

WOLF ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

7/22/2014 Wausau Howard Johnson Hotel

Introductions - Dave MacFarland, committee Chair, thanked the committee for their attendance. Deb Beyer was introduced as the new committee facilitator. Deb has a background as facilitator on the Beaver Taskforce. Nate Libal was introduced as the new field researcher for the DNR wolf program. Nate provided a trapping update; trapping was initially slow although picked up later in the season (17 wolves total trapped/collared in 2014); currently testing new satellite collars for effectiveness and cost effectiveness (overall working well; should provide an increase in data collection). The Natural Resource Board (NRB) approved the wolf quota recommendation of 156 on July 26; currently waiting for declarations from the Chippewa Tribes. Application for wolf permits is August 1; will send out notifications to drawing winners in mid-late August. A report of the wolf public opinion social survey data will be available to the WAC for the August meeting. The Conservation Congress wolf committee meeting will occur on August 9 and they will be provided a background of the survey. A summary of discussion topics for today's meeting were provided. Committee member introductions were made: Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, Timber Wolf Alliance, Wis. Conservation Congress, Wis. Cattleman's Association, Wis. Trappers Association, Wis. Wildlife Federation, Wis. Bear Hunters Association, Safari Club Int'l, Wis. Bowhunters Association, Wis. County Forest Association, USDA APHIS-Wildlife Services, U.S. Forest Service, DNR West-central District, DNR Northern District, DNR Southern District, DNR Northeast District, DNR Law Enforcement, DNR Science Services, DNR Wildlife Damage Specialist, DNR Forest Wildlife Specialist, and DNR Large Carnivore Specialist.

Deb Beyer Introduction and WAC Procedures - Discussion directed by Deb Beyer with comments provided by committee members.

- Deb provided a summary of her background and facilitating experience.
- The committee provided guidelines for conducting discussions and a list was compiled.
- Clarification that DNR committee guidelines outline that in the event that a consensus cannot be reached, a vote may be held.
- Deb's definition of a consensus: a recommendation that each person can support although they may not want that specific recommendation or that may not be their first choice. Others indicate that a consensus is when the majority of the group holds a similar opinion.
- A "consensus" does not show that some individuals or groups are opposed to recommendations; some members prefer a roll-call vote. Roll-call votes are not typically used in these types of procedures and will not be used in the WAC. Individual groups have the opportunity to present their support/opposition for recommendations to the Natural Resource Board if needed.

Wolf Public Opinion Social Survey

- Some concerns regarding the delay in receiving survey results. Survey results are necessary for developing the wolf management plan and addressing preconceived notions regarding public opinions about wolves.
- Survey results will be available to the committee prior to the August meeting. Results will be released first to the NRB for review, followed by the WAC and public. Recommended that the

WAC receives results a minimum one week in advance of August meeting to allow time for adequate review and interpretation.

- The WAC prefers to receive results prior to the public in case members receive questions.
- The final report is about 90 pages with tables and graphs. Data is cross-referenced in several ways; additional analyses can be requested if needed although final report is thorough. Bob Holsman, DNR research scientist, will be available for questions at the August meeting.

2014 Depredation Update - Discussion directed by Jason Suckow, USDA-Wildlife Services, and Brad Koele, DNR wildlife damage specialist, with comments provided by committee members.

