

WOLF ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

23 May 2013

Wausau Howard Johnson's

Introduction – The committee will be advising the Wildlife Policy team. The Wildlife Policy team will take recommendation to DNR administration. DNR's recommendation will go to Natural Resources Board. The goal of today's meeting is coming up with recommendations for this year's wolf harvest quota & licenses. The morning will be background presentations to prepare us for the quota discussion. In the afternoon, we will be developing recommendations.

At our June 20 meeting, we will begin work on the Wolf Management Plan Revision.

Public Comments & Introductions – The following people provided input as summarized below:

L.Groskopf – (handouts – Social Tolerance of Wolves in WI; WI Carnivore Survey Blocks 2011-2012). Difference in how people in wolf range view wolves compared to people outside wolf range. Suggests loners are undercounted in DNR survey and the committee can't set quotas if they don't have an accurate population count.

N.Poulton – Totally against wolf hunt; ~25% of population is lost to other mortality factors annually; control mortalities are additional to that; population goal of 350 in Wolf Management Plan was not meant to be a maximum population.

Howard Goldman, HSUS – Disappointed HSUS is not represented on the committee; encourages expansion of the committee to include other groups; objects to the wolf hunt & some of the methods; encourages committee to be very conservative; believes illegal kill may be much higher than estimates & should be considered when setting quotas; don't know long term effect of removal of alphas or of climate change.

It was noted that there will be a roundtable this winter when anyone who represents an organization with an interest in wolf management can participate.

Review Emergency Rule – The emergency rule adopted by the Natural Resources Board in July 2012 is in effect until a permanent rule is adopted next year. So, the rules cannot be changed for this fall's season (e.g. zone boundaries).

Gray Wolf Population Monitoring in the Lower 48 States - Dave MacFarland presented a review of population monitoring methods and harvest management for the 10 states with gray wolf populations. Eight of the ten states, including Wisconsin, use the Territory Mapping with Radiotelemetry method. Idaho & Minnesota use different methods and are the only states that incorporate an additional estimate for lone wolves. Idaho and Montana's methods rely upon territory mapping with telemetry at a smaller scale which is then extrapolated into un-surveyed areas. Seven of ten states use a minimum count method as the basis of their management decisions. All states base their management

decisions on a late winter population estimate, at the low point in the annual cycle. Some states use volunteer observations to target efforts of agency employees. Wisconsin is the only state that uses volunteers directly in survey efforts and has more opportunities for citizen involvement than any other state. Wisconsin efforts to count wolves are more intensive than that of any other state. Michigan's proposed harvest is focused on conflict control in areas with depredation problems. Minnesota has a target harvest number, not a quota. It is ~13% of the population. Montana has an open season with no limit on number of hunters and no harvest quota, as they don't expect hunting to reduce the population to their minimum population goal.

Review 2012-2013 count & analysis of effort -- Dave MacFarland reviewed how block priorities are set; how wolf observation reports are used, % of blocks surveyed; effort at surveying packs, and volunteer contributions to the effort. Priorities are set based upon historic wolf use, telemetry data and public reports of wolf observations with blocks designated as high priority, medium priority or inactive. Observation reports are collected year round. Reports received outside the January-March monitoring window are used to document wolf presence and direct tracking efforts. Reports received within the monitoring window are incorporated directly into the annual count if there is data on the number of individuals. Changes in wolf policy led to a higher than average turnover in the volunteer tracking pool. Despite the loss of some of our volunteers this past year, experienced trackers stepped up and provided even more effort in total than in the previous year. All high and medium priority blocks were surveyed by volunteers, agency personnel or both. Data from ground tracking, aerial telemetry based pilot counts and public observation reports are used to obtain counts on wolf packs and individuals, most packs have multiple counts. In 2013 there was an average of 4.6 independent counts of each pack in the state. All 2012 pack territories were surveyed, and an additional 16 packs were identified. Total tracking effort equaled 13,178 miles of surveys.

