

## **WOLF ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**

9/30/2014 Wausau Howard Johnson Hotel

**Introductions** - Dave MacFarland, committee Chair, highlighted discussion topics for the day. The public input process was amended by the administration; will begin in mid-November to provide more time to finalize draft plan (dates and locations TBA). A wolf roundtable meeting is scheduled for mid-late October; stakeholders not represented on Wolf Advisory Committee are allowed to participate although all WAC members are invited to attend but likely not participate as they have had an opportunity to voice their opinions via the Wolf Advisory Committee. Committee goal is to develop one preferred zone boundary alternative for public for comment. The population goal will be presented to the public separately from other aspects of the plan but if there are aspects of the plan that have considerable disagreement among committee members the committee can recommend to the administration that multiple alternatives be developed. A list of primary elements of the management plan was provided; the committee should provide input on any missing items. Adrian Wydeven was thanked for nearly three decades of service to the department and wolf recovery in the state; he has been a great manager and scientist and is wished the best of luck in the future. Committee member introductions were made: Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, Timber Wolf Alliance, Wis. Conservation Congress, Wis. Trappers Association, Wis. Cattleman's Association, Wis. Wildlife Federation, Wis. Bear Hunters Association, Safari Club Int'l, Wis. Bowhunters Association, Wis. Trappers Association, Wis. County Forest Association, USDA APHIS-Wildlife Services, U.S. Forest Service, DNR Customer Service, DNR West-central District, DNR Northern District, DNR Southern District, DNR Northeast District, DNR Law Enforcement, DNR Science Services, DNR Wildlife Damage Specialist, DNR Forest Wildlife Specialist, and DNR Large Carnivore Specialist.

**Wolf Conflict Complaint Categories** - Discussion directed by Dave MacFarland, committee Chair, with comments provided by committee members.

### **Draft Categories Proposal**

- Categories should be written in plain language for easy understanding.
- Additional categories will help with the assignment of wolf and non-wolf complaints.
- All documents pertaining to wolf management should be included in the plan, either as part of the plan or as an appendix.
- **Human Health and Safety**
  - Draft category for human health and safety concern does not provide flexibility for varying degrees of concerns. Sublevels should be added as done with bear safety reporting; ranging from concerns with no physical threat to concern with a potential for physical threat.
  - Confirmed wolf human health and safety complaint - there should be consistency with bear and wolf management; the bear conflict levels will be reviewed and the wolf category for human health and safety will be written consistently with the bear levels.
- **Livestock Harassment**
  - Confirmed livestock harassment - can lead to depredation and abortion of calves and other damage. This can be addressed through policy changes; there is a document dictating wolf depredation and harassment issues and it is reviewed annually.

Harassment issues are evaluated on a case-by-case basis; different directives for using management tools can be provided to field staff.

- Create a “wolf harassment” category with sublevels of “confirmed” and “probable” and a separate “wolf other” category. The Cattleman’s Association approves the creation of a separate category for “wolf harassment” and sublevels of “confirmed” and “probable.” Confirming wolf depredation can be difficult, particularly during some times of the year. Define as “confirmed” or “probable” so confirmed can then be treated similarly to actual depredation events and lethal tools can be implemented.
- The management plan is more general, i.e., lethal control can be instituted after verified confirmed wolf harassment has occurred. Policy then specifies how to implement the plan.
- Public perception is important and people need to feel that they have been treated fairly. Place emphasis on public perceptions in this part of the plan.
- Categories that specify “etc.” need to be clarified and if it doesn’t mean anything change the category name from “other” to “harassment.”
- The 8 categories provided in the draft with the discussed changes are good.
- **SUMMARY**
  - Change “other” to “harassment.”
  - Add category level for “probable harassment” in addition to the “confirmed harassment.”
  - Create a human health and safety category system similar to the one established for bear conflicts.
  - Confirmed or verified harassment should receive the same management response as confirmed depredation.
  - The committee can review depredation management responses annually rather than specifying in the plan; provides greater flexibility in responding to complaints.

**Wolf Harvest and Management Zone Boundaries** - Discussion directed by Dave MacFarland with comments provided by committee members.

