



Wisconsin Conservation Congress
 District 10 Fall Meeting 2023
 Meeting Minutes

ORDER OF BUSINESS	08/08/2023	7:00 P.M.	DNR Service Center, Janesville
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I. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS
A. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order by	Scott Lettman at 7:00 P.M.
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B. ROLL CALL

ATTENDEES	Dane County - Paul Reith, Mary Ellen O'Brien, Brad Wagner, Tim Gorski Green County - Ken Risley, Ryan Schutte, Scott Lettman Jefferson County - Jeff Winn, Dennis Jones, Lowell Wright, Thomas Schwefel Rock County - Larry Meyer, Charlie Brown, Ryan Stahl, Kyle Walker, Curt Jacob Walworth County - Ronald Earnest, Oscar Mueller, Martin Sands, Joe Theys Youth Conservation Congress - Gabby Wright (Jefferson County)
EXCUSED	George Meyer (Dane Co.), Richard Marti (Green Co.), Cody Gadow (Green Co.), William Kehoe (Jefferson Co.), Ryan Stahl (Rock Co.), Kathleen Tober (Walworth Co.)
UNEXCUSED	
GUESTS	Shelly Allness, DNR Secretary's Office representative Andy Paulios, DNR Wildlife Management supervisor (Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Jefferson) David Rowe, DNR Fisheries Management supervisor (Columbia, Dane, Grant, Green, Iowa, Lafayette, Richland, Rock, Sauk) Kyle Johnson, DNR Law Enforcement (Janesville service center, serves Rock County)

C. AGENDA APPROVAL/REPAIR

DISCUSSION	None
ACTION	

D. REVIEW COMMITTEE MISSION STATEMENT

DISCUSSION	None
ACTION	

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

DISCUSSION	None
ACTION	

II. INFORMATION & ACTION ITEMS

A. Department of Natural Resources Staff Updates

DNR Staff

DISCUSSION	<p>DNR (Andy Paulios, David Rowe, Kyle Johnson) provided the following information and updates:</p> <p>FISHERIES Fisheries has lost 5 positions due to lack of funding; biologists are needed for Dane, Green, Rock, and Jefferson Counties. One of the funding issues is that there have been no fee/license increased in 17 years. Availability of less money has resulted in cutting back on some programs. Creel surveys continue to be prioritized. Brown trout production was good in 2021, but suppressed since then. Although water levels are low this year, there is still good trout fishing at most locations. Pan fishing the the Madison chain of lakes is good. Carp management has been cut at most locations due to lack of markets for the harvested carp.</p> <p>There was a question on whether Dingell-Johnson funds (federal fishery funds) are being used by DNR projects? These funds are being used for surveys and other projects and DNR relies heavily on them DJ funds are based on license fees. License sales have been pretty steady, the problem is no increase in the fees. There needs to be an increase in fees in the state budget.</p>
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	<p>WILDLIFE</p> <p>The statewide wolf management plan is now available for public comment. A fair number of bears were sighted in southern Wisconsin this summer, mainly in the Jefferson County and Waukesha County areas. There has been a high turnover in wildlife biologists due to retirements. Most of the wildlife resource people are at about the 5 year experience level. Low water levels have resulted in poor duck production, but has allowed DNR to do more habitat and food source management as well as waterfowl banding. There was another 2,000 acre addition to the Princess Point Wildlife Area in Jefferson County, including 4-5 impoundments. Pumps on the land will continue to be used to manage water levels and eliminate undesirable habitat such as cattails. Extensive repairs have been needed at the McKenzie wildlife center due to winter damage of fencing and other facilities. DNR is aiming for releasing 70-75,000 pheasants this year. The spring turkey hunt has been the best it has been in about 3-4 years. There are lots of broods this year, with an increase in northern Wisconsin. It has been a relatively normal year for CWD occurrences. There will be numerous kiosks and dumpsters out for this year's hunting season.</p> <p>There was a question whether there has been any increase in Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) due to the drought conditions. DNR said there has not been an increase that they are aware of; there was an outbreak in 2012 which was a drought year. There was also a question about West Nile virus. DNR stated that this was an issue for grouse populations a few years ago, but there has not been much reported this year.</p> <p>There was a question whether bobcat population increases are affecting the turkey populations? DNR stated that while there has been an increase in bobcats, the density is too low to affect turkey populations. Raccoons and skunks are the main egg and nest predators.</p> <p>Concern was expressed about the "hunt wild" app that had been available for monitoring and reporting wildlife. Kari said that app was discontinued because it was old and there was not longer technology to support it. It was mentioned that Onyx is another private app that does similar things. Shelly Allness stated that if there are certain functions of a particular older app that you liked, you should let DNR know that (Kari or your local DNR representative).</p> <p>LAW ENFORCEMENT</p> <p>The Southeast and Northeast DNR districts have been issued body cams and DNR is in the process of developing a record management system so that wardens are aware of all contacts that have been made with particular landowners. Seven warden positions have been filled and there are still 19 vacancies. DNR is going through the recruitment process now for the next hiring class of 60 people. There is an opening for a statewide shooting range coordinator.</p> <p>470,000 ATVs were registered last year and there has been an uptick in fatal crashes mostly due to not wearing helmets or seatbelts. There were 270,000 snowmobile registrations last year. Fatalities have been averaging about 16 per year, mostly due to alcohol and speed.</p> <p>There was a question on the extent of roadways open for for ATVs. About 1/2 of the township roads are open, but no county highways yet.</p> <p>There was a comment on the importance of having a statewide shooting range coordinator and a question on how many DNR shooting ranges there are in the state. Mary Ellen O'Brien thought there were about 8 DNR ranges. Subsequent checking indicated there are 10 DNR ranges, 17 county ranges, and 30 private ranges.</p>	
ACTION		
PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE		DEADLINE

