

**Conservation Congress Trout Committee Meeting Minutes  
AmericInn, Merrill, Wisconsin  
September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

**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, Roland Peterson, Dennis Haanpaa, Harry Meinking, Mike Kuhr, Maurice Amundson, Todd Oestreich, Ray Weiss, James Wierzba, Arby Linder, David Barron and Roger Roehl.

**Also present:** Dave Hausman (DNR Warden), David Seibel (DNR Fisheries) and Larry Claggett (DNR Fisheries).

**Absent and excused:** Larry Knutson, David Fritz and Edgar Moses.

**Absent and not excused:** Robert Brunkow, Richard Moses and Gerald Gilbertson.

**Others in attendance:** Ray Heimerl (Resolution Presenter, Oconto County), Richard Poquette (Oconto county), Robert J. Seetan (Lincoln county), Ron Waller (WCC Delegate, Vilas County), Vern Ellefson (Resolution Presenter, Pierce County), Andy Killoren, (Wolf River TU), Joe Krzrnarich (Merrill—Friends of Prairie River), Jack Ament (Resolution Presenter, Chippewa County).

**2. Department Information Items & Updates**

a. Larry Claggett gave an overview of the upcoming 10 year review of trout fishing regulations which would be presented for the 2012 Spring Hearings. Interested stakeholders along with members of this committee would provide input for review by DNR fishery biologists. Larry provided a handout entitled “Summary of Trout Population Metrics with Respect to Regulation Category” compiled by Andy Fayram, Nancy Nate and Joanna Griffin. Several concepts were presented and recommended including no size limits, extending season, having a better defined and easier to understand trout regulation manual and increased stream habitat work to increase trout size and numbers. Larry also mentioned that trout stamp sales have increased over the last few years.

b. A Prairie River regulation overview was provided by Fisheries Biologist Dave Seibel. The Prairie River includes 33 miles of trout producing river which is free flowing after the removal of 3 dams. Dave described the history of regulations on the river and provided insight into management and effects that specific regulations could have. It appears very important that regulations be on the particular river for a number of years to get the true effect they may have. The first few years are not indicative of success or failure because it takes a longer time to show the desired effects. Habitat work is very important and streams with low to moderate fishing pressure may not need extensive regulations to retain a quality fishery. Brook trout appear to be more influenced by regulations that brown trout are.

### **3. Discussion & Action Items**

#### **A. Old Business—Review of Mission Statement and Trout Related Issues and Positions**

The Mission Statement and Position Statements of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress Trout Committee were reviewed with no modifications and approved by unanimous vote. (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.

#### **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.

## **B. Results from 2010 Spring Hearing Trout Questions and Dispensation**

1. Question #88 - Open trout season week before regular fishing (1420-1737, County Vote 27-42), Failed Statewide
2. Question #87 - Extend trout season to end of October (1757-1519, County Vote 41-28), Reversed by floor vote at Annual State Meeting)
3. Question #61 - Lead Reduction in fishing tackle (1980-1818, County Vote 55-11)  
EPA may regulate lead in fishing lures and probably phase out lead in tackle.

## **C. New Business—**

### **a. Resolutions—potential WCC Advisory Questions for the 2011 Spring Hearings**

#### **i. 190110 – Open Trout Fishing on Keyes Lake until First Saturday in March – Florence Co. (29-3)**

A letter from the author, Arden Loker, was read indicating that the resolution was considered a local issue. It was indicated that both the local residents and fisheries were in agreement. A motion was made and approved to work with the fish mangers to get this resolution in place for the 2012 regulation overhaul. Chairman Reiter will contact Mike Vogelsang and Greg Matski to make sure everyone is on the same page.

#### **ii. 250110/540110 – Open Trout Season Early with 5 Bag Limit – Iowa/Rock Counties – (30-15/26/14) – Submitted in 12 Counties, passed in 3 (Iowa, Rock, Washburn) failed in 9, Combined votes 144 Yes/233 no, 38% yes/62% no)**

Jack Ament (Chippewa County), one of the 4 authors, was present and spoke on this resolution. Jack's statements included: category Classification System (special regulations) only plays a minor role in increasing trout populations. Over populations due to catch and release are causing stunting in fish populations and are not increasing trout size. Five fish limit state-wide is very viable. Three (3) fish limit in southern Wisconsin comes from a time when there were fewer fish and few trout streams and is out of date. Catch and release fishermen want to catch many fish but release them all versus those that want to catch and keep.