- Maps of various alternative boundaries based on previous committee discussions were provided.
- **Subzone 1A (or Zone 7)**
  - Initially proposed in 2012 to implement more liberal harvest in response to high wolf depredation and conflict (90% of Zone 1 conflicts occur in proposed subzone). The zone would not need to be used each year, only when more liberal harvest is needed.
  - The subzone would target areas where hunters are not currently harvesting wolves. However, only 13% of wolves harvested came from depredating packs. The effectiveness of the subzone is unknown.
  - Need to clarify the department’s authority for setting separate quotas in subzones. Separate quotas for subzones could lead to confusion; create as a separate zone (i.e., Zone 7).
  - Need to review age and sex information from the harvest in this area. A separate zone may create a population sink; geographically small and likely supports 3 or 4 packs.
  - Some of the subzone encompasses large portions of National Forest where little depredations occur. Packs that use the NF portions of the subzone winter in areas of

livestock production. Lethal controls can be used on farms; do not include NF in subzone as depredations do not occur here.

- The Bad River Reservation tribe may disapprove of a subzone adjacent to the reservation. The tribes would prefer a buffer between the subzone (high harvest) and reservations. Wolves monitored in the Bad River Reservation very infrequently move west of Highway 13; use this as the boundary.
- The northern boundary should be Cherryville Road east to Ondossagon Road, and north to Nolander or Wedal roads to include agricultural areas.
- Packs shift and so subzones should not be so small that they become ineffective for achieving management goals.
- Deer do not winter in the northern portion of the eastern block of the subzone; inclusion of this area in the subzone will provide greater harvest opportunities but little effect on the population.
- The general public wants to hunt/trap in the largest blocks of habitat, not micromanaged subzones. If zone-specific tags are ever issued this subzone/zone may be avoided if the perception is that the population has been reduced heavily via depredation control.
- The subzone should target areas where agriculture/livestock production exists; areas closest to the lakeshore.
- For deer, bear and wolf, hunters can access the lands where depredation tags are issued.
- Confirmed livestock depredations have and are decreasing in this area as a result of delisting and hunting, but largely depredation controls by USDA Wildlife Services.
- **VOTE - SHOULD THE SUBZONE 1A (OR ZONE 7) BE CREATED TO REDUCE DAMAGE COMPLAINTS? \*6 VOTES YES\***
  - **SUBZONE 1A (ZONE 7) IS NOT VIEWED AS BEING AN EFFECTIVE WAY FOR REDUCING DAMAGE AND WILL NOT BE CREATED.**
- Dissolving Zone 4 into Zones 2 and 6.
  - *Considerations*
    - Using the Mladenoff suitability/probability map, portions of Zone 4 match those in zones 6 and 2. Eliminating Zone 4 would simplify the zone structure. The northern half of the eastern portion of Zone 4 is higher suitability habitat and could be added to Zone 2.
    - Opposition to changing the zone structure only two years into the wolf harvest exists. There isn't a biological reason to make a change. The proposed boundaries are not accurate and do not match the agricultural or forested areas; Highway 64 does a better job of this. The new proposed zone boundaries were based on the USDA agriculture map. The boundary should reflect the Mladenoff model, not simply where agriculture exists or does not exist.
    - The current Zone 2 southern boundary was established to connect to Menominee County.
    - Wolf populations are demonstrating where suitable habitat exists; packs exist in the eastern block of Zone 4 and depredation levels remain low.
    - Boundaries should be established with consistency with old Deer Management Units and furbearer management zones; these are easily understood and recognizable for the public; the old DMUs system was replaced by a county-

based DMU system although the boundaries were maintained for bear and furbearer management. Could use a county-based wolf management zone structure; simple structure and problems can be addressed as they arise. Highways and rivers are more recognizable in the field.