B. Conservation Congress Updates

[PRESENTER]

DISCUSSION	<p>1. YCC Update Lowell Wright, Jefferson County, noted that the YCC summer program will be a camping event at Calumet County park. Activities will include learning about Lake Winnebago, cave exploration, bat ecology, survival skills, duck banding, fishing, hiking, trap shooting and archery. The YCC will staff and host the Youth Zone at the Waterfowl Hunter's Expo in Oshkosh on August 24, 2023. Gabby Wright will be an instructor in the shooting event (new this year).</p> <p>2. Guidance for upcoming committee meetings and advisory committee assignments Scott Lettman reviewed this item. The focus of this item was to encourage WCC delegates/committee members to review the code of procedures regarding committee meeting procedures and protocols. It is important for committee</p>	
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members to understand their role in the committee, the expectations for committee leaders, and the role of DNR liaisons. WCC delegates should review who is representing their districts on the various advisory committees. Councilors should review any committee openings with their districts and make sure everyone is assigned to a committee.		
3. Review resolutions from the district Paul and Scott reviewed the resolutions from each county in District 10. Dane County had 17 resolutions; topics included the following: regulating wake boat ballast water, bear baits, hound training season, removal of barriers to stewardship program, eliminate lead for hunting, air quality concerns, and grassland bird protection. Green County had two resolutions - keeping cats indoors and include educational material on lead in all applicable DNR publications. Jefferson County had one resolution - ban LiveScope 360 degree imaging locators in Wisconsin waters. Rock County had two resolutions - change the muskrat/mink season to 6 a.m. and include educational material on lead in all applicable DNR publications. Walworth County had four resolutions including increasing musky size limit to 50 inches on Lake Delavan, keeping cats indoors, removal of barriers to Stewardship program, and support farmers using non-lethal predator programs.		
4. Paul and Scott briefly reviewed the following miscellaneous administrative items: Advisory committee evaluation forms, delegate reimbursement process, unexcused absences, filling county delegate vacancies and WCC outreach.		
ACTION		
PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	

C. Other Congress Business

[PRESENTER]

