CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

State of Wisconsin

DATE: September 24, 2012

TO: Natural Resources Board

FROM: Cathy Stepp, Secretary

SUBJECT: Informational: Wisconsin Wolf Management Plan Update Timeline

In June 2012, the Natural Resources Board (NRB) asked the department to come to the September NRB meeting with its proposed timeline for updating the state's wolf management plan. The plan has been reviewed a number of times since 1999 by the department and its partners.

Wisconsin's 1999 wolf management plan and a 2007 addendum to the plan are the basis of wolf management in the state. These documents outline the conservation strategy for Wisconsin's wolf population, as well as, outlining the approach for controlling depredation situations, and population management and monitoring. The state's management plan was critical to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service delisting decision earlier this year. It is widely viewed as one of the most comprehensive wolf management plans in the nation. As former DNR secretary George Meyer stated at the July NRB meeting, it was seen as a compromise weighing sociology and the best available science.

In the past 9 months since delisting of the gray wolf in the Great Lakes state occurred (January 27, 2012), many questions have surfaced regarding when the state was going to revisit the 1999 wolf management plan. Many changes have occurred in the past 9 months. Delisting, legislation authorizing the state's first modern wolf hunt, lethal control authority for farmers seeking relief from wolf depredations, emergency rules to implement the first wolf hunt in Wisconsin, and on October 15, the first wolf harvest season will begin for just over 1,000 hunters and trappers.

The timeline we have discussed and provide for the NRB review is focused on using at least two seasons worth of harvest data and experience, human dimensions research and stakeholder involvement as the basis for a well informed and publically accepted plan. We will strive for the same balance struck in the original plan where we use the best available science and extensive public input to assure the continued success of the gray wolf population in Wisconsin.

Many aspects of the wolf plan were discussed as the department worked with stakeholders and the public to promulgate the emergency wolf season rule. We will build on those discussions, recent events, data, and changes in statute and code as we work to write a revised plan. The Department plans to update the 1999 wolf plan according to the following schedule.

- Draft Timeline for updating the Wolf Plan presented to NRB for feedback, September 2012
- Develop White Paper on evaluation current wolf monitoring and provide recommendations on potential future monitoring systems, July-October, 2012
- Initiate pilot project for alternative monitoring methods for wolf population for consideration in monitoring section of revised plan, Fall-Winter 2012-13

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- Develop summaries of existing data including trends for wolves and their impacts for use in the revised plan, Fall-Winter 2012-13
- Develop an economic impact statement on wolves, Fall-Winter 2012-13
- Write background section of plan, Winter-Spring 2013
- Engage stakeholders to identify issues that should be addressed in a revised plan, Winter 2013
- Initiate Discussions on Wolf Plan and plan Human Dimensions Survey, Winter-Spring 2013.
- Conduct Human Dimensions Surveys to identify issues, concerns, and potential strategies for new Wolf Plan, Summer 2013
- Analyze human dimensions work on Wolf Plan issues and options, Fall 2013
- Work with staff and stakeholders to develop options for wolf plan modifications based on public input, Fall 2013
- Hold public meetings in several locations around the state to gather input on issues and strategies being considered, Fall-Winter 2013-14
- Complete plan revision writing and recommendation development process in the department, Winter-Spring 2014
- Take updated Wolf Plan, Wolf Harvest Permanent Rule, and 2014 Quota to NRB for adoption , April-May 2014; set quotas for the 2014 season based on available population information; population models; documented impacts of the first 2 wolf seasons; documented impacts of depredation control efforts; harvest zones in the permanent rule; and the population goal in the revised plan.

Other relevant wolf timeline issues:

- Communication and outreach on the upcoming wolf harvest season, summer & fall 2012.
- Begin Wolf Hunting and Trapping Season, Oct. 15, 2012
- Present Draft of Permanent Rule to NRB to Authorize Public Hearings, Dec. 12, 2012
- Conclusion of Wolf Hunting and Trapping Season, Feb. 28, 2013.
- Wolf Winter Track Surveys and other Population Monitoring Activity, Dec. 2012-Mar. 2013.
- Wolf Season and Population Data Collection and Analysis, Mar.-May. 2013.
- Present Proposed Quotas to NRB, June 2013; quotas to remain conservative as new plan not yet written and approved and impact of harvest on reproduction in 2013 not yet known.
- Prepare for 2013 wolf season, Summer 2013
- 2013 wolf application deadline, August 1, 2013
- Hold Public Hearings on Permanent Wolf Harvest Rule , Fall/Winter 2013

- 2013 wolf season begins, October 15, 2013
- Wolf Winter Track Surveys and other Population Monitoring Activity, Dec. 2013-Mar. 2014.
- Conclusion of Wolf Hunting and Trapping Season, Feb. 28, 2014.
- Wolf Season and Population Data Collection and Analysis, Mar.-May 2014
- Wolf quotas recommended to NRB, April - May 2014
- Third wolf season begins October 15, 2014