

2nd Meeting of the Stakeholder Advisory Group to consider changes to the Endangered Resources Review Program

Wednesday November 5, 2008 from 10:00 a.m. – noon
Room G09, of the State Natural Resources Building (GEF 2),
101 S. Webster St., Madison.

Meeting Attendees: Dana Ferguson, Alliant Energy; Lesley Zuehls Brotkowski, Cedarburg Science, LLC; Karen Etter Hale, Madison Audubon Society; Brad Foss, Dairyland Power Cooperative; Mike Grisar, WE Energies; Ron Krueger, Conservation Congress (Endangered Species Committee); J. Scott Mathie, Metropolitan Builders Association; Bill Poole, Natural Resources Consulting, Inc.; Pamela Linn, Waukesha County Parks; Allan Waelchli, Wisconsin Consulting Foresters; Michael Warwick, Yaggy Colby Associates, Terry Yakich, American Transmission Company. WDNR staff in attendance included Sarah Carter (project coordinator), Tim Cooke*, Erin Crain*, Angela Engelman*, Lisie Kitchel*, Rori Paloski*, and Emily Rusch*. **Indicates staff member served as a recorder for group discussions.*

Stakeholders providing input via phone/email (comments included at the end of this document): Gary Casper, UW-Milwaukee Field Station & Casper Consulting; Lee Turonie, Wisconsin Towns Association; Bob Weihrouch, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service; John Wagner, The Nature Conservancy.

Minutes compiled and edited by skc. Please let me know if you think a comment, question or suggestion has been misinterpreted. (Sarah.Carter@Wisconsin.gov; 608-264-8968)

Comments/questions during presentation (Preliminary Summary of Potential Changes to Services Provided by the Endangered Resources Review Program in Response to Stakeholder Requests):

- Question as to whether we have data on the number of ER Review Requests we receive to support the need for long-term staff (FTEs) to perform this service. Suggestion that these data should be included with any request for additional staff. DNR noted that previously FTE's did perform ER Reviews; only relatively recently (2007) did the function shift to limited-term staff (LTEs). Also noted that even though there is a lot of variability in the number of ER Review Requests received in any given month, over the last 8 years the monthly average has been quite consistent.
- Question: If a project doesn't require any DNR review (permit, authorization, etc.) but the user of the detailed NHI data looks up the site in the NHI database anyway, would the user be required to submit the 'preliminary recommendations' to the DNR for concurrence. Answer: The endangered species law does not require submittal of an ER review request at any time. However, the responsible party is required to comply with endangered species laws regardless of whether there is a DNR permit involved. Requesting an ER review (or possibly in the future requesting concurrence with 'preliminary recommendations') is the landowner's best mechanism of assuring that their activities will be in compliance with endangered species laws. [post-meeting note from Sarah: Submission of 'preliminary recommendations' could be required as part of a data sharing agreement and/or certification program].

- Comment that lending institutions may require an ER Review from the DNR to help the institution better assess risk associated with a project for which they are providing funding.
- Strong concern expressed that the time and money involved in the NHI certification process would be prohibitive for many Certified Plan Writers (CPWs, for forestry MFL plans). Substantial training is already required by Forestry to be a CPW, and many CPWs are (very) small businesses and do only a few plans per year. Does not want to see a duplication of the training/certification process. Could part of the NHI certification training be incorporated into the CPW training? DNR noted that we are talking with staff from other programs to help us assess the impacts of potential changes on their customers, and that it may be possible to combine training in some cases (e.g., as part of annual refreshers).
- Question as to whether the future budget outlined in the presentation (i.e., funds that would be needed to implement the majority of changes, excluding portal improvements) represents initial costs (to get improvements in place) or expected annual expenditures over time. Answer-it is a rough estimate looking at the initial implementation period.

Stakeholder input gathered through small group discussions:

1. Describe your vision for a Review Program that would best meet your needs and those of the organization and/or constituents with whom you work.

