

Warm Water Study Committee Minutes – Sept. 24, 2011

The meeting was convened at 10 am. by Chairman Joe Weiss at the Gander Mountain Conference Room, Wausau. After a roll call the mission statement was approved unanimously.

During the Public Comments portion Larry Van de Hoff questioned the resolution process and what he alleged was inadequate notification to resolution writers, especially when multiple county submissions were encountered. He maintained that all writers should be notified not just one of the multiple submitters.

The Committee heard Tim Simonson's (DNR Warm Water Committee Liaison) report that substantial changes and reorganization was ongoing in the DNR. Additionally, his comments included:

- DNR Regional Directors will be eliminated and staff will be cut to approximately 210 from the current 300.
- The rule making process will be longer due to Act 21.
- There will be no DNR questions on the 2012 questionnaire but advisory questions will be permitted.
- Rule hearings, including fishing regulation changes will be in odd numbers years: advisory questions in even years.
- Rules can only be reviewed when the legislature is in session.

At the conclusion of Simonson's comments committee members voiced concerns about Act 21, often centering on how dramatically the rule process will be slowed. Rick Olson's motion for a smaller Congress Committee to discuss with the DNR the current charge and relevancy of the Conservation Congress was passed unanimously. He noted that discussions should ensue on creating DNR advisory questions as well as Congress questions.

Byron Goetsch presented the DNR Law Enforcement updates and reported 31 warden vacancies with a warden class in training, but assignments will not occur until 2013. Having no fishing license remained the top citation issued in the state – 1618 out of a total of 3300 tickets. Additionally, he reported that 16 wardens had received meritorious awards.

Dave Neuswanger and Jon Hansen (DNR Fisheries) reported on possible ways to simplify bass fishing regulations, noting that his (Neuswanger's) ideas were only for preliminary discussion. He demonstrated that currently 13 different bass regulations (largemouth and smallmouth) are in use in Wisconsin. His ideas would reduce this complexity to three possible water designations – walleye/smallmouth, largemouth waters (the vast majority of WI bass waters) and largemouth at low density. Each

category would have separate size/bag limit regulations creating a reduction from 13 to three. Walleye/smallmouth would have no minimum length limit on largemouth: largemouth waters would feature a 12-to 15-inch protected slot, daily bag of 5, one over 15 inches allowed; and largemouth at low density would have a 15-inch minimum with a bag limit of one. Neuswanger emphasized these were only “straw dog” proposals. Warm Water Committee members indicated their approval in a question and answer period and a motion to endorse his concept was seconded and passed unanimously.

Chairman Weiss reported that Governor Walker wants to simplify rules and regulations and had asked for Conservation Congress assistance. A discussion ensued on rule/regulation impacts on tourism with Weiss noting, “The Congress should be an advocate for public input and present ideas on rule simplification. We should serve as a conduit from the public and invite legislators to the process.”

Citizen resolutions followed.

- 200411 passed without opposition.
- 500211 passed with opposition noted.
- 440311 passed with a single vote in opposition.
- 210511 passed without opposition.
- 590611 passed on an 8 to 6 hand count.
- 510411 a motion to reject was approved.
- 540411 passed without opposition.
- 640111 rejected after Neuswanger commented that an earlier opener could conflict with tribal harvest.
- 080311 rejected without opposition.
- 090211 rejected without opposition.
- 270111 rejected without opposition.
- 420211 rejected without opposition as the DNR reported Lake Tomah is undergoing rehabilitation and the resolution problem “doesn’t exist.” The current management strategy is correct.
- 420111 rejected without opposition as this resolution on Lake Tomah was related to 420211.
- 560411 rejected after Simonson reported that it was a Wisconsin/Minnesota boundary water rule problem. A motion to reject passed without opposition.
- 580111 passed without opposition.
- 580211 passed without opposition.
- 580511 passed without opposition after Simonson reported on recent size improvement in the muskie population on this resource.
- 590711 passed without opposition.
- 590811 passed without opposition.
- 670211 rejected without opposition after reported the resolution had been preempted by legislature rule making.
- 680411 rejected a motion to reject was approved by a 9-2 hand vote after the initial motion to approve failed by a 7 to 6 hand vote.

680511 rejected without opposition.

700311 passed with opposition noted.

710311 rejected without opposition when it was reported the resolution would violate VHS rules.

The agenda item Member Matters followed. Problems with muskie trolling rules where some waters and counties are open to trolling while others are closed were discussed. It was reported that the DNR Muskie Team is discussing the problem and supports statewide trolling. As an advisory question Vice Chair John Aschenbrenner moved to make trolling legal statewide. His motion was passed without opposition.

Member Rick Olson in discussion noted on increased interest in reducing panfish harvest as seen increasingly with panfish resolutions submitted and discussed in recent years. His motion to address panfish overharvest with an aggregate bag limit of 30 of which no more could be 10 crappie, 10 bluegill and 20 yellow perch passed without opposition.

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Weiss.

Submitted by Russ Warye, Warm Water Committee Secretary.