

## **WOLF ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**

10/7/2014 Wausau Howard Johnson Hotel

**Introductions** - Deb Beyer introduced the committee. A reminder of committee discussion ground rules was provided. A clarification of discussion order and the procedure for when members are allowed to talk was provided. A review of the meeting agenda was provided. 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, and DNR Large Carnivore Specialist.

**Pre-Agenda Discussion** - Discussion directed by Dave MacFarland, committee Chair, with comments provided by committee members.

- Zone-specific tags were discussed at the previous meeting; issuing unlimited tags in zone 6 was voted down by the committee and the committee retained the authority for issuing zone specific tags in the future. The technical ability to issue zone-specific tags does not currently exist in the licensing system; this ability will be available in the new system in 2016. The technical change in the new licensing system will allow the committee to excise its authority for issuing zone-specific tags if the committee decides to do so in the future.
- The committee is only authorized to develop multiple options for population goals and to present these options for public comment; the committee is not authorized to present multiple options for zone-specific items for comment. The committee is charged with developing the best available recommendation on each issue they consider other than the population goal. The committee should not confuse plan and policy; the committee is an administrative board and should not include policies in the management plan that hinder their future management authority.
- A map of new zone boundaries delineated according to the committee's recommendations was provided. This map will be presented with the management plan for public comment. Zones will need to be renumbered as one zone was eliminated.
- The Wis. Bear Hunters Association indicated that they do not wish to be a part of committee recommendations or the process for developing them. When the management plan goes forward for public comment it will be a recommendation of the department at that point, not the committee.
- A wolf livestock depredation grant has been received and so non-lethal abatement methods will be implemented around tribal reservations.
- Recommended that the wolf tracking forms include deer as an option.
- **Public input process**
  - Originally, all discussions on the management plan were to be completed in July, a couple months following to finalize and edit a draft for public comment, and the public comment period scheduled to begin in October. This schedule was delayed.

- The public input process was recently moved to November. The recommendation of the administration is to move the public comment period to January to avoid the holidays/hunting seasons and to allow adequate time to finalize a draft plan for consideration by the Natural Resources Board at the April board meeting. The NRB will approve the plan before the quota setting process begins next year.
- The four population goal options and the draft plan will be presented simultaneously for public comment. The final rules must undergo a rules hearing by law as well. Five public input meetings will be held throughout the state; four in wolf range and one outside wolf range. A virtual/online input option will also be available.
- The public comment period is tentatively scheduled to begin January 4 and be open for 30 days. The deadline for submitting a green sheet (board agenda item) to the NRB is March 9. This timeframe allows one month for reviewing public comments. The board can also send the plan back to the department for further changes or review and readdress the issue at their summer meeting.
- The possibility that the 2015 season operates under current rules exists. The time sensitive items for approval are those pertaining to hunting/trapping regulations (new zone boundaries, etc.). Other aspects of the plan can be implemented prior to the 2015 season.

**Public Education and Outreach and Volunteer Programs** - Discussion directed by Dave MacFarland with comments provided by committee members.

- A draft of the public education and outreach section from the 2010 plan was provided.
- Management plans typically include a public education/outreach section. This is a broad review; a more detailed plan for implementation would be developed separately by education team.
- The Timber Wolf Information Network (TWIN) has provided key collaboration with education to date. The Wis. Trappers Association has worked on voluntary training, education and courses involving wolf trapping and hound hunting. The USDA Wildlife Services (USDA-WS) develops outreach materials regarding depredation management.
- Private organizations fund education efforts through private funds; the only government funds uses were state and other government funds for purchasing posters (this ended several years ago).
- The Wis. Bowhunters Assoc. offered assistance with education and outreach.
- Wis. Cattleman's Assoc. offered assistance with education and outreach although believes the section has been negligent and the need for this section overblown.
- The recent public survey showed there is a need for outreach regarding wolf biology and ecology.
- Elevate TWIN to equal stature with the Timber Wolf Alliance (TWA). If the DNR provides a liaison to Twin the same person could be a liaison to TWA; both should be members of the Wolf Advisory Committee. These two organizations were recognized specifically due to their long history in partnering on education efforts. Not all partners require a liaison; the DNR provides liaisons to various groups for various reasons and they are not unique to any one group.
- **SUMMARY**
  - In the phrase, "...arguing for the restoration of wolves on ethical grounds," the term "ecological" should be added.
  - The draft indicates that the DNR will assign a person to sit on the TWA board, this should be changed to "be a liaison to."