- To date, 43 complaints; 1 bear hound, 2 coyote hounds, 1 beagle, and 1 pet dog killed; 7 calves killed and one injured; likely multiple harassments. 3 wolves removed by USDA-Wildlife Services (USDA-WS; this time last year the number was double this).
- Complaints considerably down to date. Depredations are lower likely for the reasons provided at previous WAC meetings. Lowered depredation levels typically follow harsh winters; deer are in lowered condition and predated more, and fawns are smaller which stretches the time period out longer when wolves are predated on fawns. USDA-WS has all of the tools needed to reduce wolf conflicts; over the past two years USDA-WS has removed about 150 wolves which has likely broken the cycle in chronic depredation areas. The late winter in wolf territory has caused husbandry practices to change in some areas. Regulated wolf harvest does not necessarily translate proportionally into lowered depredation.
- To date, 29 depredation permits issued; number of landowners accessing permits is decreasing. Last year, 16 wolves removed on landowner permits but 0 removed to date this year. 2014 depredation payments will be paid in Jan./Feb. of 2015. Depredation compensation based on average cattle prices for year, not the market price on the day of the depredation; individuals from the UW-Madison, Farm Bureau, and Dept. of Agriculture set prices for 5 classes of livestock.
- To date, majority of damage permits issued for livestock harassment or damage; 1-2 for human health and safety (close to residences). Douglas Co. highest with 8 permits, followed by Wood Co. (4 permits). Very little wolf depredation in NE part of the state. Last year, depredations increased in July.
- A table of depredation compensation payments was provided. In 2013, a new missing calf policy was implemented (yearling animals could be compensated). Thus, 2013 compensation payment numbers are not necessarily consistent with previous years. A table of payments through the WDACP and Wolf Depredation Program was provided (deer payments were the highest in 2012 and 2013, wolf was fourth highest in 2012 and second highest in 2013).
- In 2013, 28 of about 200 wolf packs caused depredation; 14 of these packs had wolves harvested through recreational harvest (32 wolves total; 12.5% of the total harvest). 13 wolf packs depredated hunting dogs; 7 of these packs had wolves harvested through recreational harvest (14 wolves).
- USDA-WS has the responsibility to respond to complaints within 48 hours. This is often misrepresented. In 2013, from the time WS received a report (phone messages/calls are time stamped) to the time when USDA-WS personnel were in the field to analyze and investigate the report, the average response time was 10.5 hours. Response time was >50 hours in 3 incidents because the persons who filed the complaints requested that WS wait until a later date to investigate. USDA-WS does respond and investigate reports on weekends and holidays; evident

by low average response time. USDA-WS cannot control whether complaints are reported to the wrong agency (this periodically occurs); the USDA-WS contact information was added to various DNR wolf web pages. The public needs information on how to preserve evidence so investigations can be appropriately investigated. Reports must be submitted to 1 of 2 toll-free numbers for appropriate and timely assignment.

- Misunderstanding of depredation categories exists. It is untrue that ½ of investigated depredations are classified as unconfirmed. 5 investigation categories were identified in the current wolf management plan (categories not developed by USDA-WS); 1) confirmed wolf depredation, 2) verified wolf other problem (any type of damage or harassment), 3) confirmed non-wolf depredation (non-wolf predation; other species), 4) probable wolf depredation (based on evidence in area), and unconfirmed depredation (all other mortalities including still-born calves, lightning strikes, vehicle-killed, and in 1 incident a burnt stump was reported as a dead cattle). USDA-WS can determine in most cases what caused or likely caused a depredation or death. Additional classes could clarify these misinterpretations; confirmed non-wolf predation or confirmed non-predator death. It was previously determined that the “confirmed non-wolf depredation” class specified non-wolf depredations.

Wolf Management Plan

Wildlife and Disease - Discussion directed by Lindsey Long, DNR wildlife veterinarian, with comments provided by committee members.

- Working to add wildlife disease sections to all species wildlife management plans including current disease issues, potential future issues, and health monitoring.
- A draft of the background disease section was provided to the committee.
- Recommendations regarding current best management practices can be included but as a general statement because situations are variable.
- Disease prevalence can vary by strain, age, etc. Prevalence mainly indicates exposure, not disease impacts. Prevalence is difficult to determine as symptoms do not confirm a disease; physical examination is often necessary.
- Recommendations must be written to allow flexibility in future management.
- Include recommendations that captured wolves be investigated for disease in some fashion. Cannot say that the DNR will blanket investigate all captured animals for disease, not unless funding will be available.
- A trigger point on when to intercede in wildlife disease outbreaks is not included in the MN or MI wolf management plans. Biologists in other states should be surveyed to determine what triggers exist for implementing disease management actions.
- Many conditions can cause hair loss and hair loss does not necessarily indicate an animal has mange and should be removed; this should be clarified. Wisconsin wolves have been diagnosed with mange in the past; the prevalence of mange in WI is included in the draft section. The phrase, “signs consistent with mange”, indicates hair loss but is not a confirmation of mange.
- The current monitoring plan can be added as an appendix to the plan/disease section.
- It is important to monitor as many animals for diseases as possible, particularly if the population is managed at a population level of 350.

