as well). Thereafter, each working group met or communicated periodically over the course of approximately 12 months to complete the natural community updates, including definition of new communities, natural community-ecological landscapes opportunity scores, and conservation actions for corresponding threats, including information and research needs.

Tables 8.3 to 8.5 list individuals that accepted our invitation and provided consultation on natural community related issues or served on the natural community working groups. It should be noted however, that as with any technical team actual participation varies.

After the WWAP revisions are approved some of the working groups, including external participants will continue to make additional WWAP improvements or take existing revisions to the next phase (e.g., improve the streams classification similar to inland lakes). Otherwise, the Natural Community Team will continue largely as a group internal to the WDNR-Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation and other DNR programs, but will call upon external experts and professionals as needed for interim improvements to the WWAP.

#### Wisconsin Conservation Congress 10 Year Fish & Wildlife Plan Ad-Hoc Committee

In Wisconsin, the Conservation Congress provides citizens with a local avenue for input and exchange about conservation issues in the state. The Conservation Congress was created by the State Conservation Commission (the predecessor of the Natural Resources Board) in 1934. In 1972, Governor Patrick Lucey signed legislation that legally recognized the Conservation Congress (Statute 15.348), to ensure that citizens would have a liaison between the Natural Resources Board and the Department of Natural Resources.

The purpose of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress places it in a mixed role that combines technical, stakeholder and public interests. Because their participants are well-informed on conservation issues, the WCC lends itself to having more of a technical role in revising and implementing the WWAP.

The Wisconsin Conservation Congress is the only statutory body in the state where citizens elect delegates to advise the Natural Resources Board and the Department of Natural Resources on how to responsibly manage Wisconsin's natural resources for present and future generations. The Congress accomplishes this through open, impartial, broad-ranged actions. The vision of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress is "to strengthen and enhance our ability to gather and convey the wisdom and

influence of Wisconsin citizens in the formation of natural resource policy, research, education, and conservation."

In 2013, the Wisconsin Conservation Congress established an ad-hoc committee to assist the department in updating the Wildlife Action Plan and the Fish, Wildlife, and Habitat Management Plan. This group met multiple times, both in person (August 2013; August 2014) and via conference call (May 2015). The mission of the committee, as defined by the members, was "to contribute to the process of updating the 10-year Fish and Wildlife Habitat Management Plan and the Wildlife Action Plan. In doing so, the committee will take into account the diversity, demographics, social demands and expectations of the citizens of the state. The committee will provide input on the proposed approach to updating the plans as well as the content and make recommendations to the WCC Executive Council."

The committee provided early input into the proposed approach for gathering public input on the plans. They were early 'testers' of the Conservation Café method serving as a pilot group to run through a practice Café. Their initial test included review and affirmation of the questions/topics used at the later Cafés. In addition to providing early input on the public outreach methods, committee members were also invited to participate in the public outreach process by attending a Conservation Café and taking the online survey. The group helped get the word out about the importance of the plans to the future of fish, wildlife, and habitat conservation and management in Wisconsin. They also helped get the word out about the public input opportunities by sharing information with fellow Congress members and constituents in their districts. The committee members were also invited to review the draft plans and encouraged others to review them as well. A member of the ad-hoc committee was also an invited participant on the Technical Advisory Team.

Full color informational handouts describing the two plans were distributed at the WCC district meetings in winter 2015. The full Conservation Congress also heard an update on the two plans and the related public outreach efforts at their spring Convention in May 2015.

### Agency and Tribal Coordination

The teams described above included representatives from the following state and federal agencies:

Federal	State
NRCS	Department of Transportation
USFS – Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest	Department of Natural Resources – Bureaus of Watershed Management/Regulations, Water Quality, Wildlife, Parks and Recreation, Forestry, Fisheries Management*
USFWS Ecological Services	UW-Eau Claire
USFS Northern Climate Research Center	University of Wisconsin-Madison
Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve	UW-La Crosse



Federal	State
National Park Service – Apostle Islands	UW-Stout
US Army Corps of Engineers	UW-Milwaukee
Wisconsin Sea Grant	UW-Parkside

\*Unlike some state governments, Wisconsin's environmental regulatory and natural resource programs reside within the various bureaus of one state agency - the Department of Natural Resources. For the purposes of understanding the breadth of our internal participation, those Bureaus are listed here.

