

The Wisconsin Statewide Karner Blue Butterfly HCP 2011 Winter Meeting

February 16, 2011 9am to 3pm
Stevens Point Holiday Inn – 1001 Amber Avenue

MINUTES

Anti Trust Statement – Quinn Williams, WDNR Legal Services delivered the Anti-Trust Statement

Introductions - Gary Birch, WDOT and IOC Chair

Agenda Repair – Dave Lentz, WDNR HCP Coordinator

Housekeeping & Announcements

- KBB monitoring training is being planned at Sandhill, Black River Falls, and Crex Meadows the Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday following Memorial Day this year.
- Compliance audits will begin again in 2011. When the audit frequency changed from 3 years to 5 years, there was a 2 year delay in the rotation of mandatory audits.

The New HCP Webpage

The DNR has designed a new webpage. It looks and works differently. Currently, when you access the DNR webpage you are taken to an introductory page with an option to access either the present site or the new site under assembly with information being transferred into a new format and categories.

Under the new site the KBB HCP Program page is located under the tab: **Business and Government / Forestry**. The redesign of the KBB web page is still under development. HCP Partner input will be very helpful in restructuring the KBB web page.

Partner Suggestions -

Change the location of the *Emergence Model*. Move it to the first tab for INFORMATION about the KBB.

Change the tab for *I'm interested in information for* to information about the HCP and how it works.

Do these 3 categories work for everyone? Do they seem supportive to the objective of the program and instructive in channeling information?

- FOR HCP PARTNERS
- ABOUT THE HCP AND HOW IT WORKS
- HCP USER'S GUIDE

Another suggestion was to add a pull down tab to identify the user – an example would be; researcher, student, citizen, etc. Information of interest to the user group would be listed here as well as other places. Most of the information presently available on the website will remain, while we will streamline and edit links to other websites our goal is

to create a more intuitive format allowing for easier access. What's more we hope to create tutorials in the future to address common questions and have these available shortly after the complete migration to the website.

Partner Suggestions - continued

I think modeling other agencies and using the various formats for information dissemination is another tool we might want to look into for the redesign. Cathy Carnes mentioned for example that some FWS forms provide an explanation of what needs to go into the information box when you hold your mouse over the box, or click on an "information" icon on the right hand side of the page.

Regarding the Emergence Model; the accuracy of last year's predictions was off as much as 2 weeks due to an early flight and because the model uses historical averages when data is not reported from a weather station. To increase accuracy weather sensors are being installed at actual Kbb sites to develop a calibration for weather station variation and replace missing weather station data instead of resorting to averages.

Strategic direction beyond the 5-point plan

Strategic Direction – The 5 point plan has been a steady topic of discussion since 2005. Most of the goals in the plan have been achieved. It's time to reassess what was not accomplished and talk about new strategies and renewed goals. The goal of supporting Kbb recovery in Wisconsin was difficult to get our arms around, especially in light of all the effort that was going into the other 4 points of the plan. The logical direction is to set the 5-Point Plan aside and take a more focused and simpler approach in the years ahead. It is important than ever to simplify. We need to find more creative outlets to sustain the HCP program and recognize that a great deal of future opportunities lie in automated the HCP training and reporting processes.

A Two-Point Plan

The first strategic point is to honor our conservation agreements. HCP improvements that will help achieve this strategy more effectively and efficiently, include utilizing the web to provide more timely and effective training. Partners' staff turns over and new folks need to learn how to implement the HCP, often without a co-worker to mentor them. Webcasts can provide turnkey pre-training and refresher opportunities, which should help partners as well as the DNR's HCP staff. Automated web reporting of surveys and annual reports can further reduce entry errors, rework and data entry costs for the DNR.

A second strategy being proposed is to reassess the recovery strategy from the 5-Point Plan. We need to ask ourselves what if any, is the HCP Partners' role in recovery and how can we support the recovery program in achieving the federal recovery plan's Kbb population goals.

Greg Hamilton (USFWS Private Lands): Anything you can do to simplify the HCP will ease the burden of all the partners and if more partners can look at putting a little habitat on the land; that's a good goal. A great deal of all this is pretty simple; small things make a difference.

Gary suggested that the first of the two strategies simply say, “Implement the HCP and honor our conservation commitments”. It’s important to maintain this primary goal.

Decision/Action: All were in agreement. Dave will change this.

Cathy Carnes: stated that the WI KBB Statewide HCP is still recognized by the USFWS (Service) as a national model of a large successful HCP; an HCP is a great tool for working through endangered species conservation issues.