Cattleman's Association presentation – Eric Koens gave a presentation on impacts of wolves on livestock. The following notes were provided by Eric:

1. I have been raising cattle for over 50 years. As per USDA stats, cattlemen are the sector of society most adversely effected by wolves.
2. There was no livestock representation or consideration drafting the 1999 Wisconsin Wolf Management Plan.
3. Wolves are portrayed as elusive animals. They are living on our farms, entering our buildings, and eating dog food off of the porch.
4. Wolves are counter-productive when raising livestock. Depredation is only the tip of the iceberg regarding damage.
5. Wolves result in stress on both the producers and livestock. Sleepless nights hearing cattle being chased by wolves in the pasture. Hearing bawling cattle and fence wire stretching as cattle stampede through fences.

6. Cattle become very agitated and aggressive, a danger to anybody entering the pastures after depredations.

7. Stampeding cattle trample calves, killing them and injuring others. Some cattle cannot be found, and some are shot or hit by vehicles on roads.

8. Cattle huddle near buildings and will not graze in pastures where wolves are present.

9. Neosporiosis is a disease that causes cattle to abort their calves. Canines spread the disease in feces. Wolves and coyotes are definitive hosts for the disease.

10. Cite DVM Palmquist observations at T&T Ranch. Cite DATCP Neosporiosis brochure.

11. Jason Sukow (USDA WS) cited two additional research papers regarding indirect livestock wolf damage.

It was noted that stressed cattle have lower weight gains, increased abortion rates, increased exposure to diseases. Jason Sukow reported that Wildlife Services investigators see a difference in the demeanor of cattle on farms where depredations have occurred. Secondary effects have been incorporated into their Environmental Assessment. There was discussion of liability if cattle are chased out of pasture and get hit on the highway. There was a question about whether people are calling in on harassment cases. DNR has been issuing shooting permits for some verified harassment cases. There was discussion about whether responses to complaints have been adequate and effective this year. Wildlife Services feels being able to remove depredating wolves last year has made a huge difference in reducing harassment. Shooting permits and the In-the-Act provision that allows killing depredating wolves immediately have also been valuable tools. The tribes would like to see some research on stress effects.

Human dimensions of wolf conflicts -- Adrian Treves & Lisa Naughton (UW Madison) have been conducting research on public attitudes towards wolves in Wisconsin for 13 years. They've conducted surveys in 2001, 2004, 2009 (2 separate surveys), and 2013. Surveys have not been intended to represent the entire state, and have had a high response rate (>64%). They've tried to show contrasts between key constituencies and have met with constituent groups. Most money for depredation compensation comes from the southeast part of the state, but surveys were done in wolf range. A majority of respondents want compensation for wolf depredation on livestock to continue, but want it to be contingent upon verification of wolf involvement and use of best management practices by livestock producers. The highest rate of support for lethal control of wolves was among bear hunters, then cattle producers, then random residents. In 2004, support for a public hunting & trapping season was highest if depredations became unmanageable and when biologists felt it was sustainable. Potential for conflict exists for methods used to hunt wolves – 10% would use dogs, 25% oppose the use of dogs. Responses to what number the wolf population should be kept below seem dependent on how the choices are

presented. Respondents tend to choose the middle choice or one of the extremes, regardless of what those choices are. The mode among respondents in wolf range was 350; the mode among respondents outside of wolf range was no cap. The response from residents of the Bad River reservation was very different. Decrease in tolerance of wolves among residents of wolf range was most highly related to competitiveness for deer. The inclination to poach wolves was correlated with competitiveness over deer, not with fear of wolves or depredation. There was also a decline in appreciation for ecological values of wolves. Familiarity with wolves did not increase tolerance, and personal experience of loss due to depredation didn't decrease tolerance. A risk identification model for predicting risk of livestock depredation was developed and tested. It is now available as an app. High risk areas cover <7% of the state. Information gaps include (1) how to set zones, quotas, & harvest methods to reduce conflicts, (2) how to measure & communicate the benefits of wolves state-wide, (3) do we tolerate wolves better as game. Trying to calibrate the wolf population with social carrying capacity may be very difficult because social tolerance varies between groups and over time. It might be better to focus on conflict management. (Adrian & Lisa will send their PowerPoint to Dave MacFarland to make available to the committee after they remove a few unpublished slides)