In May 2014 all tribal leaders received a notification letter and invitation to participate in the WWAP and were notified of all subsequent public participation events. Environmental or conservation contacts for each of the tribes also received invitations to participate on the Technical Advisory Team. Tribal leaders and their lead environmental/conservation staff received email notice of the public comment opportunity (see Section 8.7 below).

### 8.7 Public Review of Draft Plan(s) and Response to Comments

The Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan was made available for public comment for 33 days from July 28 – August 30, 2015. In addition to the plan being posted in two locations on the Department's webpages, email notifications were sent to the WWAP Technical Advisory Team, the Wisconsin Conservation Congress' 10-year Plan Ad Hoc Committee, all people who accepted invitations to the Technical Teams and tribal leaders.

Plans were posted at the following locations:

- Wildlife Action Plan & Fish, Wildlife and Habitat Management Plan Webpage: <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/WildlifeHabitat/wap10year.html>
- The department's Proposed DNR Program Guidance webpage: <http://dnr.wi.gov/news/input/guidance.html>

Of the 29 public comments that were received, none indicated their position as unconditionally opposed. Approximately eight were explicit in their support and appreciation of the objectives of the WWAP. Of the 28 people who provided comment during the 33-day public comment period (one organization provided two comment submittals), 17 represented themselves and 11 represented organizations or business sectors. Of the 29 comments received in the WWAP public comment mailbox:

- 3 were applicable only to the Fish and Wildlife Habitat Management Plan and were forwarded to that plan's coordinator
- 3 were applicable to neither plan
- 3 were partially applicable to both plans
- 19-20 were applicable to the WWAP in some way
- approximately 11 proposed revisions to the plan

Comments were diverse, although forest industry associations accounted for the largest proportion of the comments (four out of 29). Most comments were provided to call

attention to issues and conservation actions discussed in the WWAP or to register an interest in participating in the WWAP during Plan implementation. Another common topic was degraded aquatic habitats from pollution, eutrophication, reduced water levels and siltation of lakes and rivers. A few Commenters questioned some species that were not included on the SGCN list and provided additional information to support their argument. Comments on the WWAP illustrated that citizens equate Wisconsin with natural resource diversity AND that citizens themselves are diverse in how they appreciate biodiversity and use natural resources.

Regardless of the nature of the comment, all submittals have or will receive a direct response from the Department. In some cases Commenters have already been contacted through emails, phone calls or meetings to clarify the nature of the comments to improve our response.

### 8.8 Wisconsin Natural Resources Board Approval

The Wisconsin Natural Resources Board (NRB or Board) sets policy for the Department of Natural Resources and exercises authority and responsibility in accordance with governing state laws. The public is welcome to attend any Natural Resources Board meeting unless it is noticed as a closed or executive session. Citizens may appear at Board meetings or submit written comments about issues that come before the Board. The Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan must be approved by the NRB before it can be submitted to the USFWS. The revised WWAP was approved with amendments by the Natural Resources Board on September 23, 2015.

**Table 8.1 Accepted invitations to the Technical Advisory Team for the WWAP revisions\***

Name	Affiliation	Position
Lacey Hill	Bad River Band	Wildlife Program Manager, Bad River Natural Resources Department
Carmen Hardin	DNR_Forestry	Forest Mgt. Sciences Section
Owen Boyle	DNR_Natural Heritage Conservation	Species Management Section Chief
Bill Walker	DNR_WICCI	Science Services Economist
Kent VanHorn	DNR_Wildlife	Wildlife Mgt. Ecology Section
Dale Katsma	DNR_Wildlife	Area Supervisor
Dave Matheys	DNR_Wildlife	Wildlife Biologist
Alyssa Barrett	DOT	NEPA Specialist
Brian Glenzinski	Ducks Unlimited	Regional Biologist Milwaukee Area
Joanne Kline	Ecologist	Ecologist
Heather Stricker	Forest County Potawatomi	Wildlife Resources Program Director