Because of the fact that two issues are proposed in the resolution (March and April catch and keep season and statewide bag of 5 fish), it was felt that it complicated the resolution. After a lengthy discussion, the resolution was defeated with one abstention. A suggestion was made to revise the resolution into two separate issues and resubmit at the 2011 Spring Hearings in a single county.

#### **iii. 430110 – Allow Live Bait Fishing on All Rivers for Youth and Seniors – Oconto Co. (43-9)**

Ray Heimerl (Oconto County), author of the resolution, spoke on the issue. Ray's comments included: people over 65 approach streams differently because of age. 10.7 % of licenses are for trout and 95,000 are for seniors. Cannot separate but assume 10 percent of trout stamps are over sold to those over 65. In 2009 there were 111,000 for senior but perhaps 10,000 to 11,000 seniors would be able to take advantage of this regulation change. Youth numbers would be difficult to estimate but they are inexperienced in used artificial baits.

Comments from the committee included: early season and type of bait complicate this issue. Youth ages of 13 to 14 could bike to the stream. Should we make this available to returning veterans?, 1.5-2.0 percent of streams during regular season would be affected. Is this discriminatory by age cut? I don't see the resolution as fixing the problem. Not bait or lure but an

issue of access to trout streams and rivers. Is it easier for older/youth/disabled to use live bait? Does live bait include minnows—if so—then we have VHS issues if we do not limit to worms. What about catch and release seasons and categories?

A motion to reject this resolution was made and passed by a vote 9 - 2 with one abstention. The committee's was concerned with the fish mortality of using live bait during catch and release seasons. It was suggested that the resolution be amended to have this recommended during regular seasons and not the artificial only seasons and resubmit it.

#### **iv. 480210 – Early Season Trout Stamp – Pierce Co. – (16-7)**

Vern Ellefson (Pierce County), author of the resolution spoke on the issue. Some of his comments included: for major streams in Pierce county we have an influx of many out-of-state fishermen (MN) not following early season rules for bait and catch and release. We need greater law enforcement during the early season and early trout stamp funds would provide more money to fund more wardens during the early season.

Dave Hausman, DNR Warden, thanked Vern for the support and asked to please report these violations. The current class of 10 warden candidates will not fill the vacancy of 25 wardens. Texting of violations is a new tool and can be used to get results.

It was also noted that we cannot use trout stamp money to pay for increase for warden work. A motion was made to reject to resolution and passed with a vote of 11 - 0 with 1 abstention.

A resolution was then made and approved unanimously by the Trout Committee to petition the Legislature and DNR to fill the warden vacancies as quickly as possible and request more funding for items such as equipment, fuel and other necessities for the wardens to do their job!

#### **4. Members Matters**

It was suggested that in Pierce County during recent flooding, trout streams should have been closed. The Rush River rose 31 feet in one hour. The state has been requested to help with the clean up. There is no program to do this so it was suggested that the Trout Committee should encourage the DNR to have a plan to recruit forces to clean up local streams (FEMA requires a minimum of \$6 million but that is for roads not streams.) How do we get the money from FEMA that is available for stream clean up?

**Harry Meinking, Trout Committee member for the last 30 plus years, announced that this would be his last year with the Congress. The Trout Committee of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress would like to commend Harry for his service over these many years. The cold water resources in the State of Wisconsin are in a much better shape thanks to the efforts of Harry and his hands-on approach to conservation and resource management. The Trout Committee then made Harry an Honorary Member of the Committee going forward. Thanks Harry for a job well done!**

With no further business the meeting was adjourned at 10:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted:

Dennis Vanden Bloemen – Recorder

On Saturday, September 11<sup>th</sup>, the committee was treated with an excellent tour of the habitat work performed on the Prairie River. Fisheries Biologist Dave Seibel and Friends of the Prairie River member Joe Krznarich, led the tour of various portions of the Prairie River where extensive work had been completed. It is amazing how much work can be performed and what results can be accomplished through partnership included the DNR, local conservation groups, state conservation groups and private land owners. Their efforts should be emulated statewide!