Jimmy Christenson: I just want to comment that I see a lot of new faces in the crowd than those I saw 10 years ago. I just want everyone to realize we have a national model. Our HCP is different because we have partnerships, and essentially this could go on forever. The thing to note is the change in status. We need to consider the Federal Endangered Species Act: do we want to try and modify the status of the species in the state? Can we streamline HCP processes and regulatory requirements even further to ease the status of the species so we are not forever stuck with the incidental take permit? Personally, I don’t foresee the federal law changing, so we really need to focus on species recovery.

Cathy Carnes: The WI KBB HCP is unique, incorporating concepts like the Voluntary Group that were never included before in an HCP. As an ESA related program, the HCP is the perfect way for dealing with incidental take of KBBs that may result from your management activities. The Services’ ultimate goal is to recover the KBB by restoring self-sustaining populations of the butterfly across the species range. The closer the KBB comes to meeting the WI recovery goals, the less regulation will be needed in areas outside recovery areas (BRZs) in WI. Bob Hess will speak about the KBB recovery program in WI later. Recovery requires restoration of sustainable populations in perpetuity – that means they need to be located on land that can be managed for the long term like state and federal lands, or other lands with conservation easements. Currently, I am working on the draft KBB 5-year review which includes a summary of the status of KBB metapopulations and related recovery work across the species range; a lot of great recovery work is on-going across the range.

Gary Birch: How achievable are the goals for Wisconsin and are ability to possibly delist the butterfly in the state? Is this something we can achieve?

Dave Lentz: Are you asking how long will it take to reach recovery?

Quinn Williams: I think with the new administration coming in there is an opportunity for maximizing public and private partnerships. We have an opportunity to reenergize the program.

So simply put - what is the cost for continuing the HCP?

Are there risks of this continuing for the next 50 years? What does it cost to implement the HCP? Recovery costs are unknown; supporting recovery is a strategy we need to explore.

KBB Citizen Volunteer Program – Tracy Lee Karner

Not being from WI I notice different things – the word FORWARD is used frequently and I’m here to talk about the Karner Blue Network and engage people about the butterfly. I’ve met so many interesting people in the last year just through an interest in

butterflies. We are connecting people who are interested in the environment, birds and butterflies. You as HCP partners are part of this network as well.

I contacted Dave Lentz last year about the butterfly because I was interested in it because we shared the same name as well as being from New Hampshire where it is the state butterfly.

Our volunteer network took flight last summer with the help of Cathy Carnes, Bob Hess, and a wonderful intern who worked diligently all summer. Through this we emerged with a vision to expand our network with a concerted effort on everyone's part to preserve the species and habitat.

Priority Program Needs for 2011:

- IT specialist to help with website (student independent study?)
- Fund raiser

Action: All: Please help connect people interested in helping with Karner blue work to Tracy Lee Karner (tracy.lee.karner@lakeland.ws).

KBB Habitat Restoration Services on Private Lands - Greg Hamilton is with the Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.

The voluntary habitat restoration program is designed to help landowners restore their land for wildlife. There are very few rules in general and our program is non-regulatory. Additionally, there are not a lot of constraints. Simply put, we just need a 10 year commitment for the land restoration and keep in mind this is not just for private lands. Our goal is simply; better wildlife habitat. Presently I am concentrating on barrens restoration in central sands area in Portage, Waupaca, Waushara counties. Please call Greg for information on the program and pass his contact information on to potentially interested landowners:

Greg Hamilton – Central Sands Biologist UFWFS – Wisconsin Private Lands Office

608-221-1206 Ext. 11

greg_hamilton@fws.gov

While private landowners are our main objective there are corporations that we can certainly help.

WI Attorney General passes down opinion - Quinn Williams WDNR

Recently there was a Wisconsin Attorney General's opinion that was published on allowing permanent conservation easements on lands enrolled in the County Forest Program, so long as the easement did not conflict with the purpose of the County Forest Program under Wis. Stat. s. 28.11. This could provide opportunities to enter into permanent conservation easements with the USFS on County Forest lands with shifting mosaic harvesting or similar to the Clark County Forest designated state natural areas within the forest. Work in partnership. It really only applies to county forests.

The WI KBB Recovery Program 2010 Recovery Report - Bob Hess WDNR Karner Blue Recovery Coordinator

We are certainly making progress on recovery of the KBB in Wisconsin. Our goal is to demonstrate recovery and show that there has been an increase in the population. We are presently concentrating recovery on barrens as there are many species that are dependent on barrens habitats.

The numbers game; properties with goals.

