

## Wisconsin Conservation Congress Mississippi River Committee Minutes

The regular meeting of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress Mississippi River Committee was held on **August 23, 2008** at the Radison Hotel of LaCrosse Wisconsin.

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 AM by Chairman Marc Schultz; roll was called by Secretary Wes Domine.

Committee members present included: Marc Schultz, Wes Domine, Tom Buckner, Byron Clements, Gary Dillaber, William Howe, Dick Jesseski, Ralph Kunkel, Matt Sedelbauer, and Wayne Stietz

Committee Members Excused Included: Mike Hayes, Travis Johnson, Steve Sievwright, and Ken Snow

DNR Staff Present included Fisheries Team Supervisor Ron Benjamin and Warden Bob Jumbeck

Others members of the public present were Ron and Joy Johnson.

### ORDER OF BUSINESS –

**Informational:** Byron Clements and Dick Jesseski both expressed a concern that growing pelican populations could result in an excessive predation of game and pan fish.

#### **Approval of a Mission Statement for the Mississippi River Committee:**

In accordance with Code of Procedures, the first order of business for each CC study committee in 2008 will be to adopt a committee mission statement. Chairman Schultz and Secretary Domine each submitted a draft for committee member's consideration. Discussion supported an additional clause with specific mention of the committee's efforts to encourage public input from river management agencies. The amended/final draft was as follows below. **Motion to accept mission statement was made by Bill Howe, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Dick Jesseski – motion passed by unanimous voice vote.**

#### **Mission Statement of the Mississippi River Committee (MRC) of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress:**

Within and to the support of Wisconsin Conservation Congress process; it is the mission of the Mississippi River Committee to advise the Wisconsin NRB on issues, rules, or policies which affect the river and/or other associated natural resources.

The MRC strives to stay acquainted with current river resource management; the science in support or opposition to that management; and with public opinion thereof. The MRC encourages river management agencies to seek public participation in management decisions or policy. Influence

stemming from the MRC shall be generated with greatest intentions toward long term benefits to all wildlife resources; and with an emphasis toward preserving public access and harvest of game resources, (i.e., preserving outdoor heritage activities of hunting, fishing, and trapping).

**Resolution 220108** – This resolution was submitted by Ralph Kunkel of Grant County, who is also a member of MRC. Kunkel expressed his displeasure with the rule which closed fishing in the area from Lock & Dam 11 downstream to the Highway 51 – 161 bridge. Kunkel expressed particular displeasure in regard to the unethical continued closing; and explained that per a sunset clause, the area was set to reopen to fishing in 2008 following a five year study. However, the area has remained closed. Kunkel continued that anglers of his county and district are extremely upset with this unnecessary closure, and asked for the committee's support for this resolution.

Ron Benjamin, WDNR Fisheries Team Supervisor, explained that the area will reopen in April of 2009; and explained that the extension beyond five years can be attributed to the rule writing process. Benjamin continued with an historical summary of the closure, explaining that the closure occurred at the request Mike Steuck, a biologist of the Iowa DNR. Steuck was conducting a study on walleye and sauger population. Public attendee Ron Johnson shared comments about a previous study near Redwing MN which was already completed. He felt the Iowa experiment is/was unnecessary. **Motion was made by Bill Howe, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Gary Dillaber; to support resolution 220108 and to support re-opening winter angling in the area below Lock & Dam 11. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.**

**Resolution 220308** – This resolution was similar to resolution 220108. **Motion was made by Ralph Kunkel , 2<sup>nd</sup> by Dick Jesseski; to support resolution 220308. Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.**

**Invasive Species** - Ron Benjamin shared that silver carp are now known to be two dams above the dam 19 at Keokuck IA. This is the result of the recent flooding across Iowa. (Silver carp are the species known for jumping.) Big head carp and grass carp are already present in the Upper Mississippi in small numbers. Discussion continued with member's comments on several other invasive plants and animals and the need to act to control existing invasives and prevent future introduction to the United States. **Motion was made by Dick Jesseski, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Wayne Stietz, to place a question on the spring hearing, "Should the NRB ask the federal government to enact a clean species act?" Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.**