Easier & faster access to NHI data early in the planning process

- Having easier access to the detailed NHI data (within legal/regulatory parameters) early in the planning process for people qualified to interpret it. This would make it easier for consultants to do their work and do it early in the process to avoid hurdles later on. It would also help alleviate workload issues for DNR staff.
- The sooner the better, whether DNR provides the information or the consultant has it him/herself. The easier and faster it is to get the ER data/information, the less resistance consultants generally encounter from developers.
- CPWs currently receive NHI data from DNR foresters in a variety of formats: a general email, a list of species and some guidance about how to address them, or sometimes a map. Generally the system works well except for this variability of responses.

Consistency and timeliness in ER Reviews and the review process

- Main concern of group is that there needs to be consistency with screening for all projects so that the outcome of reviews can be more predictable. For example, if a wood turtle is a hit for a project there should be the same recommendations for avoidance regardless of whether ER or wetland permit staff or the Office of Energy does the review. If review responses differ, there needs to be a clear explanation for how (and why) the different outcomes were reached.

- There needs to be strict oversight to ensure consistent and accurate interpretation of the data by both internal DNR staff and externals. For example, have ER, the Office of Energy, utilities, and consultants all review the same project and work to ensure they all come to the same conclusion in terms of recommendations. A certification program will help to ensure this consistency.
- There is a need to streamline the review process so there is a short turnaround time and concurrent review of inter-related projects (not independent, one at a time reviews) to meet project schedules (often an issue for utilities). Suggested that to accomplish this, consultants with access to the detailed NHI data could have the ability to conduct reviews with no ER oversight required. If adequately trained, the consultants should come to the same conclusion as DNR staff. If independent review (without DNR concurrence) is not an option, then there needs to be decision makers/DNR in the loop and expedited decisions.

Better access to species experts (see question #4)

Online tools/screening guidance

- Simpler = better. CPWs are required to conduct on-the-ground inspections, so they have a good idea of what's on the land and how proposed management activities would impact habitat. Would like a computer program that would tell CPWs what species could potentially be present, what management activities could be an issue, and avoidance guidelines for each species. The MFL plans they produce are comprehensive and long-term, and implementation of specific management activities may not occur for 10 years or more. If CPWs could get the information within an hour (or call someone and get instant information), that would be great.
- Would like an online tool or application that allows you to select down to a quarter section, and then within about three days return a result of the individual species present (if any). GIS format is more convenient than a review letter or list.
- Maps (i.e., via the NHI portal) are really helpful because they provide the specific locational information that ER Reviews do not (often ER reviews just say that the species has been found in the general area).

Focus on achieving conservation goals

- Conservation entities are interested in conservation of species rather than the speed of the review process. Gaps in NHI data are a serious concern: they don't want the review process rushed such that things are missed (i.e., an area hasn't been surveyed so it's assumed there's nothing there).

NHI data

- The lack of rare species surveys on private lands is a frustration. DNR doesn't have the staff or the access to do surveys throughout the whole state, esp. on private land. The applicant/landowner then controls whether or not surveys will be done. Surveys can be costly, and developers do not like paying for them.

Other

- Would like a way that partners/nonprofits can find out what is happening on the landscape in terms of rare species conflicts with proposed projects before those conflicts reach the formal Incidental Take Authorization process.

2. Do the potential changes to Review Program services that we've outlined adequately address the issues that you were concerned with?

General

- Group didn't see any negatives with the entire document.
- Yes, the services outlined address the issues of concern. Also expressed that the draft report for services was well put together and that DNR did a good job taking comments from last time and summarizing stakeholder ideas on how to meet goals.
- Captured well issues of individual consultant and conservation organization representative as well as group discussion.
- Feels like this is more than foresters wanted to know and could be really cumbersome.