Name	Affiliation	Position
Mike Carlson	Gathering Waters	External Relations Dir
Mike Strigel	Gathering Waters	Executive Dir
Steven Bertjens	NRCS	State Biologist
Mark LaBarbara	NRF	Executive Dir
Chris J. Kirkpatrick	The Prairie Enthusiasts	Executive Dir
Denny Caneff	Rivers Alliance	Executive Dir
Jeremy St. Arnold	Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewas	Assistant Biologist - Wildlife and Forestry
Donald M. Reed, Ph.D.	SEWRPC	Chief Biologist
Randall Wollenhaupt	Stockbridge-Munsee Community	Ecology Department Manager
Steve Richter	TNC	Dir Conservation Programs
Jeff Hastings	Trout Unlimited	Project Manager
Steve Choy	USFWS	Ecological Services-Madison
Linda Parker	USFS-CNNF	Forest Ecologist
Dave Mladenoff	UW	Professor of Forest and Landscape Ecology WICCI
Jamie Nack	UWEX	Senior Wildlife Outreach Specialist Dept. of Forest and Wildlife Ecology
Patrick Robinson	UWEX	Env Restoration and Estuary Specialist Env Resources Specialist
Emmet Judziewicz	Wisconsin Botanical Club	
Al Brown	Wisconsin Conservation Congress	Participant Ad Hoc Committee
Jeff Barkley	Wisconsin County Forest Assoc.	Biologist
Susan Tesarik	Wisconsin Lakes (fka Wi Assoc of Lakes)	Education Dir
Katie Bielfuss	Wisconsin Wetlands Assoc	Outreach Programs Dir
Tracy Hames	Wisconsin Wetlands Assoc	Executive Dir
Michael J Jaeger	Wisconsin Society for Ornithology	Vice-President
George Meyer	Wisconsin Wildlife Federation	ExecutiveDir

\*This list includes people/organizations that initially accepted the invitation to participate and received Technical Advisory Team communications and information throughout the revision process. Actual participation varied by individual.

**Table 8.2 Accepted Invitations to the Species Taxon Teams for the WWAP revision\***

<b>Taxa</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
aquatic arthropods	Schmude	Kurt	UW-Superior
aquatic arthropods	Burian	Steve	Southern Connecticut State University
aquatic arthropods	Klubertanz	Tom	UW-Rock Co
aquatic arthropods, crustaceans	Anton	Tom	Chicago Field Museum
aquatic arthropods, crustaceans	Dimick	Jeff	UW-Stevens Point
aquatic plants	Gerber	Tim	UW-LAX
aquatic plants	Mikulyuk	Alison	DNR -SS
aquatic plants	Van Egeren	Scott	DNR -SS
aquatic plants	Skawinski	Paul	UW-Stevens Point
aquatic plants	Wagner	Kelly	DNR -SS
aquatic plants	Nault	Michelle	DNR-SS
aquatic plants	Schaffenberg	Russ	Private
aquatic plants	Butterfield	Brenton	Private
bees	Carpenter	Susan	UW-Arboretum
bees	Hatfield	Rich	Xerces Society
bees	Johnson	Denny	Private, Beaver Creek Nature Center
bees	Wolf	Amy	UW-Green Bay
bees	Herrick	Brad	UW-Arboretum
bees, leafhoppers, leps, plants	Henderson	Rich	DNR
beetles, etc.	Young	Dan	UW-Madison
birds	Grveles	Kim	NHC
birds	Pidgeon	Anna	UW
birds	Warner	Sarah	FWS
birds	Wires	Linda	Univ of Minn-Fisheries and Wildlife
birds	Anich	Nich	DNR-SS
birds	Brady	Ryan	DNR
birds	Dadisman	John	DNR-SS
birds	Etter-Hale	Karen	Audubon
birds	Howe	Bob	UWGB