- How to address outbreaks needs to be included in the plan although large-scale outbreaks are state and federal issues and supersede the management plan.
- Must focus on what can be included in the plan based on expected funding and monitoring objectives. Need to distinguish between required actions and issues warranting flexibility.
- The plan needs to have enough detail to guide management and show what steps are being taken to monitor diseases. The provided disease section is a background section, not a recommendation section. A recommendation section will exist and the DNR wildlife health section will develop disease management recommendations for inclusion.
- The plan should indicate that continued monitoring will occur but should not provide so much detail that each disease is outlined with specific guidelines. Some diseases require annual monitoring, other diseases do not. The wildlife health section should not be constrained to the point that time and funds are misallocated.
- An existing necropsy plan exists which is reviewed annually, this can be included as an appendix if needed. Not all wildlife health plans need to be included in the wolf management plan.

Non-depredation Livestock Impacts - Discussion directed by Eric Koens, Wis. Cattleman's Association, with comments provided by committee members.

- The general public is disconnected from livestock production today. This is an education issue.
- There is misinformation available about managing wolves and managing livestock.
- Information on non-depredation effects that wolves may have on livestock production was provided to the committee (authored by USDA-WS staff).
- Determining non-depredation impacts requires on-site inspection of cattle.
- Compensations are not fully adequate to meet depredations or harassments. Most livestock producers would prefer to raise livestock without conflict rather than collect compensation for wolf depredation and harassments.
- Neosporosis
 - Canines are the definitive host for neosporosis which is a disease that affects cattle. Neosporosis can cause considerable cattle loss (via abortions) and loss of revenue depending on the size of farming operation. Lots of information on the disease exists; it is documented and needs to be understood for future wolf management in Wisconsin and included in the new management plan. Neosporosis is a worldwide disease.
 - Domestic canids are the definitive host for neosporosis. Wolves can shed oocysts but it has only recently been documented in wolves. The primary way an area is infected by neosporosis is through cattle and domestic canines. 39 of about 140 wolves showed exposure to neosporosis through blood testing in WI; this does not indicate infection or shedding of oocysts. It is difficult to study disease in wild canids; if domestic dogs are a definitive host of the disease wild canids likely are as well. Using domestic dogs to protect cattle is not feasible because no known vaccination exists for dogs.
 - Cattle abortion levels by county will be provided to Lindsey Long at some point but unsure about what the data will tell.
 - In the presence of wolves, coyote populations are likely lowered and so the prevalence of the disease on the landscape may be lowered.
 - Wolves contract the disease by eating ruminants. Very little evidence exists to show that wolves are spreading the disease to cattle. Cattle exist at extremely high densities and it

is likely that the rate of spread among cattle is higher than from wolves to cattle. Add clarification on neosporosis transmission to the draft plan.

- Even if the disease does not cause landscape-level problems, the problems to individual landowners can be considerable.
- Only a small percentage of cattle are tested for neosporosis.
- The plan should not be over detailed on any one disease. The current plan only focuses on depredation and the goal of the new plan is to include other effects of wolves on livestock. This section of the plan is informational as to address that other risks exist. Whether neosporosis is a high or low risk is undeterminable and unnecessary to identify. Neospora oocysts can be found in wolf feces but to what extent is unknown. The risks exist (which the new plan is acknowledging) but needs to be kept in perspective. Prevalence rate is not likely useful as it doesn't consider the source.
- A request to include discussion on Echinococcus/tapeworm infection in the management plan was made.

WAC Procedure - Discussion directed by Deb Beyer with comments provided by committee members.

- One-on-one discussions are sometimes necessary so people can fully discuss topics.
- Longer discussions can be helpful in allowing people to work-out and understand issues.
- Deb was complimented by multiple members on her ability to facilitate the meeting; continued willingness to cut-off members when discussions stray from the topic at hand is desired.
- Committee members need to refrain from telling personal stories involving wolves.
- The committee needs to ask how topics or issues will be used to influence management. If something won't influence management decisions and is merely background information, the committee needs to address and move on.

Dog Training Regulations - Discussion directed by Dave MacFarland, committee Chair, with comments provided by committee members.