- The living with wolves section needs to be refreshed and distributed better.
- Add USDA-WS contact information prominently.
- Include social media methods of information distribution.
- Expand Section C to include additional partners and not single-out groups; word more broadly to indicate the participation of various groups and the potential for future partnerships.

**Population Monitoring Objectives** - Discussion directed by Dave MacFarland with comments provided by committee members.

- A review of research needs developed at the previous meeting was provided.
- Monitoring objectives are a list of goals that the committee wants to achieve and research items are methods for achieving objectives.
- Future radio-collaring plans depend on the outcome of research evaluating current methods and potential monitoring methods. The current goal is to maintain similar radio-collaring levels.
- The plan should note the current USFWS post-delisting monitoring period and requirement to continue current population monitoring methods.
- Maintain the voluntary tracking program if the goal is to maintain/enhance population counts.
- Recommended that a committee be established to evaluate a restructure of the annual count to utilize more user groups (sportsman's groups); Opportunities currently exist for groups or members of groups to participate in voluntary track surveys, provide data via the online tracking system, and to submit wildlife observations via the online large mammal observation form.
- Outline the role of DNR staff in monitoring efforts; staff roles are identified in the monitoring programs for other species. If defined roles exist field staff may better explain programs to the public and be more available to help when needed. Current participation is determined by individual interest or the interest of supervisors. This will be discussed with administration.
- When wolves were classified as a game species various data became legally protected as with other game species.
  - The committee in April voted to increase the transparency of wolf monitoring program. The administration is looking at ways to increase transparency while maintaining the integrity of the system. Discussions will begin at the end of October to determine what information can legally be provided. A person representing volunteer trackers should be included in these discussions.
  - The spring meeting regarding count data was ended as pack territories, tracking and location data, and radio telemetry data was no longer legally available to the public. This information is protected for all game species, e.g., the deer radio telemetry data from the recent buck mortality study are not open to the public. These data were previously available when wolves were a protected species to provide transparency as the data was controversial and in an effort to build public confidence in the data.
  - Specific location data is not open for public record; zone level data is available.
  - Location data should not be available as it could be misused for harvest reasons; this would eliminate fair chase. According to the Wis. Bear Hunters Association hunters are not currently having problems locating wolves.
  - Questioned whether providing a map of general pack territories would harm the integrity of track survey data or be useful for hunting/trapping purposes as packs cover relatively

large geographic areas. A map of pack territories would be less descriptive than the current dog depredation alert maps and would be less useful for hound hunters. Other user groups and the general public may have interest in a map of territories; this information as well as how many packs are located in a county are of particular interest to the public. This map would increase transparency and provide educational benefits.

#### Population Monitoring Goals

- Maintain annual minimum winter population count while seeking to develop methods for establishing a population estimate (maintain existing and improve; maintain this verbiage to eliminate confusion).
- Management zone-specific population assessments (maintain).
- Gather public observation data for assessment on wolf distribution (maintain).
- Review current and additional monitoring methods (currently started).
- Fulfill USFWS monitoring requirements under post-delisting monitoring period.
- Utilize new data collection methods such as trail cameras to gain population data.
- Volunteer tracking survey and volunteers (maintain).
- Increase public participation by other groups outside volunteer trackers to develop better population count.
- Monitor mortality causes.
- Define role of DNR staff in monitoring program; conducting surveys and trainings and identifying volunteers.