Taxa	Last Name	First Name	Affiliation
birds	Hull	Scott	DNR-SS
birds	Kreitinger	Kim	NHC/WSO
birds	Lapin	Carly	NHC
birds	Lopez	Davin	NHC
birds	Matteson	Sumner	NHC
birds	Mueller	Bill	WSO, WGLBBO
birds	Russel	Bob	FWS
birds	Sample	Dave	DNR-SS
birds	Steele	Yoyi	DNR
birds	VanHorn	Kent	DNR
birds	Worland	Mike	DNR-SS
birds	Zuckerberg	Ben	UW-Madison
birds, mammals, herps	Mossman	Mike	DNR-SS
crustaceans, herps	Casper	Gary	UW Milwaukee
dragonflies	Tennessee	Ken	Private
dragonflies, fish	DuBois	Bob	NHC
dragonflies, tiger beetles, MWB beetles	Steffens	Wayne	Private
dragonflies, tiger beetles, raptors	Smith	William	NHC
fish	Sipiorski	Justin	UW-Stevens Point
fish	Seibel	Dave	DNR-Fisheries
fish	Weeks	Jordan	DNR-Fisheries
fish	Wheeler	Michele	FWS
fish	Short	Pat	DNR-Fisheries
fish	Lyons	John	DNR-SS
fish	Marshall	Dave	DNR (retired)/Private
fish	Amrhein	Jim	DNR-Water
fish	Bessert	Mike	UW-Stout
fish	Wawrzyn	Will	DNR-Fisheries
fish	Nelson	Aaron	DNR-Fisheries
fish	Sorge	Mike	DNR-Water
fish	Bartels	Andy	DNR-Water
fish	Kampa	Jeffrey	DNR-Fisheries
fish	Willink	Phil	Shedd Aquarium
fish	Welke	Kurt	DNR-Fisheries
fish	Stremick Thompson	Laura	DNR-Fisheries
fish	Roffler	Luke	Ozaukee County

<b>Taxa</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
fish	Freund	Jason	Carroll University
fish	Anderson	Robert	Wisconsin Lutheran College
fish, herps	Cochran	Phil	St Mary's University
grassland insects	Sauer	Scott	Private
herps	Peterson	Jon	UW-Plattville
herps	Linton	Mary	Snapping Linton Ecology
herps	Wilder	Tim	Fort McCoy
herps	Russell	Kevin	UW-Stevens Point
herps	Rittenhouse	Tracy	University of Connecticut
herps	VanDeWalle	Terry	Stantec
herps	Viernum	Sara	Stantec
herps	Kapfer	Josh	UW-Whitewater
herps	Lorch	Jeff	UW-Madison
herps	Paloski	Rori	NHC
herps	Watermolen	Dreux	NHC
herps (L)	Bergeson	Tara	NHC
herps, fish?	Berg	Craig	Milwaukee County Zoo
Hines emerald	Brotkowski	Leslie	Private, TRC Environmental
leafhoppers, leps, bees	Watson	Jay	DNR
leps	Borth	Bob	Private
leps	Dana	Bob	MNDNR
leps	Bleser	Cathy	DNR
leps	Borkin	Sue	MPM
leps, birds	Swengel	Scott	Private
leps, dragonflies	Legler	Karl	Private
leps, dragonflies, robber flies	Reese	Mike	Private
leps, insects	Johnson	Kyle	UW-Entomology
leps, Karner's	Kleintjes-Neff	Paula	UW-Eau Claire
leps, terrestrial insects	Henry	Joe	NHC
mammals	Gilbert	Jon	GLIFWC
mammals	Anich	Paula	Northland College
mammals	Yahnke	Chris	UWSP
mammals	Van Deelen	Tim	UW
mammals	Wydeven	Adrian	DNR

Taxa	Last Name	First Name	Affiliation
mammals	Wallenfang	Kevin	DNR
mammals	White	Paul	NHC
mammals	Olson	John	DNR
mammals	Anderson	Eric	UWSP
mammals	Kaarakka	Heather	NHC
mammals	Huebschman	Jeffery	UW Platteville
mammals	Woodford	Jim	DNR
mammals, birds, herps	Staffen	Rich	NHC
mussels	Levine	Todd	UW-Rock Co
mussels	Rypel	Andrew	DNR-SS
mussels	Dare	Jason	Private
mussels	Piette	Randy	DNR
mussels, odonates, aquatic plants, birds	Berg	Matt	Private
mussels, snail, fish	Kitchel	Lisie	NHC
plants	Harriman	Neil	UW-Oshkosh
plants	Leach	Mark	UW-Stout
plants	Garske	Steve	GLFWIC
plants	Clark	Andy	DNR
plants	Spickerman	Steven	USFS
plants	Huhnke	Wayne	TPE/Private
plants	Lammers	Thomas	UW-Oshkosh
plants	Boos	Tom	DNR
plants	Matula	Colleen	DNR
plants	Hlina	Paul	UW-Superior
plants	Leitner	Larry	SEWRPC
plants	Judziewicz	Emmet	UWSP
plants	Bennett	Jesse	Driftless Land Stewards
plants	Trochlell	Pat	DNR - Water
plants	Epstein	Eric	DNR-NHC (retired)
plants	O'Connor	Ryan	DNR - NHC
plants	Kearns	Kelly	DNR - NHC
plants	Bushman	Matt	USFS
plants	Wernerehl	Bob	UW-Madison
plants	Janke	Steven	USFS
plants	Anderson	Derek	MNDNR
plants	Westad	Kristin	USDA