Dog Training Regulations

- A copy of the current hound training rules and summary was provided.
- In state law, the use of dogs to assist in the harvest of wolves is allowed. In 2012, there was a court injunction prohibiting the use of dogs for hunting and training purposes. In 2013, a court ruling allowed the use of dogs to track and trail wolves during the regulated harvest season. In 2014, another court ruling lifted the injunction prohibiting the training of dogs on wolves.
- According to the courts, wolves are considered a "free roaming wild animal" which are open for dog training. In the absence of state laws prohibiting training dogs on wolves, the court interpreted that training dogs on wolves is legal.
- Federal agencies can develop additional restrictions on the use of dogs in addition to any the state develops.
- Department policy allows the use of well-trained dogs to pursue or retrieve game; the committee is to recommend rules for implementing dog training and use, not to recommend regulations prohibiting it. The administration also seeks that training regulations mirror the hunting regulations; no more than 6 dogs may be used regardless of the number of hunters in a group and

the hunter/trainer must possess and keep on their person any required tags or permits. The committee may recommend a timeframe for training that is sufficient to train dogs.

- Dogs killed by wolves while in pursuit of wolves are not eligible for depredation compensation. This regulation is set in state statute.
- Option - Expand the Class B bear license to authorize training of dogs with wolves. This may be a statutory issue and require a statutory change.
- Option - Set the training season to occur after harvest permits are issued so only those persons with a harvest permit are allowed to train dogs with wolves.
- There are current restrictions on bear dog training that do not exist for wolf dog training. The current rules are in place until the permanent rule is established.
- Committee consensus – Dog training rules will be identical to dog hunting rules in respect to number of dogs used, tagging requirements, etc.
- While training hounds off-reservation the hound trainer cannot be accompanied by a Tribal member in possession of a harvest permit. This would be consistent with regulations for other species. The issue is that Tribal members can receive multiple tags; they can harvest a bear and then go back and receive another tag and pursue another bear. Discuss at later WAC meeting.

Considerations for Training Season

- Training Dates
 - Start Date
 - Start date consistent with the start of the hunting season (Monday after the end of the 9-day gun deer season).
 - Closure Date
 - End date of April 14 would be consistent with training seasons for other species.
 - Ending the training season with the close of the harvest season/zones may eliminate prime training periods (when snow is on the ground).
 - Close training season in each zone as they close to harvest; once all zones close to harvest, the training season reopens for all zones. Closing the training season when a zone closes to harvest could eliminate illegal harvests; known incidents of illegal harvest are documented. Closing the training season when harvest zones close is complicated as hunters can pursue bobcat and coyotes in these zones at these times.
 - From public relations standpoint, better to only allow training up to March 1 to minimize conflicts and because not a lot of hunters train in March and April. Dogs may be killed by wolves and dogs may kill wolf pups at dens in spring; not worth risking this situation. Spring hound training would put stress on pregnant wolves, and the later in the pregnancy the greater the effects of stress can be.
 - End February 28 (statutory end of wolf harvest season) which provides adequate opportunity to train in good snow and avoids problems with spring conflicts.
 - Concerns exist that hounds can catch and kill animals (bobcat, etc.) in deep snow or heavy crust. Close the training season in late winter.
 - Training hours should be consistent with hunting hours.
- Training Season

- Should proceed the hunting season (few months) to allow adequate time for training of dogs. If zones close in one week, the time to train may not be adequate to fully train dogs. Training season should be open until at least the end of the harvest season. Considering the 2013 harvest results, under short notice the dogs used in the harvest were very effective at tracking and trailing wolves; they were adequately trained.
- Should avoid the breeding (starts January), birthing (March), and rendezvous seasons; could be times of high conflict (times when wolves tend to be more aggressive).
- Only open to those that hold valid wolf harvest permits; a start time in October could ensure this. Training opportunities could be limited for many if a harvest permit is required to participate.
- Establishing a training season to prohibit training during the breeding season would not likely eliminate many opportunities as hound hunters are not training at this time (increased likelihood for conflicts with wolves and loss of dogs).
- There may be snow cover in spring to allow suitable training.
- Regulations should be consistent with those for coyote and fox. Regulations should be consistent with those for bear.
- A fall training season could conflict with other hunting opportunities and user groups.
- Avoid conflicts with bear hunters.
- Consider wolf population surveys; avoid impacts to data and survey effectiveness. End training by January 15 when wolf track surveys begin.
- Consider fraudulent depredation claims; wolf hunter claiming that their dog was hunting bear when killed.
- **Committee consensus** - State law was changed to prohibit night hunting for wolves but not night dog training; training regulations should be consistent with the hunting regulations and only allowed during legal hunting hours.
- **Baiting**
 - Only place bait during the hunting season. Acknowledged that baiting is not required for dog training. Running dogs by a naturally dead animal carcass is not baiting (including road kill deer, etc.) but placing an animal carcass as bait would be considered baiting.
 - **Committee Consensus** - Wolf baiting is no longer allowed in a zone when the zone is closed to wolf harvest.