Certification program/ expanded sharing of detailed NHI data

- In general, supportive of providing more information and resources to people who make decisions; it is nice when local governments are prepared with the information and data they need to make decisions.
- Anything that helps identify ER issues on specific properties as soon as possible is good. Municipalities need information prior to referendums, and developers need information prior to buying land. Consultants may be involved in both cases, and his group would enroll in a certification program.
- A certification program per se isn't needed by all users (e.g., many utilities already have data sharing agreements), but would be good for consultants. Regardless of a certification program, would like to see more NHI training.
- Important for utility staff (who are often doing internal reviews) to have access to the detailed data and to know how to use it through the provision of training and species guidance/management recommendations.
- *Conversation on what kinds of organizations might want access to the detailed data and why:* Metropolitan Builders Association would probably not want access to the data – they would rather builders come to the DNR for that information. Some non-profit conservation organizations might be interested in getting data and/or training (e.g., in the Karner Blue butterfly range it might be helpful for conservation groups, so that they could encourage specific people to do voluntary conservation on their land). The role of Madison Audubon is more of a watch dog to ensure resources are protected rather than actively engaging in projects. It's possible that the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative could incorporate NHI information or training into their workshops.

- A Certification Program should have the ability to be flexible. Consider 2 levels of access to the data/certification: 1) generalized for planners/developers that only requires online training and testing to just look at the data and see what is there, and 2) detailed for conservationists/consultants that requires interpretation of data. In general, different levels of training should be provided to meet the needs of different types of users.
- Suggestion that early screening could be done by consultants who access the data, and that the final review can be done by DNR staff.
- Group expressed support for DNR reviewing all 'preliminary recommendations'. Thinks DNR should maintain this level of oversight. USFWS and US Army Corps of Engineers both have a concurrence approach that works efficiently (though noted that the Corps typically gives only a cursory look at what they are concurring with). Concern that if DNR were to give full review authority to externals, there would have to be a very high level of training/certification. The DNR wetland assurance program which originally did not require concurrence for assured delineators is now considering having all consultants send their wetland delineations to DNR for concurrence because there have been so many issues.

Concerns about broader sharing of detailed NHI data

- Potential misinterpretation of data. For example, a state agency (not DNR) looked at breeding bird data from the Breeding Bird Atlas, and interpreted a listing of no birds for the area as implying that there were no concerns with the parcel. The project involved cutting down a forested area for fencing.
- Potential destruction of species/habitat. People who receive access to specific locational information should be trained, but noted that at some point the information tends to get out (developers, newspapers, etc.). When this occurs, it is essential that DNR provide information to the public that species are protected. Immediately after bald eagles were delisted, wildlife rehabilitators had an influx of bald eagles that had been shot. DNR needed to provide clearer, more strongly worded information (not just in the fine print at the bottom of the article) that eagles are still a protected species.

ER Reviews

- Critical to maintain the ability to request one-time ER Reviews even if we pursue a certification program.
- Suggestion to identify standard screening protocols for ER reviews. There should be protocols for all land disturbing activities. There might be different protocols for different types of projects and/or for temporary vs. permanent impacts.
- Two weeks would be an turnaround for ER Reviews, but there will still be times when one week would be better (e.g. last minute requests to consultants).
- A list of species only (without avoidance recommendations) would be a great option if the customer needed the information in less than 2 weeks.
- Suggestion to consider having ER Reviews conducted regionally.

Species information

- Better online information including species guidance documents/management recommendations for more species would help address a lot of the questions that come up during reviews.
- Group really liked the idea of a calendar – both a short ‘cheat sheet’ of general issues/timing to consider, as well as more detailed calendars for different taxa groups. Different users thought the ‘cheat sheet’ or more detailed calendars would be most helpful.

Technical support

- Need tips on using the NHI Portal.

Generalized NHI data

- People using the online county data and maps for screening/reviews leads to inconsistencies: the consultant uses the maps as a preliminary check for projects, but additional species are included in the formal ER Review from the DNR.