<b>Taxa</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
plants	Reed	Don	SEWRPC
plants	Knight	Susan	UW-Madison
plants, aquatic plants	Fewless	Gary	UW-Green Bay
plants, aquatic plants	Anderson	Craig	DNR - PR
plants, aquatic plants	Freckmann	Robert	UWSP (retired)
plants, aquatic plants	Doyle	Kevin	DNR - NHC
plants, herps	Bartz	Armund	NHC
slugs, leps, spiders, misc	Watermolen	Dreux	DNR
snails	Kuchta	Matt	UW-Stout
snails	Hyde	Terrell	NHC
snails	Perez	Kathryn	UW-La Crosse
snails	Theiler	Jim	Private
snails, leps, tiger beetles	North	Eric	All Things Wild Consulting
spiders	Kaspar	Jack	Private, UW-Oshkosh (retired)
spiders	Draney	Michael	UW-Green Bay
tiger beetles, grasshoppers	Brust	Matt	Chadron State University (Nebraska)

\*This list includes experts and professionals that initially accepted the invitation to participate and received communications and information for their respective taxonomic teams throughout the revision process. Actual participation varied by individual.

**Table 8.3 Individuals that provided Technical Input into Natural Community and Ecological Landscape related topics for the WWAP revision\***

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Berthal, Tom_Wetlands	DNR-Water
Diss-Torrence, Andrea	DNR-Forestry
Eklund, Dan	USFS-CNNF
Epstein, Eric_Statewide_consultation only	DNR-Retired
Fandel, Sharon_Dist Ecologist	DNR-NHC
Fayram, Nate_NHCHabitatPrairiesSNAs (could consult to Zine)	DNR-NHC
Feldkirchner, Drew_NHCForestry	DNR-NHC
Harrington, John (UW Landscape Architecture_Environmental, Ag systems)	UW-Madison
Henry, Joe_DistEcologist	DNR-NHC
Hoffman, Randy_NCcSNAs	DNR-NHC
Howell, Evelyn (UW Landscape Architecture_plant ecology)	UW-Madison
Hutnick, Brad_Forestry (sciences section_silviculturist_ecologist)	DNR-Forestry
Johnson, Sarah	Northland College
Kearns, Kelly_NHcInvasives	DNR-NHC
Lyons, John_SSFisheriesAquatic	DNR-SOC
Matula, Colleen_Forestry (sciences section_silviculturist_ecologist)	DNR-Forestry
O'Connor, Ryan_NHCEcology	DNR-NHC
Paulios, Andy_WildlifeDaneStatewide	DNR-WM
Peczynski, Mike	USFS_CNNF
Rowe, Maureen	DNR-WM
Staffen, Amy_NHcNCs	DNR-NHC
Stoltman, Andy_ForestryEL	DNR-Forestry
Trochlell, Pat_WWInvasivesWetlandsStatewide	DNR-Water
Zine, Matt_NHcNCsSNAs	DNR-NHC

\* These individuals were not all part of a team per se, but were consulted on various topics related to Natural Communities in the WWAP revision (e.g., natural community definitions, ecological landscapes, conservation actions and threats related to natural communities, etc.).

**Table 8.4 Participants in the Inland Lakes Working Group to develop Inland Lake Classifications and Definitions for the WWAP**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Ali Mikulyuk	WDNR-Science Services
Katie Hein	WDNR-Water Quality Monitoring
John Wagner	TNC
John Lyons	WDNR-Science Services
Michelle Nault	WDNR Water Quality (Green Bay)
Lisie Kitchel	WDNR-NHC
Kevin Doyle	WDNR-NHC
Paul Garrison	WDNR-Science Services
Tim Simonsen	WDNR-Fisheries

**Table 8.5 Participants in the Northern Forests Working Group to develop definitions for some northern forest community types**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Ryan O'Connor	DNR
Rich Staffen	DNR
Drew Feldkirchner	DNR
Brad Hutnik	DNR
Colleen Matula	DNR
Adrian Wydeven	DNR
Dan Eklund	USFS