- Delineate and describe boundaries as best as possible in management plan.
  - **VOTE - SHOULD ZONE 4 BE DISSOLVED INTO ZONES 2 AND 6? \*16 VOTES YES; MAJORITY VOTE YES\***
  - *Boundary Delineation Discussion*
    - Use Highway 64 as the southern boundary of Zone 4, not Highway 47 to the west of Menominee County. Use Highway 64 as a consistent southern boundary.
    - Use one highway to form the western boundary for simplicity. Use County Highway S as the western boundary; believed that the Menominee tribe would prefer to use Highway S as a buffer between the reservation and Zone 6. The Menominee originally preferred to have their reservation surrounded by a zone of less intense management.
    - Area north of County Highway 47 NW of Menominee County: removing this area of lower suitability/probability habitat is not necessary as the area is surrounded by areas of higher suitability/probability.
    - Use Highway 2 as the western boundary to the west of Menominee County so there is a recognizable connection to the Stockbridge area of the current Zone 2 in SW Menominee County. This is unnecessary if Menominee County is considered part of Zone 2; thus the Stockbridge area will be connected to Zone 2.
  - **VOTE - SHOULD HIGHWAY 64 BE THE SOUTHEASTERN BOUNDARY WHERE AREAS TO THE NORTH ARE INCLUDED IN ZONE 2 AND AREAS TO THE SOUTH ARE INCLUDED IN ZONE 6? \*19 VOTES YES; MAJORITY VOTE YES\***
  - **VOTE - ESTABLISH A WESTERN/SOUTHERN BOUNDARY OF HIGHWAY S SOUTH TO HIGHWAY 47 EAST? \*0 VOTES YES\***
  - **VOTE - ESTABLISH A WESTERN/SOUTHERN BOUNDARY OF HIGHWAY S AND D TO NEAR THE SW CORNER OF MENOMINEE COUNTY? \*14 VOTES YES\***
  - **VOTE - ESTABLISH A BOUNDARY USING 5<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE TO THE NORTHERN BOUNDARY OF MENOMINEE COUNTY? \*6 VOTES YES\***
- Include Portions of Oneida County in Zone 6.
  - Include a portion in the center of Zone 2 in Zone 6; wolves already avoid this area and a zone with more intense management is unneeded in the middle of Zone 2.
  - **VOTE - SHOULD A PORTION OF ZONE 2 EAST OF THE BAD RIVER RESERVATION BE PLACED IN ZONE 6? \*1 VOTE YES\***
- Simplify the Western Boundary of Zone 3 Using Highway 53
  - The current boundary deviates from Highway 53; using only Highway 53 would simplify the boundary and be more easily recognizable by hunters.
  - **VOTE - USE HIGHWAY 53 AS THE WESTERN BOUNDARY OF ZONE 3? \*15 VOTES YES\***
- Move a Portion of Zone 3 North of Highway 8 into Zone 1

- This would simplify the more complex boundary currently used.
- The Blue Hills area is difficult to hunt using hounds because it is fairly narrow.
- The purpose of Zone 3 was originally established to help manage for livestock depredation problems; act as a transition zone with higher harvest levels.
- The far eastern ¼ of Zone 3 in Taylor County is primarily County and National Forest lands with little depredations; this could be included in Zone 1. The National Forest Service and County Forest Association are not opposed to keeping this area in Zone 3 as there is some agriculture interspersed and it provides USDA-WS more freedom with using management tools. Recreational harvest is effective at removing wolves from this area so leaving it in Zone 3 is acceptable.
- **VOTE - USE HIGHWAY 8 AS THE BOUNDARY SO THE AREA NORTH WOULD BE INCLUDED IN ZONE 1 AND THE AREA SOUTH WOULD BE INCLUDED IN ZONE 3? \*12 VOTES YES, 7 VOTES NO; SPLIT VOTE\***
  - Reasons for not supporting this change:
    - Bear hunters are encountering conflicts in the areas north of Highway 8.
    - There are a couple pockets of agricultural lands north of Highway 8.
    - Liberal regulated harvest may be reducing conflicts in this area.
    - Recommendation: Expand Zone 3 boundary north to County Road W to provide greater opportunities for hound hunters; likely the only zone to remain open long enough to allow hound hunting. Although the WAC is not addressing conflicts with elk the area will likely see elk reintroduction in the near future. This would negate the intent of Zone 3 to act as a transition zone with more liberal management and place large portions of forested lands, suitable habitat, and areas with very few conflicts into Zone 3.
      - **VOTE - SHOULD THE COMMITTEE CONSIDER THIS PROPOSAL REGARDING USING COUNTY ROAD W AS THE BOUNDARY FOR ZONE 3 AND REVOTE ON THE HIGHWAY 53 BOUNDARY ISSUE? \*2 VOTES YES\***
- Connect the Northern Boundary of Zone 5 with the Southern Boundary of Zone 3.
  - The Black River is a major travel corridor between zones 3 and 5 and with Zone 6 (low or no tolerance for wolves). If the quota in Zone 6 were made unlimited this area could result in a large number of wolves being removed.
  - The Mladenoff model shows this area to be low suitability/probability habitat.
  - A considerable amount of agriculture south of Highway 29 exists; Highway 29 or County Road MM would make a suitable northern boundary for Zone 5.
  - Maintaining a strip of Zone 6 in between zones 3 and 5 will not eliminate wolves from traveling through this area.
  - **VOTE - KEEP THE NORTHERN BOUNDARY OF ZONE 5 AS HIGHWAY 29? \*16 VOTES YES\***
  - **VOTE - CONNECT ZONES 3 AND 5? \*0 VOTES YES\***
  - **VOTE - USE COUNTY ROAD MM AS THE NORTHERN BOUNDARY OF ZONE 5? \*5 VOTES YES\***
- Connect Fort McCoy to Zone 5