**Proposed Cassville Power Plant issues** – Bill Howe expressed displeasure with lack of funding for environmental protection in power plant proposals by Alliant Energy and Wisconsin Power and Light. Howe provided copies of the proposals and explained that he had read them in entirety. Byron Clements shared similar concerns and shared example of what may occur if power companies are not forced to add such funding into their plans up front. As one example, Clements sighted the loss of 1200 feet of shoreline as the direct

result of barges used by the Genoa power plant. This loss was brought to the attention of the WDNR. Howe shared that two public hearings will be held regarding new power plant proposals:

In Cassville - Sept. 22 at 4:00 PM

In Portage - Sept. 23 at 6:30 PM

Marc Schultz offered/suggested he and Howe speak with CC Chairman Ed Harvey to request permission to represent the CC at these public hearings.

Gary Dillaber commented that at the recent District 5 CC meeting in Alma, a motion was passed in support of "no net loss of habitat."

**Fishing Tournament Rules Updates** – Ron Benjamin shared information on resulting walleye mortality during fishing tournaments. He explained that walleye mortality is high during summer months if fish are not immediately released. If new tournament rules are approved by the NRB and legislature, the DNR may/can lower bag limits for walleyes during tournaments. Bob Jumbeck shared that the DNR wants to have inspection authority, without probably cause, for participants in/during fishing tournaments. This ability would curb illegal sorting and other problems in tournaments. This request is currently in the hands of the legislature who may not approve the rule. The legislature will not be acting on the rule until January. Other rule changes included a five-tournament limit per pool per month.

#### **Status of NR 115 rules (relating to shoreline concerns)**

There is no proposal at this time to have the NRB consider the proposed NR115 update that was put together by the statewide study committee. The WCC had representation on that committee.

#### **Update on EMP, NESP, LTRMP**

The integration of the EMP into the recently enacted NESP is a serious concern. The EMP is an active successful federal program that requires state and public involvement to carryout its assigned programs of environmental monitoring and habitat improvement. The Mississippi committee members will be seeing the pool 8 islands project this afternoon and see first hand the habitat benefits which are supported by the COE FWS WDNR and the public.

**USFWS Upper Miss Refuge CCP implementation Update** – Swapping of lands closed vs. open to hunting in pool 4 was discussed. Ron Benjamin shared concerns that the ability to improve fish habitat may not be included in final implementation. Ron suggested that at upcoming meetings in Nelson or Wabasha, public input could/should request that fish habitat improvement projects remain possible after closed areas are complete. Bob Jumbeck commented that final CCP rules might still be open to the allowing of hunting in the closed areas, during the first week of the waterfowl season. Those

attending the meetings will have an opportunity to voice such requests. The status of slow-no wake areas; electric motor areas; navigation restrictions and the Gibbs Lake hunt were discussed.

### **Fishing Floats –**

Marc Schultz said he contacted Don Hultman about the status of the fishing float that is operated below Lock and Dam 9. Don Hultman said that FWS wanted the fish float to be removed from FWS land. He said they had issued an interim permit through July 2008 but no agreement with the operator was reached so no permit will be issued.

### **Member Matters –**

Chairman Schultz shared updates on waterfowl bag limits. Scaup bag limits will be reduced to two birds for 20 days and one bird for 40 days and the season on canvasbacks will be closed in 2008. Schultz also showed a draft waterfowl identification brochure available through the La Crosse County Conservation Alliance. The King of Ducks video will be available in DVD and both the DVD and brochure will have a link at the website [www.Briceprairieconservation.org](http://www.Briceprairieconservation.org)

Following the meeting members were invited to tour the EMP project near Bownsville MN. from 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm. Boat transportation and information updates for the tour were complements of WDNR, via Ron Benjamin.

Motion to adjourn by Gary Dillaber, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Wayne Stietz. Meeting was adjourned at 12:45 PM

Respectfully Submitted, Wes Domine – Secretary