Backlog of data waiting to be entered in the NHI database

- Broader data sharing when the NHI database is incomplete is worrisome and dangerous. Fixing this should be a priority, so that people aren’t assuming that the NHI database is complete when it isn’t.
- DNR provided some background on the data backlog: Mapping of these data into the NHI database is a function of the NHI section as a whole, but is separate from the Review Program. The data backlog is large - estimated that it would take roughly 3 years (and a million dollars) to eliminate it. The process of entering data into the NHI database is elaborate with multiple QA/QC steps and can only be done by staff with special training. Mapping staff are looking at ways to address the backlog, but are reluctant to provide public access to the backlogged data because of concerns about quality control and potential misinterpretation. The NHI data are used for a wide variety of projects/activities outside of the Review Program. The current system of mapping priorities is driven by 1) grant requirements and 2) data needed for master planning of DNR properties. This priority system does not effectively address backlogged data on private lands. The backlog has been identified as a concern in the forest certification process and is also an issue with other DNR permit staff, as they may not be aware it. [Note from Sarah: State and federally listed animal species are also a priority for mapping.]
- Suggestion that we prioritize addressing the NHI data backlog for important places – e.g., land legacy program, important bird areas, State Natural Areas (and surrounding buffer), environmental corridors (e.g., those designated by SEWRPC)?
- Subsequent suggestion that we prioritize mapping backlogged data outside of environmental corridors and other areas which already have some level of protection. Noted that environmental corridors do not have any legal authority but in some cases are regulated locally (e.g. SEWRPC in SER), and that corridors do not capture habitat needs for all species (e.g, Butlers garter snakes).

- Suggestion that we refocus grant priorities and focus on updating data in areas with the biggest growth pressure- Milwaukee area, border with MN, Racine/Kenosha; and other areas of high development like lakeshores. Forestry representative agreed, but does want to access the information that is there within a reasonable timeline.
- Question as to how others (e.g., local govts, SEWRPC) might be able to help map/enter backlogged data if they are collecting and entering those data themselves anyway.

Miscellaneous

- Question about why agriculture lands are exempt from so many permits. Noted that landowners still need to comply with endangered species laws regardless of whether a DNR permit is involved. There is a need to better educate other DNR staff regarding ESA issues when there are no required DNR permits. (Permit programs should refer people to the Review Program for an ER Review if there is a concern).

3. Which broad areas and/or types of change do you see as most important to reaching your goals for the program?

Group A:

1. Certification Program and expanded sharing of detailed NHI data: Would speed up the whole process and provide much needed information on how to interpret the data.
2. Better online information (to help users make decisions before needing to call ER staff), including species guidance documents for more species and taxa groups.
3. Portal FAQ's
4. Quick ER reviews

Group B:

1. First and most important step is talking to an advisory group, which we are doing.
2. If the Review Program only had money to change one thing, it should be addressing ASAP the accuracy and thoroughness of the NHI database (backlog data, discrepancies between county maps/data and data on the NHI Portal).
3. Once you have accurate and complete information, the next step should be setting up a process to share it. Since the former will take many years, start on the latter first – i.e., sharing the data that we have. Following the discussion on the NHI database backlog (see previous page), the individual restated his #1 priority to be putting the backlog data into an excel spreadsheet (with appropriate disclaimers about interpretation and QA/QC issues) accessible to customers.

Group C:

1. Make access to the Portal/detailed NHI data more readily available early in the planning process to consultants working with groups who already have access to the NHI data as well as to other customers. Would like to be able to access and use the

NHI data as a tool for screening and project planning, and get DNR involved at the appropriate time (likely later in the process).