- Fort McCoy currently exists as an island separated from Zone 5 and the small amount of Zone 6 separating FMC is negligible. If FMC is not allowing wolf harvest it does not need to be connected to Zone 5 using small county roads; FMC could allow harvest in the future. FMC would dictate the number of access permits and ultimately regulate their own harvest.
- Include FMC in Zone 6; it would be a closed area of Zone 6.
- **VOTE - SHOULD THE COMMITTEE CONSIDER CONNECTING FORT MCCOY TO ZONE 5? \*0 VOTES YES\***
- Adjust the Eastern Boundary of Zone 5 in Marquette and Waushara Counties.
  - Use the Wisconsin River as the eastern boundary of Zone 5.
    - Highway 13 should at least be the eastern boundary of Zone 5; the area between Highway 13 and the Wisconsin River could be included in Zone 5. The area east of Highway 13 is highly agricultural. Highway 13 is an easily recognizable boundary and geographically logical from habitat and depredation perspectives.
  - Use the Wisconsin River and Highway 80 as the western boundary of Zone 5.
    - This moves the city of Wisconsin Rapids out of Zone 5
  - These two proposals should be discussed and voted on together, not separately.
  - **VOTE 1 - IF THERE IS CHANGE, WHAT IS THE PREFERRED CHANGE.**
    - **VOTE - USE HIGHWAY 13 AS THE EASTERN BOUNDARY OF ZONE 5 (RATHER THAN THE WISCONSIN RIVER AND HIGHWAY 80)? \*18 VOTES YES; MAJORITY VOTE YES\***
  - **VOTE 2 - VOTE FOR EITHER NO CHANGE TO THE EASTERN BOUNDARY OR ESTABLISH HIGHWAY 13 AS THE EASTERN BOUNDARY.**
    - **VOTE - MAINTAIN THE CURRENT ZONE 5 EASTERN BOUNDARY? \*9 VOTES YES\***
    - **VOTE - CHANGE THE EASTERN BOUNDARY OF ZONE 5 TO HIGHWAY 13. \*11 VOTES YES\***
    - The split vote will be presented to the administration.
- The Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission proposes that the committee endorse maintaining management buffers around reservations with reduced or no public harvest and in which management authority is shared between the state and the tribes; proposes that the committee encourage intergovernmental discussions between the state and the tribes. There are border animals that span both tribal lands and non-tribal lands and management authority for these animals should be shared.
  - This would not prohibit USDA-WS from using lethal controls in these areas.
  - By statute, the department does not have authority to close areas to regulated wolf harvest.
  - The committee is not tasked with creating buffers around sovereign government lands and should not recommend intergovernmental discussions. The committee has authority to provide recommendations regarding zone boundaries (i.e., lines on a map). The committee does not have authority to say how management will be conducted in buffers.
  - Unsure whether this concept has been discussed or used in other states. Some tribes have on-reservation rights and others have on- and off-reservation rights.

