

# WISCONSIN AMERICAN MARTEN COMMITTEE MEETING

August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019

## Final Meeting Notes

**Place: Town of Manitowish Waters Community Building, 5733 Airport Road, Manitowish Waters, WI 54545**

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- 9:30 Meeting Called to Order
- 9:40 Winter 2018/19 marten camera & track surveys presentation by Skyler Vold (WDNR)
- Skyler presented results from the first field season of the WDNR & US Forest Service research project in the Nicolet National Forest. Marten and fisher co-occurrence data were collected during the winter of 2018-19 using remote field cameras. A 2<sup>nd</sup> field season is planned for this coming winter, 2019-20.
- 10:00 Apostle Islands Genetic Research presentation by Matt Smith (UW-Madison)
- Matt presented the results from the first two years of field and laboratory work on the Apostle Islands, where he is using non-invasive hair snares to collect samples of resident American martens. Many interesting results were presented including estimates of abundance and density on study islands, as well as, marten movements between islands and inland. Matt presented this work at the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Mammologists, late June 2019. A 3<sup>rd</sup> and final field season is planned for Sep. – Nov. 2019 to collect additional field data.
- 10:45 Small mammal study in Cayuga presentation by Ally Scott (UW-Madison)
- Ally presented results from her first year of data collection on small mammals in the Great Divide District of the Chequamegon National Forest. Her research is investigating seasonal small mammal diversity and abundances in areas known to be used by martens, before and after forest management activities. They have trapped small mammals in summer and winter of 2018, and currently plan to collect data during two additional seasons, summer and winter 2019.
- 11:15 Discussion of new marten research proposal – Jon Pauli (UW-Madison)
- Jon proposed a new project evaluating American marten foraging and energetics in northern Wisconsin. Research from previous marten projects have suggested low recruitment may be keeping marten populations in Wisconsin from rebounding. The new project would assess caloric opportunity for martens at the scale of the energetic landscape and assess the risk of marten foraging in this landscape. The goal would be to offer management recommendations to optimize a landscape for marten in terms of energetic opportunity.
  - This project would continue the very successful and highly productive collaboration by UW-Madison, DNR, GLIFWC, USFS, and Park Service

conducting research to advance our knowledge on the ecology and biology of American martens in northern Wisconsin.

- The committee discussed this proposal and fully agreed with and supported this proposed project.

11:30 Other marten research/monitoring project updates

- Menominee Tribal Biologist Don Reiter provided a written summary of the trail camera surveys he is completing within the Menominee Indian Reservation. Summary: a healthy population of fishers exist on the reservation, but to date, no confirmed American marten have been documented.

11:40 Apostle Islands Trail Camera Mammal study presentation by Morgan Farmer (UW-Madison)

- Morgan presented current findings from her study evaluating carnivore abundance and species richness across the entire Apostle Islands National Lakeshore.

1:15 Iron County Marten Project updates – Zach Wilson (Iron Co. Land Conservation)

- Zach presented a summary of the American marten research he has led in Iron County since 2007. He also presented the results from his tracking and camera surveys from winter 2018-19. He plans to continue this highly successful project that engages Iron County high school students to learn and appreciate nature and local wildlife ecology.

1:30 Marten Restoration Areas rule updates – Shawn Rossler (WDNR)

- Shawn provided details regarding the new Marten Protection Area (MPA) rule. The rule creates a 3<sup>rd</sup> Marten Protection Area, the Apostle Islands. Trapping regulations on the Apostle Islands will follow those currently in place. The rule expands trapping opportunities in existing MPAs, where two new trap types will soon be allowed: weasel boxes with holes less than or equal to 1-3/8" and foothold traps with pan tension greater than or equal to 4 lb.
- The rule change has been passed the DNR's Natural Resources Board and is awaiting a signature from the governor's office. It will then go to legislative review, which can take up to two months.
- Given the timeline and the uncertainty as to when the rule will become official, the Wisconsin trapping regulations for 2019-20 do not explicitly state the two new trap types that are allowed on Marten Protection Areas. In the "What's New in 2019" section of the regulations, the text mentions there is a pending rule change to the trap types allowed on MPAs but does not give further details.
- Shawn wrote an article for the Wisconsin Trapper's Magazine to inform trappers of the potential new rule.
- The committee discussed enforcement of the foothold pan tension regulation in Marten Protection Areas and noted that this will be nearly impossible for Conservation Wardens to enforce.

- Another concern discussed was the reporting of incidental marten captures. Based on modelling results from Grauer et al. 2019, the committee discussed how the potential removal of a single adult female marten could have significant implications on the long-term persistence of marten populations in northern Wisconsin. This is especially true for the marten population in the Chequamegon National Forest, where immigration appears lower than what is occurring within the Nicolet population. Warden and trapper awareness of this issue and rule change will be key to preventing increased injuries or mortalities of martens due to incidental captures.

#### Action Items

- The committee discussed actions needed related to the new rule in the Marten Protection Areas. Ideas expressed included:
  1. A need to develop a better process for future trapping related changes to be fully discussed and agreed to by both the Marten Advisory Committee and the Furbearer Advisory Committee.
  2. Wardens who cover areas within and adjacent to MPAs need to have additional training so that they are aware of what to look for in MPA's. They also need to be provided equipment necessary to test foothold trap pan tension and measure weasel box holes.
  3. Need for increased monitoring of trapping effort in Marten Protection Areas. There is a need to be proactive rather than reactive when implementing monitoring and outreach activities related to this issue. Several ideas were discussed, including mandatory call-ins, check stations, and trapper surveys.
  4. Need for greater public outreach to trappers taking advantage of these new opportunities. DNR will update the "Marten Avoidance Techniques" brochure to reflect the rule changes. A few members also suggested developing a more detailed map reflecting the core areas of marten range within the MPA's which trappers could avoid to reduce the risk of incidental marten captures.
  5. Install replacement signs at the two inland MPAs to reflect the rule changes.
  6. Investigate and decide on a threshold of incidental marten take that would necessitate emergency actions to limit techniques or trap types causing the incidental take within the MPAs.
  7. Resume monitoring of the marten population in the Chequamegon National Forest. Currently, we know very little regarding the population trend for martens in this area. Snow tracking surveys have been completed, but few martens have been recorded in recent years. The use of remote cameras could be helpful to collect more data and monitor trends for this population area.
  8. Send out reminders to local field Wardens and Wildlife Biologists reminding them to report all incidentally trapped martens, both released and turned in, to NHC program staff located at the DNR Service Center in Rhinelander.
  9. Make sure all trapper education courses include information on the current trapping rules in the MPAs.

2:30 Other updates and public comments: none

2:35 Meeting adjourned