**Wildlife Health Monitoring** - Discussion directed by Dave MacFarland with comments provided by committee members.

- Health Monitoring
  - Currently monitoring the health of wolf population and disease.
- Mortality Monitoring
  - Mandatory reporting of all wolves found dead and investigated by DNR Law Enforcement staff.
  - Mandatory reporting of all harvests and depredation removals.
  - Natural and illegal kills go undetected. Goal is to record as many mortalities as possible.
  - Conduct necropsies on wolves with unknown causes of death and on all collared wolves (unless cause of death is obvious), or on wolves in which the conditions surrounding death are suspicious. No longer investigating road-killed wolves underestimates illegal killing as some wolves have been identified originally as road kill but were in fact gunshot first.
  - Maintaining current levels or increasing levels of radio-collaring is needed as the population is relatively small (compared to deer) and additional data is needed.
- The plan should identify inter-state cooperation, and a response plan and objectives, in the Great Lakes Region as wolves cross state borders. No formal agreements exist although a bi-annual tri-state meeting regarding carnivore management occurs.
- Management responses to diseases are established in policy. Management occurs at the population level, not at the individual level.

- Cross-species management responses should be considered; e.g., if an outbreak occurs in fox there should be an outlined response plan in place for wolves. This will be included if not currently established.
- Blood samples are currently only collected from wolves at the request of the Wildlife Health Section. Recommended that serum samples be collected from all captured wolves and stored for future monitoring efforts; proactive management. The idea should be considered although may not be necessary for inclusion in the management plan.
- Add information regarding if the population is ever relisted as a protected species; there is some overlap with federal guidelines.
- If the additional voluntary carcass registration procedure is kept in the future it needs to be revised; this procedure will be evaluated after the 2014-15 season.
- Train biologists to evaluate carcasses and collect data; eliminate the storing and transport of carcasses.
- Under the current plan, wolf carcasses can be released to the public if not needed for data collection by the department. Add to the new plan language that the DNR will continue to maintain carcass collection if needed (identified on a list) discretion whether to turn the carcass over to the harvester/landowner will be by LE discretion as done with bear and other species. This will not include found dead wolves as it may create an incentive to kill wolves; with bear and other animals it is up to LE discretion whether to issue salvage permits to the public for these animals (road kill, found dead, etc.).
- Many tribes conduct mortality monitoring internally and are strong partners in collecting and sharing these data. Maintain current cooperation. Recommended that the language be broader to include other cooperation with the tribes.
- **SUMMARY**
  - Identify inter-state management and communication needs.
  - Identify cross-species management needs.
  - Continue evaluation of carcasses from harvested wolves.
  - Collect and store serum from wild animals during research/control trapping efforts.
  - Add management response if population is relisted as a protected species.
  - Maintain capacity to perform more formal mortality monitoring through the radio collaring of wolves.
  - Allow harvested or depredation wolf carcasses to be submitted to the harvester or landowner at the discretion of DNR LE staff when carcasses are not needed for data collection.
  - Continue age assessment of wolves.
  - Maintain current mortality cooperation and partnership with the tribes.

**Compensation for Hounds Killed by Wolves** - Discussion directed by Al Lobner, committee member, with comments provided by committee members.

- Compensation levels have never been increased. The max payment of \$2,500 was established in 1982 because no hunter was able to provide sales information for their hounds and the market was not well documented. The compensation level was established in Administrative Rule in 2005. \$2,500 is the max compensation and has currently acted as the minimum as most hunters request a value over the max compensation. The rule does not state that the value of the dog is

\$2,500 but that the department will only compensate a max value of \$2,500. A court ruled that the processes for developing this rule and collecting public input were valid.

- The Wis. Bear Hunters Association does not feel the compensation level is fair. Some dogs are worth more than the max payment and the committee is requested to make a recommendation to the department to raise the max compensation to \$5,000.