- The committee likely does not have the authority to recommend intergovernmental discussions.
- A vote by the committee will do nothing to enhance state-tribal relations and will likely only harm them. Additional clarification will be sought as to the committee's authority for holding a vote on this topic or providing a recommendation.
- Elk Range and Elk Management Zones
  - A formal recommendation from the Elk Advisory Committee has not been provided to the Wolf Advisory Committee.
  - The major issue prohibiting foothold trapping in elk range is the pine marten closed area. Currently, cable restraints are allowed for use on the Monday following the 9-day gun deer season.
  - Last year, the EAC chose to not vote for additional predator control in elk range; this was included in the draft elk management plan. Much of elk range is on National Forest lands and the USFS would not support predator control on their lands.
  - A zone could be created but the zone would need to be open long enough to allow the use of hounds in the area.
  - The marten closed area does not reflect areas where martens actually exist; a modification to the marten closed area could be made so it does not overlap elk or proposed elk range.
  - **CONSENSUS VOTE - THE COMMITTEE DOES NOT RECOMMEND CREATING A WOLF MANAGEMENT ZONE LOCATED AROUND ELK OR PROPOSED ELK RANGE.**
- Set an Unlimited Harvest Quota in Zone 6
  - Proposal (Wis. Bowhunters Assoc.) - Keep Zone 6 open until the legislatively mandated end of the harvest season; last day in February. Minimize wolves in areas where they are not desired and reduces the possibility for conflicts with humans; ensure a sustainable population in areas deemed wolf range. This proposal will not eliminate wolves from Zone 6 but it will reduce their populations. There are places in Zone 6 where wolves are not counted and so the minimum count is unsure; setting a quota when the count is not complete is difficult and thus the quota should be unlimited.
  - Pros
    - Depredation compensation will decrease in the future and an unlimited harvest in Zone 6 could help decrease depredation and reduce the burden on the compensation funds.
    - The Wis. Bowhunters Assoc. believes this is a good way to generate revenue as many bow hunters are likely to purchase a wolf permit in Zone 6. People will buy these licenses but there will be an expectation that hunters will have a reasonable chance to fill the tags; this was not met with unlimited and bonus antlerless permits in areas where high numbers of deer did not exist. Setting an unlimited quota on the basis of revenue generation would be viewed negatively by the public.
    - Provides harvest opportunities.
  - Cons

- This could cause additional issues with illegal harvest reporting (i.e., zone jumping); this has already been identified as a problem under the current system.
  - The committee has authority to set annually high quotas to ensure that few wolves persist in Zone 6. Quotas for the 2014 season were set proportionally high and the committee should evaluate the harvest progress before changing.
  - Establishing Zone 6 with an unlimited quota constrains the department's and the committee's management authorities for future management actions.
  - The Bear Advisory Committee did not recommend unlimited harvest permits for bear in Zone C (southern Wisconsin; similar to Zone 6). The issue was presented and the committee recommended against it.
  - The tribes will not support an unlimited quota in Zone 6 as the area was historically wolf habitat and range. The committee must move beyond the idea that there are areas where wolves should not be allowed to exist.
  - There are areas in Zone 6 of suitable wolf habitat where wolves currently exist with little or no problems. The intent of unlimited harvest is to reduce conflicts; depredation controls are currently reducing conflicts and more data is needed before the committee recommends unlimited quotas.
  - The committee should consider that a federal Judge ruling last week placed the wolf population in Wyoming under federal protection because the state's management plan lacked sufficient management direction.
- The committee has the authority to create zone-specific permits. Recommended that Zone 6 permits be zone-specific but permits for other zones be valid statewide.
  - Recommended that the Zone 6 quota be set separately so higher proportional quotas can be set without impacting harvest opportunities or management in other zones. A separate quota in Zone 6 could impact the populations in adjacent zones for a variety of reasons; errors in the wolf count, wolves are mobile, and hunters may zone jump.
  - **The Wis. Bowhunters Association withdraws their proposal for an unlimited quota in Zone 6 because adequate support does not exist among committee members and the variety of negative issues mentioned.** Recommends issuing enough permits to keep Zone 6 open until the end of the season.
  - Recommended that quotas be set by zone rather than by developing a statewide removal goal and then dividing the quota among the multiple zones to achieve it. Current data allows for evaluating the effect of harvest at a statewide level but does not allow for reliable quota setting and prediction at the zone level. More data may allow for this in the future.
  - **VOTE - ESTABLISH A PROPORTIONATELY HIGH QUOTA FOR ZONE 6 SEPARATE FROM THE QUOTA FOR OTHER ZONES. \*7 VOTES YES\***
  - **VOTE - NO CHANGE; THE COMMITTEE MAINTAINS THE AUTHORITY AND FLEXIBILITY TO SET QUOTAS ANNUALLY. \*12 VOTES YES; MAJORITY VOTE\***

**Research Needs Section of the Wolf Management Plan** - Discussion directed by Dave MacFarland with comments provided by committee members.