DISCUSSION		
ACTION		
PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	

III. MEMBERS MATTERS

DISCUSSION	<p>Ken Risley noted that some resolutions need outside expertise in order for county delegates to understand them and decide how to vote on them. County delegates do not have the expertise to evaluate some of the resolutions and DNR can't be present at all of the meetings. Paul suggested that resolutions requiring particular expertise could be flagged as needing further input from DNR. Ken thought they should be flagged at the Rules and Resolutions committee as needing more information before being assigned to a committee. Shelly Allness suggested that this concern be brought to Kari's attention.</p> <p>Ryan Schutte expressed concern about mowing practices along town roads and county highways. Invasive and other undesirable plants such as wild parsnip are actually being spread when mowing occurs after plants have seeded out. It would be more effective to allow burning of roadside ditches.</p> <p>Joe Theys noted there is a huge problem with wake boating on Lake Geneva and asked about resolutions on that topic. Mary Ellen O'Brien stated that there have been wake boating resolutions in the past. The most recent was Resolution 133922 submitted in 2022 by George Meyer, Dane County. It passed at the spring hearing by a margin of 1,545 to 95. A resolution on preventing transfer of wake boat ballast water between water bodies has been introduced in 2023 and it has been assigned to the Environmental Committee. Joe also expressed concern about DNR "rubber stamping" requests for longer piers on Lake Geneva; approving lengths that go against their own studies. DNR responded that there is guidance for pier length and construction and DNR encourages this guidance to be followed. However, DNR can only enforce state law, not guidance. Sometimes the laws and guidance differ. Joe should look at state statutes to find out the legal requirements for piers.</p> <p>Oscar Mueller noted that there was a lot of discussion and confusion after the annual meeting regarding whether there will be any changes to the spring hearing format. The 2023 open house format wasn't well received in most counties. Attendance was way down and citizens were disappointed that they did not have a chance to speak on the resolutions. This sentiment was also expressed by others at the District meeting. Paul Reith responded that as it currently stands, the open house format is being considered for 2024. He suggested that concerns should be brought to the attention of the District Leadership Council and Executive Committee.</p>
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	<p>Ron Earnest shared his experience with fishing contests out west - this is an effort to get new anglers involved in fishing and to keep current anglers involved. The contests involve not only catching fish, but learning to identify them, their habitat requirements, and other aspects. This might be a good idea for Wisconsin to consider. Curt Jacob was disappointed that the resolution allowing an extended 2-day deer hunt for youth was soundly defeated. He supports dedicating a couple of extra days for a youth hunt to encourage more participation.</p> <p>Larry Meyers complimented DNR on the Princess Point land purchase and management of the previous pumping practices that adversely affected downstream landowners.</p> <p>Tom Schwefel believes that youth hunts are getting too long and that they are being abused. The kids are going on the hunts, but their dads are doing the hunting. Eight years worth of youth hunts is too long; this was originally set up for 4 years. There needs to be a better way to do this. Tom also expressed concern that it is too easy to get turkey hunting tags when some are left over after the initial allocation; he is aware of one person who got 19 tags. There should be a limit on the number of these additional tags, 2-3 per person at the most. Tom is also concerned about the broad definition and interpretation of ordinary high water/high water. Under the current definition, people can trespass on private land to hunt or operate a canoe/kyak as long as there is enough water to be considered "navigable", including flooded fields, ditches, driveway, etc. Public access is allowed in all navigable waters.</p> <p>Jeff Winn is of the opinion that kids are hunting at too young an age in the youth deer hunts. He also stated his disappointment with the open house spring hearing format and asked if that will continue next spring. Paul and Scott said this is still being discussed, but most likely some form of open house will continue. He noted that this is a good opportunity for DNR to showcase their activities and meet with the public. If particular counties are strong minded about going back to the old style spring hearings, they also need to find someone to coordinate that effort. Kari isn't going to be able to accommodate and handle multiple forums. As noted in an earlier comment, delegates and county chairs who are opposed to the open house format need to contact Kari and the WCC leadership to make this known and to help identify and evaluate alternative venues that combine some of the past practices with some of the new practices.</p> <p>Mary Ellen O'Brien summarized recent communications with Kari and other DNR staff regarding the increased emphasis on environmental topics by WCC leadership. The game plan is to ask DNR to do webinars or other presentations as needed to assist WCC delegates and the general public in understanding current issues of concern such as PFAS contamination and other subjects that have been brought up in citizen resolutions. This could also benefit Ken Risley's concern about county delegates not wanting to vote on certain resolutions because they did not have the understanding or information necessary.</p> <p>Dennis Jones shares Tom Schwefel's concern about the high water mark situation. People are going on private land to hunt via a "navigable" waterway and you can't do anything about it. Dennis is also opposed to on-line registration for deer hunting.</p> <p>Paul Reith raised a question about drain tiles, how these function and how they are regulated. The main historic function of drain tiles has been to drain wetlands to make more available farmland. Ryan Schutte said this is still being done today and is pretty sophisticated in terms of drain tile types and sizes to accomplish a certain acreage goal, moisture conditions, etc. Paul acknowledged that the youth hunt is divisive, but feels we need to do everything we can to address the hunter shortage; there is no statewide shortage of deer.</p> <p>Tim Gorski noted that he had 29 students in his hunter education classes this year. Only two had been in the woods prior to the class. Purchase of hunting licenses is declining and we should do everything we can to encourage new hunters. Allowing kids to take a couple of days off from school to participate in an extended deer hunt wouldn't be any different than taking off for other reasons. Tom Schwefel said the main concern is just too many days of hunting - stick with the 9-day deer hunt season and take the kids with you.</p> <p>Scott Lettman said based on his observations at a particular where he has hunted turkey for a number of years, the increasing bobcat population does seem to affect the turkey population. He knows there is one tomcat present at this location and expects to see the bobcat population increase.</p> <p>Joe Theys mentioned that he gives fishing lessons and that he will have taught over 600 kids how to fish at the end of the season. There is strong interest in fishing by youth.</p>
ACTION	

IV. ADJOURNMENT

MEETING ADJOURNED	9:30 P.M. Motion to adjourn by Tom Schwefel, seconded by Brad Wagner
SUBMITTED BY	Paul Reith
DATE	08/21/2023