### Compensation

- Current compensation values are less than what some people believe the hounds are worth.
- There is an appeal process if hunters do not agree with the compensation payment; goes through a contested case hearing. The hunter has 20 days to contact the department or to seek judicial review once they receive the standard notice of appeal. No one has currently gone through the contested case hearing or the judicial review; all cases have been settled before this step. In one incident a payment was increased because the hound was originally misclassified.
- A list of 2012-2014 requested and approved compensation payments was provided.
- The state compensation payment could be viewed as a deductible and the responsibility to have additional monetary protection for hounds is at the discretion of the hunter.
- Livestock is paid at the fair market value; hounds are not. Hound compensation should be treated similarly if there is a method to evaluate the fair market value for hounds.
- Current compensations are funded from hunting license revenue and compensation payments for both hounds and livestock; compensations will be prorated for all claims according to state statute if funds do not exist to compensate all claims.
- The language states that the department should compensate the “fair market value” (not exceeding \$2,500). The language should be changed to say the payment is an indemnity payment, not a fair market value payment, as to clarify what the payment actually is.
- The Cattlemans Association is not opposed to compensating for lost hounds. However, livestock production is a person’s livelihood and hound hunters are placing their hounds in the woods by choice. There are people who own high-valued hounds that use them for making a living as well.
- The issue is not the value of hunting hounds but the requested compensation for lost hounds. Must develop a system that can be applied consistently to various categories of dogs. If the max compensation is set at a flat rate of \$5,000, then all dogs killed will automatically be valued at \$5,000; this is currently happening with the max payment of \$2,500 for types of dogs clearly not worth \$2,500.
- 198 hound dogs compensated from 1998-2010; not one hound hunter was able to provide documentation for how much they paid for those dogs; tried to evaluate fair market value in the past but staff was unable as hound hunters were unable to provide payment documentation.
- Compensation funds and the order in which funds are allocated are set in state statute in the following order: first for depredation payments (prorated if not adequate to cover all claims) and second for the wolf management program (if additional funds remain). If the wolf management program does not use the funds they go into the general fund.
- In September, a Michigan hunter had a dog cross into Wisconsin and was killed by wolves; the committee previously voted that hunters not in compliance with all laws while hunting will not be compensated for hunting losses. Recommended that if a dog starts in an adjacent state and is killed in Wisconsin then the loss will not be compensated.

- Must determine definitions for hunting hounds and pets.

### Fair Market Value Model

- Livestock Compensation Payments
  - A panel of 3 agencies/departments (Dept. of Agriculture, UW-Extension, Farm Bureau; established in Administrative Rule) develop the fair market value for livestock compensation. Livestock is compensated according to the average annual value for 5 classifications of livestock; determined each year.
  - Livestock producers have shared genetic information from cattle to help prove the fair market value of livestock.
- A fair market value model for hound compensation must be created so payments can be applied consistently. Components of the model should include: genetics, registration paperwork, breed, age, sex, current market payments, behavior of the hound, etc.
- Consider implementing a new system as a pilot in case payments are considerably increased to the point that funds are not adequate for compensating all depredations. Consider developing a retrospective model based on past data to evaluate this.
- If a fair market value system is established, hunters will still be able to access the appeal process.
- **CONSENSUS VOTE - THE COMMITTEE CONSENSUS IS THAT THE PANNEL WILL DETERMINE THE DEFINITIONS OF HUNTING HOUNDS AND PETS AND DETERMINE THE FAIR MARKET VALUE FOR ALL CATECORIES OF DOGS INCLUDED.**

### Summary

- The management plan will state that a panel will be developed annually for determining the fair market values for various types of hounds modeled after the process for determining livestock compensation values.
- **VOTE - SHOULD THE COMMITTEE FORWARD THE PROPOSAL AND PURSUE THE POSSIBILITY FOR DEVELOPING A PANEL TASKED WITH DEVELOPING A PROCESS FOR DETERMINING THE FAIR MARKET VALUES FOR HUNTING HOUNDS SIMILAR TO THE PROCESS AND PANEL USED TO DEVELOP LIVESTOCK COMPENSATION VALUES \*19 VOTES YES, 0 VOTES NO; MAJORITY VOTE YES\***

**Future Role of the Wolf Advisory Committee** - Discussion directed by Dave MacFarland with comments provided by committee members.