- A list of research needs identified in the 2007 wolf management plan addendum was provided.

- Listing research needs in the plan sets justification for prioritizing and funding research needs.

#### Additional Recommended Research Needs

- Research regarding neosporosis and disease prevalence; advantageous for the livestock industry.
- Impacts of harvest on wolf pack size and structure, dispersal of animals, reproduction, and hunting efficiency.
- Analysis of food habits and diet of wolves.
- Number of hunters and trappers accessing depredation program properties.
- Reissue social tolerance study in 5 or 10 years; undertaking these management actions is expected to increase tolerance.
- Radio collar wolves in proposed elk reintroduction range; effects of elk on wolves and wolves on elk.
- Ecological relationships between wolves and Lyme's disease and CWD.
- Impact of hunting with hounds and whether it differs from other forms of recreational harvest.
- Impacts of wolves on forest succession.
- Continuation of hunter/trapper surveys.
- Depredation and harassment abatement techniques.
- Increase genetic testing; evaluate pure wolves and dog-wolf or coyote-wolf hybrids.
- Survey the entire hunting population for estimating the wolf population.
- Research the non-reimbursable effects of wolves on the landscape; economics and social changes.
- Health parameters.
  - Past broad examination for exposure to Lyme disease, parvovirus, distemper, etc. was conducted; evaluate differences between wolves/packs that cause depredation and those that feed on natural foods. The results did not change much overtime and was discontinued; no thorough analysis or comparison was completed.
- Expand population monitoring and counting to the entire Zone 6.
- Continued development of current research into new methods for estimating wolf abundance and distribution of wolves into tribal areas.
- Creation of a more complete population analysis; currently on-going.
- Develop more information on illegal harvest.
- Determine whether regulatory changes can reduce hound depredations.
- Pup survival and mortality factors.
- Evaluate how many bird hunters are not participating in season because of wolf trapping season.

#### Comments from the Public in Attendance

- Comment 1 - The Wolf Stakeholder Committee was popular and diverse; questioned the current status of the committee and why it is no longer in existence. Questioned whether Wisconsin is the only state that provides compensation for hounds killed by wolves.
- Comment 2 - The Timber Wolf Information Network is interested in partnering with the committee and state on wolf education opportunities in Wisconsin. Currently, works with other groups.
- Comment 3 - Wisconsin college professor; brought students to see the process.

- Comment 4 - Doesn't make sense that more money is needed to compensate for killed hounds yet the state continues to allow hound hunting.
- Comment 5 - The committee is so one-sided that it won't even recommend that the state work with the tribes on additional wolf issues. The state deserves to get sued and the committee is a good example why.
- Comment 6 - Nathan Roberts, DNR Research Scientist - Appreciated the committee's input and recommendations for additional future research needs.
- Comment 7 - Encouraged by the additional research needs presented. Concerned that wolves are being discussed as vermin in some parts of the state.
- Comment 8 - Adrian Wydeven, DNR forest wildlife specialist and Wolf Advisory Committee member - Acknowledged the difficulty and quantity of issues address by the Wolf Advisory Committee. Details on how to manage the wolf population are needed but the recovery of wolves in the state is a success story.

**Next Meetings:** The October meeting will be on Wednesday, October 8, 2014.

- Agenda:
  - Monitoring objectives.
  - Education issues.
  - Program funding.
  - Role of the Wolf Advisory Committee; specify in the wolf management plan.
  - Mechanisms for the management plan; when to reevaluate.
  - Mechanisms for altering the wolf management plan.
  - Conflict response on tribal reservations and other tribal issues.
  - Additional issues not previously addressed.
    - Max compensation value for hounds - the need for increasing the value.