2. Provide more consistency – in reviewing and screening projects for ER concerns (including how data on the NHI portal are used/viewed) and in interpreting screening results. This is an issue among different programs within DNR. Better consistency and predictability in the review process could be addressed through screening protocols (e.g., if/then decision process) to guide/provide more consistency in review outcomes and by providing more screening guidance for individual species.
3. Better access to regional and species experts (see #4).
4. Species guidance documents/avoidance guidelines for more species and taxa groups

4. Are there additional changes that you would like to see?

- Use volunteers – they have a wealth of information.
- There is a need to have better access to the regional ecologists and species experts. Would like to see access to species experts early in the review process, but at this point that doesn't necessarily seem possible. Some programs encourage applicants to consult with regional or species experts, while others (e.g., Office of Energy) ask customers to work only with central office staff. At times it is more efficient and quicker to work directly with regional staff, especially if they are the experts. There was a group consensus that regional staff have been very helpful.
- Other state agencies need to be held accountable for ER lookups (e.g., Dept of Commerce stormwater permits for commercial projects). There is the assumption when applying for a permit from a state agency that they will do the ER look-up, so the applicant proceeds (without separately checking on ER issues) thinking their due diligence related to ER issues has been completed when in fact the agency has not done an ER lookup.
- It would be nice for the NHI Portal to have an interactive feature so someone could enter the project area, click on the project site map, and be directed to steps needed to satisfy permit requirements.
- Suggestion that the DNR, via the review process, encourage applicants to contact local experts whenever appropriate. Local groups and individuals have lots of expertise, and applicants could use this local expertise as a resource if they knew who to contact.

5. In light of the staff time, costs and other considerations associated with implementing the individual improvements outlined in the document, what do you suggest as a strategy for moving forward in the near term? In other words, what areas of change would you like to see us pursue first?

Group A:

1. Certification. If the Review Program can't get additional staff, try a scaled-down (mini-pilot) version of the certification program to start with (e.g. cut out the test and field trip) and evaluate how well it works.
2. More species guidance documents
3. Portal FAQ's

Group B:

1. Prioritize and work through the NHI database backlog
2. Pursue expanded data sharing
3. Provide training to understand, interpret, and apply the NHI data. The level of training and specifics should be tailored to different user groups depending on their background, which may help streamline the amount of training needed/certification process.

Group C:

1. Allow more customers (including consultants) direct access to the NHI Portal (with certification or safeguards). Providing consultants with access to the Portal, rather than receiving subsets of data, would allow them to look in the surrounding areas of the project site and make more educated decisions (e.g. consultants could overlay the data with GIS data to do better predictive analysis). This would lead to a much smoother planning process with fewer surprises. This is particularly important for big planning efforts. Consultants are also a valuable source of new records for the NHI database: they are in the field looking for rare species, often find new rare species records, and subsequently provide these data back to NHI.
2. Technical support - making information accessible and useful
3. More species guidance (including avoidance guidelines) for high priority rare species.
4. Standardize the Incidental Take Authorization process.

6. Other suggestions, concerns, or guidance for us as we continue through this process?

Before moving forward with program improvements, it is important to make sure we have enough resources (time and staff) to do it right, particularly with a certification program. This was a major issue with the Wetland Delineation Professional Assurance Initiative.

Comments received from stakeholders who were not able to attend the meeting in person:

Input from The Nature Conservancy:

1. *Describe your vision for a Review Program that would best meet your needs and those of the organization and/or constituents with whom you work.*

The Nature Conservancy has interests in the review program that are not unique. Of course, as a client of the review program, we would like to see a very responsive service that allows access to the needed information in a timely fashion, as early in the project planning phase as

possible. TNC also often requires the expertise of ER staff in interpreting information about and planning for species and communities that may be impacted by our projects or management activities. This expertise is important in truly protecting the species and natural communities of the state. This expertise needs to be fulfilled by full time permanent staff that have the ability and security to expand their skills and abilities through time. It is a partnership that TNC needs to carry out our work on the land.

However, there is another aspect to this project which TNC also shares, at our core level, with the staff of the review program and the entire ER program. It is of the utmost importance that the NHI data and database are protected. So TNC would encourage the safety of the data as the first priority in any revision of the Review Program.