- Determine and outline the future role of the WAC in the new wolf management plan. The draft 2010 plan was provided.
- Other species advisory committees meet on an as-needed basis; often once or twice per year to establish annual quotas.
- The membership of the committee is determined by the administration. Retired DNR staff can represent member organizations on the committee but cannot fill a seat because of past familiarity with the issue.

**Wolf Management Plan Update and Revision** - Discussion directed by Dave MacFarland with comments provided by committee members.

- Provide a recommendation for the lifespan of the management plan so the department/committee does not get into a position using an outdated management plan or having to discuss whether the plan is still valid or not.
- Recommended that the plan is developed similarly with other wildlife management plans; 10-year plan with annual reviews.
- The lifespan of the plan can be determined by establishing trigger points in the management plan; such as if the population is ever relisted as a protected species.
- Plans are typically not revised on their intended schedule; a 10-year plan with annual review is a good method so parts can be evaluated but the entire plan does not need to be rewritten.
- Recommended that the current process used to develop the 2015 Wolf Management Plan be independently reviewed as the process was inefficient.
  - The committee consensus is that the process could have been more efficient.
  - **CONSENSUS VOTE - THE COMMITTEE RECOGNIZES POTENTIAL INEFFICIENCIES OF THE COMMITTEE AND DOES NOT OPPOSE FORWARDING THIS RECOMMENDATION TO THE ADMINISTRATION.**
- **SUMMARY**
  - The management plan will be the “2015 Wolf Management Plan.”
  - The plan’s lifespan will be 2015-2025.
  - A thorough plan review will occur after 5 years (2020) and a full revision will occur after 10 years (2025).
  - The committee retains the authority to issue a plan revision before the lifespan of the plan is completed to address needs or issues.

**Wolf Management Funding and Sources** - Discussion directed by Dave MacFarland with comments provided by committee members.

- Much of the management program funding is established in state statute; sales of hunting/trapping licenses and fees. Funding is first used for depredation compensation and second for wolf management (if funds remain). Pittman-Robertson federal funds also are provided for wolf management.
- As wolves are a public trust resource and many non-hunters are interested in sustaining the wolf population, methods for gathering GPR funding are needed; forward this recommendation to the administration.
- Multiple tribes have contributed funds for various wildlife resources in the state.
- Wolf management should be funded consistently with other wildlife species.
- A general habitat stamp to replace other wildlife stamps has been proposed; unsure if these funds would be allocated in-part to wolf management.
- In many states the state Department of Agriculture funds wolf depredation abatement and controls.
- Gathering multiple partners in wolf management will provide more avenues for accessing grants and other funds.

**Summary** - Discussion directed by Dave MacFarland with comments provided by committee members.

- The committee has had the opportunity to comment and provide recommendations on all aspects of the plan.
- Committee members have had their share of disagreements but there have been plenty of situations in which members have agreed. The committee members were thanked for their participation throughout the process.
- One more meeting is expected as the committee will need to address public and NRB comments and develop a single wolf population goal and finalize the wolf management plan.
- The committee will be provided a list of tracking classes and a list of public meeting locations and times.
- There will be 5 in-person public input meetings regarding the plan (4 in wolf range, 1 outside wolf range) and 1 virtual (online) meeting. There will be additional opportunities for the public to provide online comments as well.
- There is no update to provide regarding the wolf stakeholder roundtable. The intention is to conduct this meeting prior to the public input process for the management plan.
- The members of the committee are encouraged to engage the public and encourage them to participate in the public input process.

**Comments from the Public in Attendance**

- None provided.

**Next Meeting:** TBA.