The properties we have identified are all part of the statewide recovery properties. What are the goals? The Kbb population has to be maintained at either 3000 or 6000 Kbb for 4 out of 5 years to show that the populations are viable and to meet reclassification criteria, i.e. to reclassify the species from endangered to threatened. Sandhill has an enormous population, well over 22 thousand. In 2009 the emergence model was incorrect so we missed the peak flight. In 2010 we had people on sight watching for the first flight. Things have definitely improved in the past 3 years. Additionally we contracted out our surveys.

We also did a great deal of FWS habitat work and we were able to restore over 45 acres. Management activity is increasing the populations and improving the Karner counts. Additionally, we did have a wetter Spring and Summer in 2010 which does increase the Lupine flush and other nectar plants. We have also gained a cooperating home owner on grassland restoration under a permanent contract, essentially establishing a viable population in the Morainal Sands Recovery Unit.

Current studies taking place are identifying characteristics of Kbb habitat, as well as monitoring vegetation data/tree overstory/ shrubs and bushes. Additionally, data indicates a body of water in relative close proximity to a Karner population plays a critical role.

Another ongoing project is a way to improve the flight predictions. Gap data can distort emergence models and cause us to miss peak flight time. We plan to place thermal sensing monitors to sense the first and second flights this year..

Cathy Carnes: In 2010, the USGS in Indiana has started a research project with Notre Dame to study the effects of climate change on the Karner blue butterfly. It is a 4 year project. This year the study is looking at the effects of snow cover and temperature on over winter egg survival. The study is also looking at the genetic variation in the butterfly across its range to determine if certain populations are more fit than others relative to surviving climate changes. Climate change is a threat to the species but as yet the degree of threat is not well known. Therefore an adaptive management approach is needed as we work through conservation and recovery activities for the butterfly.

2011 = modest work plans

Our goals for the upcoming field season:

- Adjust population surveys
- Implement the volunteer network
- New habitat restoration grants
- Recovery implementation plans.

Additionally, we hope to staff most of the survey staff with volunteers through Tracy Lee's network.

In addition, we are trying to work with the EPA to get funding, though it is proving to be difficult. We were chosen to receive a \$30,000. SWIG grant this year, however due to federal budget reductions, this may not be awarded. This is something we still need to confirm once the federal budget is finalized. Presently, we continue to pursue additional grants. Partners should be aware that the recovery program is running on a shoe string. As funding appears now, we'll see how long the program can remain active. Just so everyone is clear, if we are ever going to demonstrate recovery in WI we need to find funding. While we do have some grant money for habitat restoration, we have very little for administration and support. Currently we do have some seed money from the HCP and we do have a conservation easement option with counties for purchase of permanent conservation easements. But these are only options and possibilities and we definitely need to explore them.

I just want to thank everyone for their help and cooperation and especially for forging ahead in this relationship and partnership, it's a testament to the program we have. Thanks for all the help and especially the division of Forestry for all their support. We still have a lot of challenges but we'll continue to work through them.

Cathy Carnes: I thank everyone for all their help with the renewal of the HCP. Again, please know it remains a nationally recognized successful large HCP program lead by a cooperative partnership. Also, Cathy gave a special thanks to Tracy Lee Karner; a role model on how to grow a volunteer conservation network. Cathy presented a Certificate of Appreciation (on behalf of the Service and the WDNR), to Tracy Lee Karner for her work in starting and growing the Karner Blue Butterfly Volunteer Network in Wisconsin.

Bob Hess: One more comment about a HCP partner that has really helped us -- ATC. Thank you.

I just want to say; we are looking for any type of help that the partners can provide us. However large or small, it is all appreciated. Whatever it takes, we just need to get the restoration done and we need whatever support you can provide.

Properties

Kbb populations at Meadow Valley WA and Greenwood WA are essentially zero; therefore the WDNR is considering switching the recovery goals for these properties to other locations that may be able to support viable populations. We can do this, we just need approval from the USFWS. We are working with Greg Hamilton and private landowners to restore a Kbb population that may replace the Greenwood WA recovery site. Dave is wondering with help from the DNR, FWS and the volunteer network if recovery is achievable? One thing we do know – recovery is costly, and whether or not it's achievable will remain the unknown. But if we believe our goal is recovery it can't be done solely at the cost of the HCP partners. You can't add to the existing work load, but the DNR can address recovery if our regular work load includes maintaining the habitat, will maintain the species.

Bob: Agreed, and stated that one of the biggest challenges to meeting recovery goals is at Meadow Valley WA where at least 200 - 300 more acres are needed for recovery.

Greg: Barrens landscapes are very doable and easy to restore. It doesn't have to be cost prohibitive.

Cathy: Let's remember we have the HCP as the tool for covering take of the Karner blue. If the recovery requirements are met in Wisconsin, the HCP can be modified to provide more regulatory relief to partners. For example, regulatory requirements outside the recovery areas (BRZs) could be made more lenient.

