

Wisconsin Conservation Congress

Executive Committee

Minutes

Tuesday, July 5, 2011

7:30 p.m.

1. Organizational Matters
 - A. The meeting was called to order by Chair Rob Bohmann at 7:39 p.m.
 - B. Roll Call: Rob Bohmann, Larry Bonde, Lee Fahrney
 - C. Others Present: Kari Lee-Zimmermann, DNR Liaison; Ron Benjamin, DNR Fish supervisor for the Mississippi River, Marc Schultz, La Crosse County delegate; Terry Frey and Gary Nowobielski, Ultimate Outdoors Radio: Mark Clement, area business person
2. Discussion and Action Items:
 - A. Hydro Power Proposals for the Upper Mississippi River: meeting at request of Marc Schultz, delegate from La Crosse County.

Schultz states he has been watching Hydropower proposals over the last 10 years. There are a number of requests for licenses on every lock and dam on the Mississippi. Time clock has started on determining the impacts on a wide variety of categories. He has submitted a recommendation for the Congress to be sent to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). It has two major purposes: Make decision makers aware that it has taken 70 years to bring the national transportation corridor and wildlife conservation into balance. Also that \$15-\$20 million has been spent for habitat projects. Hydropower projects will have a huge impact on those investments. Fish migrate long distances and hydropower may impact the fish. Some projects will include both tainter gates and roller gates. Unique fishing platforms exist below dams. One at pool 7 is handicapped accessible and offers unique opportunities for low and moderate income people. Asks Congress to take a position and has sent a letter to Rob.

Benjamin: FERC has a very constrained process. Chances are all will be approved but the state will give a list of recommendations for study. After the studies, they will decide to allow the projects or not. Ron noted that FERC is very pro-development. Suggests there is a cumulative impact on the fish that migrate through many of the locks and dams. Power projects on two or three is one thing but to get through 26 is another. The fry need to get back through all of these. Notes that the work load for fish management staff is enormous and now the department has on- third less staff. Recommends the Congress should go on record.

Schultz: Notes fish also move up tributaries. Also, there is much aquatic vegetation that most power companies have never dealt with. Mark noted that when the Dairyland Power facility shuts down, they can't keep up with the amount of vegetation above the dams. Also noted that staff reviewing the matter are from the east and west coasts and don't understand the situation. Both fish and other wildlife are a concern. Notes that the Federal Power Commission was easy to work with compared to FERC. States that Mississippi River issues are even more complicated than Great Lakes. Notes other agencies such as those involved with invasive species and endangered species are also a concern on the river.

Benjamin: Notes there are many species such as native paddlefish and mussels involved. Rob offered background on high water incidents: In the 50s there were large populations of shovelnose that were almost extirpated. One tagged fish had travelled from St. Louis. One hundred mile runs are common. Suggests if we grind them up on the way up and on the way down it will have an impact. Involvement means getting the word in at the right time. Suggests it is easy to push things through in a vacuum, but not if they are under scrutiny.

Schultz: Noted a large group of Amish use the Genoa platform. Mngong also use the one below Eau Claire.

Benjamin: States there are many people who do not have boats and we don't have commercial boats to take people out on the river.

Schultz: Notes the power companies will have water rights. Possible that there will be a need to bring the water level down to protect fish or wildlife. If so, the public will have to pay for the loss of use of the facility.

Frey: Stated he has a river coast guard captain license that takes him onto the river frequently. Reiterates there is a vegetation issue which is a major problem for the companies near Lynxville where the weeds are thick. Also agreed about fish movement; he cited telemetry studies which show one of the fish left the dam and moved 60 miles in three days. Expressed concerns about female walleyes which won't be able to move out of Lock 12.

Clement: As a business owner he expressed concerns about the impact on business. Hydropower will impact fishing on the river. Suggests the people of Wisconsin will lose out as businesses will go out of business. Said thousands of people use the river. Fishing licenses support conservation efforts. Suggested we might end up pulling out the power plants which he claims occurred in some western states.

Schultz: Claimed another business he knows gets 60 percent of its business from anglers. Said the burden for all of this should be on the companies, not government agencies.

Clement: Said the studies that have been done are computer studies and the authors picked the ones that support their position. Mark questions if they are incompetent or intentionally omitting the facts.

Bonde: Suggests most people do not understand how great the Mississippi River resource is.

Schultz: Said low flow spill was used to push water to backwaters to keep them healthy. The power plants could possibly rob the backwaters. Said this needs to be addressed.

Clement: Adds that the roller gates may be shut down.

Bohmann: Has the NRB addressed the issue?

Benjamin: Noted we will probably have an additional 60 days to comment because an extension was requested. If the states ask for a 60 day extension, they usually get it. Everyone will be asked to provide input. Noted there used to be seven FERC coordinators now only one

Kari: The state has 120 days to respond.

Clement: Everyone has another 60 days. Noted Marty Griffin (DNR official) has already sent in a letter expressing concern. Mark said, "Symbiotics Corporation may have to re-apply for a permit for preliminary studies because they will miss the deadline". Other companies will also seek permission for preliminary studies.

Schultz: Pointed out the river is a major migration route and expressed concern about numerous transmission lines.

Bohmann: Asked about input from other states?

Clement: Expressed need to coordinating with other states to be consistent. Need to get people involved including businesses, hunters and anglers. Need to be in the front end of the debate to have an impact.

Schultz: Said the issue is institutionally complex.

Bonde: Made a motion to have Congress draft letter on behalf of the WCC to outline concerns. The motion was seconded by Fahrney. (Motion carried)

Bohmann: Will send a copy of the letter to the NRB.

Schultz: Talked to Sen. Kohl and Rep. Kind. Noted Sen. Johnson was unavailable.

B. Reassignment of CWD Resolutions:

- 1) 250111 Return deer season to Pre-CWD structure, revise EAB: Motion by Bonde, to reassign to Big Game, seconded by Fahrney (Motion carried)

- 2) 280111 First Permit Either Sex, followed by EAB in CWD zone: Motion by Bonde to reassign to Wildlife Health and Invasive Species Ctte, seconded by Fahrney (Motion carried)

- 3) 300111 Remove EAB restrictions in Kenosha and Racine Counties:
Bohmann: Stated that the deer shot in Kenosha County back in 2003 that tested positive, that it was questionable in where it was shot. Racine County has never had a wild deer testing positive. Bonde motioned to move to Wildlife Health and Invasive Species Ctte, seconded by Fahrney (Motion carried)

- 4) 300211 Move CWD boundaries to exclude Kenosha and Racine Counties:
Kari: this would move the boundaries but does not deal with EAB. Bonde motioned to reassign to Wildlife Health and Invasion Species Ctte, seconded by Fahrney (Motion carried)

- 5) 390111 Remove Marquette County from Herd Reduction Zone:
Bohmann: Stated this was moved to CWD from Big Game. Bonde motioned to send to Big Game Ctte, seconded by Fahrney (Motion carried.)

Bohmann reviewed duplicate items: 250111 is a stand alone, 301111 is a duplicate of 250111, 300211 is a duplicate of 520611, and 130111 is a duplicate of 280111

3. Member Matters:

Fahrney: Mentioned Marc Schultz item for Conservation Chronicle.

Bohmann: Will send an e-mail to Kari regarding request by Al Suchla of Trempeleau County to be assigned to the Mississippi River Committee.

Kari: Met with Mr. Marony and Mr. Gunderson on Act 21, and suggested that the Executive Committee meeting with them for discussion regarding impact of Act 21 on rule-making process.

4. Motion by Fahrney to adjourn, seconded by Bonde (Motion carried)

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by

Lee Fahrney, Secretary