- 2. Do the potential changes to Review Program services that we've outlined adequately address the issues that you were concerned with?*

I believe it will. Automating some of the standardized tasks will hopefully free up Review Program staff to provide their needed expertise in a timely fashion as specific plans are developed to avoid/reduce impacts of proposed actions. It would be great if there were more review expertise available at this level.

The data protection issue will depend on the training program for the proper usage of the detailed NHI data.

- 3. Which broad areas and/or types of change do you see as most important to reaching your goals for the program?*

TNC really didn't have many problems using the program in the past. It will be nice to automate and simplify the earlier steps in the process to free up time for more specific guidance from review staff where needed.

- 4. Are there additional changes that you would like to see?*

No.

- 5. In light of the staff time, costs and other considerations associated with implementing the individual improvements outlined in the document, what do you suggest as a strategy for moving forward in the near term? In other words, what areas of change would you like to see us pursue first?*

1. Endangered Resources Reviews: Ensure reasonable turnaround times on a consistent, long-term basis by shifting staffing of this service from limited-term to long-term positions.
2. Information on rare species and high-quality natural communities (All steps outlined in document).
3. Maintenance of a comprehensive, up-to-date NHI database.
4. A pilot NHI Certification Program to increase sharing of detailed NHI data.

Input from USDA-NRCS:

- 1. Describe your vision for a Review Program that would best meet your needs and those of the organization and/or constituents with whom you work.*

NRCS would have access to species accounts/life history to assess whether a species habitat was present AND to determine what to do to avoid adverse impact IF the NHI review determines a species may be present. NRCS also would like DNR staff to be available for site

visits if NRCS field staff are unsure if the species is present. Very few of our staff are able to identify listed plants (because they are so rare) or know for sure if the habitat could support a listed animal. Having species experts available for consultation is also an area we would like access to. We know they are very busy, so if there were designated times we could contact them to get would get a prompt response, that would be helpful.

- 2. Do the potential changes to Review Program services that we've outlined adequately address the issues that you were concerned with?*

I think that they would IF you get the funding and staffing proposed (which we hope you do).

- 3. Which broad areas and/or types of change do you see as most important to reaching your goals for the program?*

Species guidance for all listed plant and animal species (we understand this is a huge undertaking). Or more habitat protocols like the Grassland Protocol. We use the Grassland Protocol frequently because of the landscapes we work in; it provides guidance on how to avoid adverse impacts to those species likely to be present.

- 4. Are there additional changes that you would like to see?*

Not at this time. The potential changes outlined in the document appear to have addressed our concerns with additional funding and staff (we hope you get both).

- 5. In light of the staff time, costs and other considerations associated with implementing the individual improvements outlined in the document, what do you suggest as a strategy for moving forward in the near term? In other words, what areas of change would you like to see us pursue first?*

Adding staff would be our priority. Given that increasing funding and additional staff may be difficult in this current financial/budget atmosphere, we would like to see an increase in species guidance/life history information for use in avoidance activities. Many species may be able to be lumped together due to similar habitats, breeding seasons, sensitivity to disturbance, etc.

Availability of species experts or Regional Ecologists could also occur. Maybe designate the 1st and 3rd Monday from 8-9 AM as a window when we know they would be available for phone consultation on a proposed activity.

A list of the most common disturbance activities that NRCS prescribes for landowners to use on non-agricultural land including mowing, burning, herbicide treatment, disking, and brush control. Cropland is seldom an issue because the habitat is normally "unsuitable".

- 6. Please include here any other suggestions, concerns, or guidance for us as we continue through this process.*

A Portal issue: if I had several reviews, I was only able to look up one location at a time (i.e., I'd have to quit and re-sign in for each search). Hopefully the glitches will be ironed out soon, as the Portal is a great improvement over the old system to access the NHI database!

Input from the UW-Milwaukee Field Station/Casper Consulting:

- Supportive of general idea of providing data earlier in the decision making process.

