

## Wildlife Advisory Committees Protocol

**Goal:** This protocol is designed to foster clarity, consistency, efficiency, and transparency in advisory committee operations. The membership of these committees is designed to ensure collaboration among field and central office staff, among the wildlife bureau and other department bureaus, and with external partners and stakeholders significantly impacted by the recommendations of the committees. This diversity of membership is designed to provide consideration of social and economic considerations as well as ecological considerations. Involvement of stakeholders and partners will increase the probability that recommended policies are sustainable, with maximum implementation potential. These rules apply to all advisory committees listed in the attached table, which shows leaders, sponsors, internal partner bureau membership and external partner membership.

**Advisory Committee Purpose:** Advisory committees exist for the purpose of developing recommended policies, plans and harvest prescriptions assigned by the Wildlife Policy Team. They serve to help the wildlife policy team implement the department's mission. Their recommendations are to be science-based with consideration for social and economic impacts and institutional and legal constraints.

**Committee Charge:** Each committee will have a charge developed or modified from previous efforts that will be reviewed and approved by the Wildlife Policy Team. The committee sponsor will work with the chair to develop the draft charge, which may be reviewed by the committee prior to submission to the Wildlife Policy Team.

**Committee Work Plans and Reporting:** The Wildlife Policy Team may require advisory committees to submit annual or biennial work plans and progress reports.

**Committee Sponsors:** Each advisory committee will have a sponsor from the Wildlife Policy Team. The sponsor is expected to regularly communicate with the committee chair and provide advice regarding draft agendas; challenges faced; timetables for recommendation development; and follow up on committee deliberations. Generally, the committee sponsor will be the section chief that supervises the chair, where the chair is a central office staff specialist.

**Committee Chairs:** Chairs will generally be the Central Office staff specialist who is responsible for the program that the committee works on. However, some committees may be chaired by field staff or supervisors. Chairs will be assigned by the Wildlife Policy Team. Chairs will consult with the committee sponsor for advice on committee work plans, issue resolution, and follow up on recommendations. Committee chairs will prepare agendas and have them available in advance of meetings so members can solicit comments and feedback on key agenda and decision items.

**Members:** Committees will be comprised of "members" who shall be comprised of DNR members (WM and key partner bureau reps) and partner members. Members

representing districts or bureaus are responsible for soliciting input on agenda items in advance of meetings and in turn representing those perspectives on the committees.

### **Committee Membership Decisions**

Membership of Wildlife Advisory Committees is ultimately approved by the Division Administrator. Recommendations for membership are developed jointly by the Wildlife Policy Team, Committee Chair, and Land Division Administrator. The Land Division Administrator has authority to shape final recommendations, which may differ from that of the Policy Team and Committee Chair. The objectives of department staff membership are to provide for coordination and communications among the field and central office staff as well as integration among relevant bureaus. External membership is intended to provide for input and cooperation with partner agencies and organizations and for developing recommendations that consider biology, ecology, sociology, and economics. External member organizations and agencies should be those best suited to help the department carry out its mission and the laws of Wisconsin. Invited bureaus, agencies and stakeholder groups select their representative to serve on the advisory committees. Overall membership numbers will be limited to allow for manageable committee meeting deliberations. Decisions on membership are aimed at meeting all of these objectives as practically as possible.

External task forces and round tables would have broader invited participation and less department participation to assure all stakeholders have input into the development of department policy.

**Tribal Involvement:** Under the Voigt case and related stipulations, Ojibwe tribal representation is required on specific advisory committees. Prior to meeting, the committee sponsor will work with legal services to ensure these legal obligations are satisfied.

**DNR member limits:** Committees shall have no more than 1 representative for each district and for each partner bureau (e.g. FR, ER, SS). The chair may bring an assistant to take notes and manage logistics, but assistants are not members. District supervisors will assign field staff to committees. Bureau Directors will assign representatives to the committees. Exceptions are allowed where an advisory committee is responsible for an issue that is local or regional in nature (e.g. prairie chickens).

**Partner Members:** Partner members shall be comprised of key stakeholder groups (e.g. DU) and key county (e.g. WCFA) and/or federal agencies (e.g. USFS). There may only be one member representative from each partner group or agency. Kurt has reviewed current listed stakeholders and has provided suggested modifications that will be available soon in a separate document. The list of partners will be reviewed by the committee sponsor and chairs, who will suggest any prudent modifications to the Wildlife Policy Team for approval. After the initial list of partner members is approved, future requests for additions will be reviewed by the Wildlife Policy Team, with advice sought from the division when necessary.

**Invitees:** All members will be invited to each meeting. Non-members will not receive an invitation unless they are needed for particular agenda items (e.g. Professor reporting on a research project).

**University Staff and Students:** Committee chairs may invite University personnel to attend meetings on an ad hoc basis if they have information that will be helpful for particular agenda items, but they will be consultants rather than members.

**Retirees:** Interested DNR retirees can attend, but they will not be members.

**Decision Making:** Chairs will have the goal of substantial effective agreement for all items, but may take votes if agreement cannot be reached. Chairs should document where substantial disagreement exists among members and the basis for disagreement. All members and only members will be permitted to vote.

**Committee Decisions are Recommendations:** Committees must understand that their role is to advise the Wildlife Policy Team with recommendations. Committees do not speak for the department, but rather provide recommendations to department leadership.

**Communications with the Wildlife Policy Team:** Committee recommendations will generally be in the form of an issue brief that is prepared far enough ahead of the policy team meetings to allow adequate review time. Issue briefs will state the problem or issue being addressed, a brief background, recommendations, justification for recommendations, and anticipated impacts on the department, stakeholders and partners.

**Approvals of Recommendations:** Depending on the nature of the recommendation, they may require approval by the sponsor, bureau director, policy team, division administrator, secretary, or Natural Resources Board. The sponsor together with the bureau director will make this decision or seek guidance from the secretary's office.

**Meeting Frequency:** Advisory committees will meet as often as is needed to complete assigned work. There is not a required number of meetings per year. Efficiencies may be gained by assigning subcommittees to work on specific tasks and by have conference calls for some agendas.

**Public Notice:** All meetings will be public noticed, and anyone can attend. Facilities for meetings will need to accommodate guests. Public notices must follow the guidelines of the department.

**Non-Member Opportunity for Input:** Non-members generally do not get a seat at the table and are not allowed to participate in advisory committee discussions unless they are called on by the chair. However, chairs will schedule a short time at each meeting to allow statements to be made by those attending who are not members. Non-members are welcome to provide written comments to chairs at any time. Non-members will have an opportunity to provide testimony to the Natural Resources Board on items that go before

them for approval. For some issues, mail, telephone or web surveys will be designed to gather additional public input.

**Meeting Record:** It will be the responsibility of the chair to post minutes of all meetings on the department website within 30 days of each meeting.

**Stakeholder Panels:** There may be issues that benefit from deliberations of a diverse stakeholder panel with limited numbers of DNR members. Committees should recommend such panels be established to the Wildlife Policy Team as needed.

**Internal Committees:** This advisory committee protocol does not apply to internal work groups assigned by department managers to accomplish specific department operations or solve specific problems.