

**Conservation Congress Trout Committee Meeting Minutes
Vernon Inn & Suites, Viroqua, Wisconsin
September 18th, 2009**

1. Organizational Matters:

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Chairman Reiter.

Members present were Mike Reiter, Dennis Vanden Bloomen, Maurice Amundson, Edgar Anderson, David Barron, Peter Doperalski, Dennis Haanpaa, Dave Fritz, Larry Knutson, Todd Oestrich, Arby Linder, Harry Meinking and Dan Tyrott.

Also present were Dave Hausman (DNR Warden) and Larry Claggett (DNR Fisheries) plus John Bethke (Westby) former Trout Committee Member.

Absent and excused: Scott Hecker, Roger Roehl, Robert Maass, and Gerald Gilbertson.

Absent and not excused: Robert Brunkow and Richard Moses.

2. Department Information Items & Updates (review of 2009 Trout season by Larry Claggett)

a. There has been an increase in Trout Stamp sales of 6% for 2009 leading to \$250,000 being added into the Trout Stamp account.

b. An additional \$1,000,000 was added in SW Wisconsin from federal funding which incorporate multi-species habitat. The 2007-08 floods have scoured the streams making fishing very productive in the Vernon County area

c. Next year a major 10 year review of the Trout Regulations is scheduled by DNR. The Trout Committee will have a major part in this review. Modifications will be addressed at the Spring Hearings and be implemented in 2012 if passed.

A. The Missions of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress Trout Committee was reviewed with no modifications. (See Below)

**Trout Committee of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress
Mission Statement**

The Mission of the Trout Committee of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress is to provide input from the public through county delegates assembled from areas throughout the State of Wisconsin making up that committee and addressing issues where public input is deemed appropriate on matters of cold water resources including the flora and fauna that make up those resources.

These issues include but are not limited to:

1. Water quality
2. Water resource management
3. Class and category water designations
4. Bag limits
5. Tackle restrictions
6. Season framework
7. Environmental practices effecting cold water resources
8. Enforcement policies
9. Any other business that would come before the Committee

The charge of the Trout Committee is to ensure that the cold water resources of the State of Wisconsin are not degraded or impaired in any manner, with the necessary steps taken to improve them whenever and wherever possible.

3. Discussion & Action Items

A. Old Business—Review of Trout Related Issues and Positions

A review of an ongoing project that was started in 2008 and will continue on into the future by the Trout Committee was held. Following a lengthy discussion of the issues a motion was made and approved to accept them as described below.

Trout Committee Issues

In 2008 our Trout Committee started a process to streamline our future meetings and track on important issues.

- a. We started with 25 issues and statements of concern tabulated from committee members at earlier meetings. A list of these was sent out prior to the meeting.
- b. We spend minimal time discussing them but requested the members to comment on them and prioritize them responding via e-mail or letter which a number did. As they came in they were sent out as e-mail attachments to our e-mail list which elicited more response.
- c. From these responses we prioritized 5 issues deemed very important and focused on them. Many of the original 25 were incorporated in the top five.
 1. Regulation simplification
 2. Youth Involvement
 3. Conflict of users (catch and keep vs. catch and release)
 4. Water Quality
 5. Access

We will continue with this process and at our next meeting get a consensus on them with suggestions for each issue. This keeps the committee together for the whole year and not just at one meeting. We spend too much time at each meeting going over exactly the same things and this would get us up to speed so we can accomplish our real work in the first portion of the meeting when everyone is fresh. New members would be brought up to speed and a listing of past issues and how they were handled will be provided in a living document which can be modified and added to.

This process will streamline the meetings and lay a framework that can be passed along as new chairmen and members get involved.

Committee Positions on the Issues

1. Regulation simplification

This issue has been a point of contention since the Category System was put in place back in the early 1990's. This system is an extremely important tool needed to properly manage our cold water fishery. Our streams and rivers are not all the same and a graduated system is necessary to address the unique properties of each on a case by case basis.

The Category System has been modified and simplified several times since its inception. The Trout Committee will continue to strive to work on simplification without interrupting the integrity of the system.

The Category 5 portion seems to cause the most concern. We realize that catch and release regulations on certain waters may be necessary to achieve trophy water status but

the number of this type of stream classification in any given area may be a cause for concern.

The Trout Committee feels strongly that the streams in the state should be reviewed every 3-5 years to insure that they are in the correct category and that the category 5 regulations are doing what they were intended to do. If this cannot be substantiated than a change must be made until the sought after results are achieved.