Modeling harvest scenarios, -- Jen Stenglein (UW-Madison) used the same model as she described at the meeting 1 month ago to run 2013 wolf harvest scenarios. The model assumes 10% take for depredation control in summer, and all harvest is prior to the breeding season. Jen described several different harvest scenarios and the predicted outcome of each ranging from little change in the population using harvest at the 2012 rate to a 25% reduction in the population in the most aggressive harvest scenario. Wisconsin could potentially become a population sink if wolves from Minnesota and Michigan disperse into Wisconsin as our population is reduced. The model assumes constant recruitment over time, but that could potentially be affected by harvest. Harvest of alphas may result in break-up of packs & may disrupt recruitment. Aging data should help in determining how many breeders are likely harvested. If the assumption of no harvest during mating season is violated, it has a fairly large impact on population reduction. The model uses a very simple social structure where the proportion of packs in the population does not change with harvest. This may not actually be true in the wild. Partial compensation in the harvest is an artifact of the model and may not be accurate. The model was not built to accurately show effects of very high harvest where the results are more uncertain. The model probably underestimates the effect of harvest. (Jen will send her PowerPoint to Dave MacFarland to make available to the committee)

Projection on Depredation Control kills for 2013 for quota setting purposes -- Jason Suckow (USDA-Wildlife Services) reported that USDA WS has taken 4 wolves for depredation control so far this year (6 as of 6/4/13). Last year they took 57 wolves over the year. They expect this year it will be fewer, perhaps 35-45, but possibly ~20 if rate continues similar to last year.

Brad Koele reported that Wildlife Services has taken 4 wolves from harvest zone 3 this year (+2 from harvest zone 1 as of 6/4/13). Thirty-one shooting permits have been issued so far this year, compared to 130 last year. Sixteen wolves were removed under permits

last year, and 3 were shot in the act of depredate. (As of 6/4/13, 1 wolf has been taken under permit in harvest zone 1 and 1 in harvest zone 2).

Both noted that reduced problems and permits could be the result of depredation control actions last year, the late spring, and access requirements of permittees.

Tribal Perspectives -- Peter David (Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission) suggested that things are being done out of order. The existing management plan doesn't address harvest. The 350 population goal can be interpreted in different ways. It is an old goal written when the population was ~200, and was based on social tolerance. Should that be the primary consideration in wolf management? We don't have the ability to fully evaluate the effect of the first harvest season. We don't yet know the age structure of harvested wolves. The tribes suggest being conservative until the plan is revised and impacts of the first harvest are better known. The emphasis of this group is harvest, which is being viewed as synonymous with management. Three hundred fifty is not a stable number to manage at. The tribes' objective is to see all suitable habitat occupied. Minnesota is not intending to reduce the population with quotas. Michigan is only attempting to reduce depredation problems with their harvest.

Discuss most important considerations of the group for setting quotas – The factors to be considered in quota setting were read from the administrative code adopted in the emergency rule. All of these factors will be considered to the best of our ability. It was noted that all known and projected mortality, including depredation control kills, will be considered when setting the quotas, but will not be part of the quotas for hunting and trapping.

Develop committee quota recommendations – Bill Vander Zouwen provided a list of the types of opinions on quotas that were heard from Committee members at the last meeting. They ranged from wanting to get to a goal of 350 as soon as possible to being very conservative in light of uncertainty or tribal views of wolves. Committee members were asked to circle the 2 opinions that best fit with their views.

Highest number were for H (12) “there's some information that will be important to know before raising quotas”, and B (11); “people expect the wolf population to be brought down, raise quotas”. Twenty-four of the circled opinions were in favor of a conservative quota, while 19 were in favor of raising the quota. It was noted that a committee member could want to raise the quota while still being conservative.

The committee reviewed the modeling outcomes presented by Jen for various harvest scenarios in the 6 zones. The Committee noted that Zones 1 and 2 and Zones 3 and 4 should probably not be treated identically because of higher depredate in the more western of the zones in these pairs.