Dave: It has been difficult to get our arms around the idea of "supporting recovery" as opposed to being responsible for it. Maybe reluctant is a better word. If we are to move forward with recovery, the second strategy, do you think supporting the recovery of this species is a part of your business? Or are you happy with the status quo? (2 people would like to keep it as is).

Gary: I accept that recovery is the ultimate goal, but the cost is what holds us back. We don't have to collectively pursue this strategy as a partnership. Individual partners can choose to support recovery directly.

Dave: Do you want me to drop this strategy? As a partnership do we move forward or do you as partners support it?

Jake Nichols: I want to see recovery but I want to know how reasonable it is. Obviously, the only next step is recovery. If we can recover the Karner in Wisconsin, it would save all the partners hundreds of thousands a year so the only viable option is recovery. But we need to know what it's worth and what it means to us in the long run.

Cathy: WDNR has a very good KBB recovery program going. They have demonstrated through KBB population surveys that some of the recovery sites are within a couple years of meeting the KBB reclassification goals – there's an opportunity with more surveying to demonstrate recovery at these sites. The Karner blue is a USFWS keystone species, and the Service is actively tracking its progress towards recovery.

Action Items – Bob will provide rationale and background to the Service to support changing some of the recovery goals for WI so the goals are better aligned with the true population distribution. **Cathy** will review the information and clarify what it will take to change the goals.

Dave: I respect the partners and what the partners have done over the last decade to make this HCP a huge success.

Decision: What I'm hearing is that we will work together to continue to make the HCP program more efficient and more effective (strategy #1), and for now, put the recovery strategy (strategy #2) on hold for additional evaluation and consideration. In the meantime partners can individually choose to support recovery on a one-on-one basis.

Alternative Mitigation

We have been talking about alternative mitigation with the service for some time. Incorporating an alternative mitigation concept into the HCP may involve amending the HCP. When we wrote the HCP management protocols we asked the partners what they were doing in Kbb habitat areas that generated all the Kbb populations. The alternative mitigation concept would involve partners interested in trading mitigation for pre-

management surveys. At the corporate level the activities (recovery work or surveys) doesn't really matter. Most corporations and municipalities are simply interested in the bottom line (cost). Therefore why not consider spending funds on recovery rather than pre-management surveys.

Dave: Provisions for allowing alternative mitigation can be developed and will require approval of the Service and may require amendment of the HCP..

Gary: Are you proposing - as an example if DOT were to destroy 5 acres and rather than performing mitigation we would send the money that would have been used for mitigation towards the recovery fund?

Cathy: Yes, although the rationale for mitigation would need to be provided (the Service can help with this)..

Gary: It does sound more appropriate in regards to conservation to restore a large recovery site rather than just have sporadic mitigation all over the state.

Cathy: I agree, I think we have a unique opportunity here and to not explore it as an option would go against the whole concept of the HCP. The partnership with DNR and the FWS is helping to implement the recovery program in WI which is definitely moving forward and generating very good and much needed information..

Action Item: Dave and Gary will draft an issue brief for the next HCP review meeting with the FWS that covers the idea of alternate mitigation for required activities related to short-term take (as opposed to permanent take, which is already covered in the construction guideline).

Gary: I honestly feel this has a very good potential for the recovery properties as a whole, and I think we could all benefit from this measure. In no way will this hurt our partnerships; only reinforce it.

Assignment – The IOC should consider a subcommittee to consider the different options and eventual changes to the permit.

Annual HCP Team Meetings: Does everyone agree we should continue to meet once a year? No disagreement. In the future we would like to have additional speakers to address the partners. Please keep this in mind for next year – pass along your ideas to your IOC representative.

Lands Included – Land Transfers: Updated maps. Dave Lentz

In the HCP and our conservation agreements we say that when we have a land transfer that we will include a map(s) with the land transfer form to update the “Lands Included” map in the Appendix A’s of our SHCAs. This has not been happening, because I haven’t enforced it. For those partners who don’t have a great deal of land transfers, it shouldn’t be difficult to include an updated set of maps when a land transfer takes place. This may not be so easy for partners who have frequent and numerous transfers or many maps. I propose that we simplify the process. Basically, Cathy and I just need to be able to identify where your property is located in order to determine if it is covered under the permit. In 2009 the Service agreed that a map and a total acreage number would be sufficient. So I suggest for those who can, submit a new map with each land transfer. If this would be a large burden or very costly for partners with extensive lands included

and/or frequent land transfers, they can submit a new set of maps once a year when they submit their annual report.

Gary thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting.

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