- Improvements to website information and more online forms would be great and do not appear to have a major budgetary impact
- General concern about the apparent transformation of a government regulatory agency into a service industry, and the apparent drive to outsource responsibilities to the regulated private industry.
- Concern that the Review Program may become too focused on what services their customers would like and lose sight of DNR and ER missions to protect natural resources for future generations, including the DNR's regulatory role in enforcing endangered species laws
- Noted that the Michigan DNR is subject to Freedom of Information requests. Their Natural Features Inventory is separate from the DNR and has to fund itself. Work on their Herp Atlas is contracted out to another body. One result is assurance that data are protected and that there are filters in place to ensure appropriate use of the data. Is there a role/need for such a process in Wisconsin?

Concerns about expanded sharing of detailed NHI data:

- Concern about misinterpretation of detailed NHI data, especially the reliability and interpretation of very localized site-specific data. Sharing these data more broadly with so many interpretation issues seems like a bad idea. More productive would be increasing NHI capacity, which is something we can all support.
- Consider whether the level of detail that we're proposing to provide goes beyond what is needed by customers to help them comply with the law and conserve resources. Believes the township level NHI data available online can meet customer's needs for identification of potential ER issues early in the process, and that customers can then use the existing process (requesting an ER Review) to find out specific information.
- Concern that others will see RP services as duplicative as users would essentially be doing their own reviews (even though the RP would be checking them), which may hurt justification for RP staffing requests
- There is a need for more outreach and education to inform people 1) that they need to comply with the endangered species laws and 2) how the RP can help them comply using its existing services/structure. Customer does not believe expanded data sharing will necessarily address this issue.
- DNR needs to plan and prepare for the worst case scenario (i.e., intentional misuse of NHI data to harm the resource). Concern that pre-screening using the detailed NHI data could result in habitat destruction to get rid of regulated species before permits are applied for and any official review begins.
- Concern that the Review Program would be making it easier for people to take actions that harm the public interest and that expanded data sharing will lead to less people doing meaningful conservation in the course of their projects and more people doing only the absolute minimum needed to comply with the law (and not overtly kill individual animals).

- Concern that if conservation groups became uncomfortable with the level of release of detailed information and/or perceive that DNR is not protecting the data, they may not submit new records to NHI which could compromise partnerships, fragment data repositories, and ultimately harm resources.

Concerns about an advisory board

- Please clarify that the advisory board would not have actual authority over services and budgets for the Review Program, but rather would serve in an advisory role only – i.e., they would make recommendations to the Natural Resources Board who would continue to have final authority.
- To be effective, an advisory board would need to be well-balanced to ensure that no single interest group can dominate the discussion/recommendations. Possible entities to consider: development: Wisconsin Realtors Association, Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce, Wisconsin Builders Association; public: Wisconsin Counties Association, Wisconsin Towns Association, League of Wisconsin Municipalities; environmental: Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, Wisconsin Wetlands Association, Clean Wisconsin; specific expertise: conservation biologists from UW system.

Input from the Wisconsin Towns Association (WTA):

- WTA is appreciative of the invitation to participate in this process.
- Given the state budget shortfalls it will be tough to expand the Review Program, especially in light of other DNR projects currently in the works (e.g., invasive species issues). Municipalities are also facing shortfalls and will be forced to prioritize.
- Expanding the information readily and easily available on the internet as well as technical support would be needed for this to have a realistic chance of taking root.
- Does not see many local officials opting to become certified given the certification requirements. For comparison sake, there is currently only one legally mandated training requirement for local officials for 2 hours of training every two years. WTA provides much more training than that to their membership on a wide variety of topics, but NHI certification is a different ballgame than anything WTA does or could provide to their members.
- Noted that DNR [specifically Cameron Bump] is currently working on a "single point of contact" project – a person(s) that local officials could call regarding a local project and get a clearinghouse type response including any matter of concern to the DNR on that project. [Note from Sarah: This project is part of the Local Roads Program funded by the Dept of Transportation (DOT) and will provide a single point of contact only for *local municipal, town and county transportation projects.*]

Draft summary of meeting 11/16/08 by skc