2. Youth Involvement

Every year there are continuing reports of fewer youth participating in the trout fishing experience. The same can be said for all types of hunting, fishing and other outdoor activities. Organized sports and other activities along with technologies such as computers and electronic games lead to a condition termed “outdoor recreational deficit”. Time allotment in single parent families along with career timing in both single and dual parent families do not provide time allotment for parent/youth interaction. Many less obvious situations and conditions can be additive to arrive at less generalized outdoor youth involvement.

Several efforts with youth regulations have been suggested and tried with varying levels of success. Providing youth with increased opportunity can perhaps get them involved early in the desired activity. Some feel this type of approach is sending the wrong message however.

Mentoring is a viable method to expose youth to the outdoors. Parents, relatives and advocates are needed to offer the experience and get the youth involved. It is up to the youth after that to carry on with the experience.

3. Conflict of users (catch and keep vs. catch and release)

There is a perception, either real or imagined, that certain user groups can intimidate other users. Methods of fishing such as artificial vs. live bait, types or equipment or apparel and general approaches to fishing such as catch and keep vs. catch and release have caused concern and at times conflict in the trout fishing community.

The Trout Committee feels strongly that any activity on any stream that is legally allowed is appropriate. If the fisher desires to take a legal limit home for consumption then that is their prerogative. Consumption of the fish is part of the fishing experience just as communion is part of some religious activities.

4. Water Quality

The Trout Committee feels that to ensure a viable cold water resource, maintaining and enhancing water quality is our number one priority. Any activity that would degrade or impair water quality will be addressed swiftly and decisively. This also addresses activities that would influence water availability and water levels. Anything that affects any part of the macro or micro invertebrate stream inhabitants and aquatic in-stream or adjacent vegetation also falls into our oversight.

5. Access

Availability of stream access with proper vehicular parking is a concern of the Trout Committee. Resident vs. non-resident fishers has been an issue. Some feel that non-resident fishers, especially in areas that are close to state borders pose problems with landowners. Early versus regular trout fishing season participants could also be a concern. Reports, both confirmed and unconfirmed, have been voiced in both cases.

The Trout Committee feels that fishers must make the effort to foster good landowner relationships to assure reasonable stream access. Several organized groups, such as Trout

Unlimited and certain area local clubs hold landowner appreciation day events. Incentive for landowners to open their land or keep it open is an option. Individual fisher/landowner contact will go a long way in obtaining access. An educational program or brochure put out by the DNR or TU to promote landowner/fisher interaction might help in obtaining and keeping access.

Some of the comments concerning the five positions included:

One on one mentoring is the best way to get youth involved.

If you cannot get access to streams you will not fish. Get youth involved with stream projects and/or planting and they will feel a part of the resource. College classes at River Falls and Stout have moved students to the streams and have raised awareness at that age level.

The Kinni was overstocked and fishermen are taking and keeping more fish. The Fish Manager changed the slot for trout and promoted taking fish. We need to promote personal choice to keep or release.

Sixth-five % of trout die of natural causes or predation while only 15% are pulled out by fishermen. Bass size limits or “Muskie Religion of Catch and release” can be intimidating.

We have to return to fair chase and the outdoor heritage.

Water quality is the number 1 issue for the committee.

Non-residents can be conceived to be a problem. There are also early vs. regular season trout fishing issues.

Fishing path access is an option. Getting a 66 foot access into perpetuity with the DNR paying for the access is the best of both worlds. Maps of access need to be made available.

The State Constitution says we have access to streams and this is a serious issue for youth. The deterrent is trespass and the “keep feet wet” rule changes. We should be working with our legislators to keep access. It was easier to get easements from farmers with old-time views than new urbanites with “this is mine—keep out” attitude.

The Warden prospective is that they spend many hours dealing with people fencing access to streams. We need to provide maps where access is available. The DNR does not provide a map but there is an atlas available for around \$26 that shows county forests and public properties.

New Business—

a. Resolutions—potential WCC Advisory Questions for the 2010 Spring Hearings

i. 340109-Spring Water Trout Refuge of Wolf - A similar resolution was presented at the 2008 meeting with the following dispensation. From Last Year-340308 Wolf River Trout Refuge - Comments: due to warm water conditions there have been poor stocking results; habitat work for pools is expensive and not that effective with refuge status; there is poor survival of trout in that river because of high water temperature but feeder streams have trout; trout survive by going into the feeder streams; no natural reproduction supported in the main river; this will be a “put & take” river; it is difficult to create a trout only refuge; pooled fish are easier to catch as they congregate. A motion was made and approved to reject this resolution on the basis that it is a local situation and should be worked out with the local fish manager if possible.