It was noted that studies on human take suggest that a total human take of around 30% is required to begin to reduce an established wolf population. It was also noted that studies show some impact on reproduction and survival of remaining wolves when wolves are removed. The Committee will have more information to evaluate these impacts after we

get aging data back from the lab to determine what proportion of last year's harvest were adults and after howling surveys are done this coming summer.

A suggestion was made for unlimited over-the-counter sales & no quota for harvest zone 6. Discussion followed with concern over possible over harvest in other zones being registered for zone 6. The current emergency rule will not allow this approach, but it can be considered for the permanent rule.

After it became clear that not everyone could rally around a particular quota, Committee members were polled about what they felt the quota should be. Answers ranged from a quota that produced a 5% increase in the population to a quota of 416. Different scenarios from the model were discussed. A suggestion was made that harvest zone 5 should not be considered primary wolf range because there is higher potential for conflict there and should be harvested at a higher rate. Discussion followed in which it was pointed out there have been few depredation problems in zone 5, most have been at the edge in zone 6. There was a question about whether the quota will be the harvestable number. That is the intent; other mortality does not come out of the quota. Most members agreed on a quota in the range of 225-300. Scenarios that fell in that range were discussed. There was discussion about not having as high a harvest rate in zone 4, since there were no depredations there last year. One member stated the population is being managed for social tolerance. Discussion followed with the conclusion that social tolerance would have to be measured statewide if we were going to manage for it. A suggestion was made to separate out Zone 1A (draft taken for public input in 2012), which is a high depredation area in northwest Wisconsin, in the permanent rule. For those recommendations that would result in a population reduction (all but 1), the average quota was 275.

- *A quota of 275 was recommended, with the harvest quotas as a percentage of the midpoint of the minimum winter count (not of the fall population) in each zone as follows:*

Zone 1: 84 = 25%

Zone 4: 13 = 50%

Zone 2: 31 = 20%

Zone 5: 35 = 25%

Zone 3: 79 = 75%

Zone 6: 33 = 100%

Committee members were repeatedly asked if there was anyone who could not live with this recommendation, even though it may not have been their preferred quota. All, except the tribal representative, were ok with the quota.

Discuss most important factors of the group for setting license numbers – The factors to be considered in setting license numbers were read from administrative code adopted in the emergency rule. Basically, they involve reaching the quota, not exceeding the quota, providing opportunity for as many hunters and trappers as possible, and not so many that zones close before many people get a chance to hunt or trap when and where they want to. Last year, ~75% of people who could have, bought wolf licenses. Zone closures and prohibition on use of dogs were the major reasons cited by those who did not purchase licenses, according to the survey of people drawn for approval to buy a license. Of those who bought a license, 66% were active and 16% harvested a wolf. People who got tags would prefer less tags be issued.

Develop committee license number recommendations -- There was discussion of lowering the ratio of licenses in order to keep the zones open longer, but the majority supported keeping it consistent with last year. A suggestion was made that licenses not sold by a specific date be put up for sale. Discussion followed. Less than 2% of people who didn't purchase licenses last year were trying to prevent others from hunting. DNR no longer requires licenses be purchased prior to any other seasons. Many wanted to hunt later in the season, and zones closed before they had the opportunity. It was agreed to leave as last year.

- ***By consensus, the Committee recommended a license to quota ratio of 10:1***

Agenda suggestions for future meetings -- Committee members can send agenda ideas for future Wolf Advisory Committee meetings to:

Bill VanderZouwen, william.vanderzouwenjr@wisconsin.gov, or

Dave MacFarland, David.Macfarland@Wisconsin.gov.

In preparation for the next meeting, committee members should read the current Wolf Management Plan and come with recommendations about what should be addressed in the next plan.

Next meeting – June 20, 2013 at Howard Johnson in Wausau, 9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

July Meeting Date - July 18, 2013 at Howard Johnson in Wausau, 9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Meeting notes submitted by Jane Wiedenhoef, edited by Bill Vander Zouwen and David MacFarland