A Committee member has spoken with the fish biologist and he noted that they stock 6-7 inch trout with less than 1% carryover to the next year. Some winter-over trout do survive and then move up into the cooler streams in the summer. The local fish manager does not think this will improve the fishery, because of the water conditions of the Wolf River or by cooling the water

sufficiently for trout. He has studied the river and the fish biologist recommends that this will not make any difference.

A motion was again made and approved to reject this resolution on the basis that it is a local situation and should be worked out with the local fish manager if possible.

ii. 340309-Trout Management—Adhere to Proven Practices (Wolf River) proposal by James B. Waters for Brown Trout stocking in the Spring of the year at the 17 access sites to allow for brown trout and brook trout (carry-over from previous years).

Comments noted: The trout are mostly 4-inch trout stocked in April. The DNR have stocked in the fall since 2006 fall with 7-inchers and it is considered a “put and take resource” with only 1% survival over the winter. Stocking sub-legal sized fish that will not survive over the winter is not recommended. It would make more sense to stock 8-inch legal trout in the spring. This would probably be a very good river for smallmouth bass management.

A motion was made and approved to reject this resolution. The fish manager will contact the author of the resolution to explain the current situation.

iii. 590109—Extend Trout Season to October 31st - proposal by Phil R. Schweitzer-
Comments: The trout season closes later in some states. A later closure in Wisconsin would not potentially create a heavy fishing pressure because of many competing outdoor activities—archery, pheasant, grouse, duck, deer, salmon. Fishing pressure would be light as there are competing activities for the sportsman. Spawning—would we be interrupting the spawning process? We will be reviewing the laws and regulations next year. Some of the southern streams would be impacted. In the north larger fish could be affected. The top of the year-class trout would be vulnerable as they are very territorial and are in very small streams. Social issues--conflicts with bow hunters, early goose seasons, waterfowl, and woodcock hunters/seasons. Would a sunset clause be enforced? This suggestion provides more fishing opportunities for trout diehards and people that want to combine activities (hunt and fish). Fish managers think it would not affect the trout population. Warden’s comment: no conflict from a law enforcement stand point. October could increase large brook trout harvest. Blaze orange apparel would be common sense approach to be visible to anyone that would be deer hunting.

A motion was made and approved (9 in favor, 3 opposed, 1 abstain) to formulate an advisory question to be placed on the 2010 Spring Questionnaire that would seek public comment on an extension of the trout season through the end of October.

b. Submitted Resolution (Open Trout Season 1 week early from regular fishing season. (Submitted by Ken Anderson, Oneida County)

Comments: How much fishing pressure would this put on the trout streams? It would provide more fishing opportunity and add an economic stimulus for local business by having two openers. The early season was catch and release and as a gentlemen’s gesture we closed the c/r season for a week before the catch and keep season. A week earlier opener would add time on to the season when no bugs or stream weeds are present. Warden’s comments: that is when the stocking occurs and enforcement would be difficult to work two openers.

A motion was made and approved (12 favor, 1 opposed) to formulate an advisory question to be placed on the 2010 Spring Questionnaire that would seek public comment on opening the regular trout season on week prior to the opening of the regular state fishing season.

4. Members Matters

Stream Classification Issue- Parts of various rivers in the state are considered trout stream while other parts of the same river are a warm water resource? Because of the classification of part being a designated trout stream, fishers cannot fish during the closed trout season for other

species of fish in designated trout areas. Could Class II and III trout streams be allowed open for the taking of other fish species that could legally be taken outside of the trout season? Trout that would be caught during that time would be immediately released. This would open up more opportunities for non-trout species. A lengthy discussion ensued. It was decided to table the issue for now and also make the Warm Water Committee aware of this consideration.

Angler Education Fly Fishing Program Update (D. Vanden Bloomen) - The Boy Scout Instructor's manual is almost ready for DNR review. The Fly fishing Instructor's Classes were held Feb 09 in Stevens Point to certify 15 people as Angler Ed instructors. Another class was held for six women as instructors for the "Casting for Recovery" Women's Fly Fishing Programs.

With no further business the meeting was adjourned at 9:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted:

Dennis Vanden Bloomen - Recorder