Summary of Dog Training Issues Voted on by the Committee

- **Closure Date**
 - **Option 1** - Zone closed to hunting would be closed to training, but once all zones close to harvest, then all zones reopen for training. From a law enforcement perspective, hunters can still run coyotes and bobcats, and may inadvertently have their dogs follow wolf tracks, so closing the season to wolf training may be moot. Closing the training season in zones closed to harvest would go against providing training opportunities. **3 votes YES.**
 - **Option 2** - Zones remain open for training regardless of hunting zone closure status. **15 votes YES. *CONSENSUS VOTE YES***
- **Training Dates**
 - **Option 1** - October 1-14 - **Consensus vote NO**
 - **Option 2** - Monday after 9-day gun deer season through April 14 - **0 votes YES**

- Option 3 - Monday after 9-day gun deer season through January 15 - **3 votes YES**
- Option 4 - **Monday after 9-day gun deer season through February 28 - 15 votes YES**
CONSENSUS VOTE YES
 - **Committee Consensus** - Write rule to stipulate that the dog training season runs concurrent with the dog hunting season dates, thus the training rule would automatically change if there were legislative change to season dates.
- Baiting
 - Option 1 - Only bait for training purposes during the regulated hunting season; day after bear season closes (October 8 in 2014) through wolf zone closure. Baiting regulations would thus stay the same as they are currently established. **All members vote YES**
CONSENSUS VOTE YES

Summary of Dog Training Regulations for Wolves

- Hunting and training during daylight hours only.
- Same restrictions for number of dogs and permitting as required when hunting for wolves.
- All zones will remain open to training during regulated hunting season regardless of zone closure status.
- Baiting regulations will remain as currently established. Baiting only allowed for dog training when the harvest season remains open.
- Training season will run concurrent with the dates established in statute as being legal to hunt wolves with the aid of dogs.

Wolf Carcass Evaluations - Discussion directed by Dave MacFarland, with comments provided by committee members.

- In 2014, the Natural Resource Board determined that current procedures for evaluating the carcasses of wolves harvested with the aid of dogs is not adequate for collecting data on whether wolves were injured by dogs.
- The DNR wildlife health section developed recommendations to address the board's concerns.
- **Recommendation** - Hunters must register wolves with the DNR prior to skinning or removing the pelt, and the pelt must then be removed in the presence of a DNR conservation warden (should add "or trained DNR wildlife biologist").
 - Some bite marks may not penetrate to muscle and are not identified through current carcass evaluations. Carcass evaluations can indicate if there is canid damage, not necessarily dog damage.
 - This may or may not be feasible in the field but to achieve the board's objective, this registration restriction is necessary.
 - Recommended as a two-year study, not a permanent requirement.
 - Law enforcement wardens would be trained in the collection of evidence and present evidence to the DNR veterinarian for evaluation. Unsure if this process would yield useful data. Once a carcass is skinned, data can be lost in as early as two hours.
 - Some wolf carcasses are sent to taxidermists and so if a carcass is frozen at a licensed taxidermist, the timeframe would be extended to accommodate.
 - The board requested that a more prompt presentation of wolves after harvest to the DNR in order to meet their objective be voluntary. If a voluntary carcass submission, hunters

likely won't present wolf carcasses that show signs of fighting with dogs in a timely manner. To make this a successful procedure prompt submission must be mandatory. May need to work with taxidermists to gather appropriate data; ask at registration where the wolf carcass will be taken.

- May lead hunters to misreport wolf harvests; report wolves harvest with the aid of dogs as trapped wolves.
- Some hunters might view voluntary submission burdensome and may not voluntarily submit carcasses to meet the board's objectives; the public might view this as hunters trying to conceal dog-wolf fighting.
- Other countries allow the use of dogs to harvest wolves; some data from Ontario but the use of dogs to harvest pure gray wolves is not very common.
- Possibly collect and evaluate carcasses from wolves trapped or shot for comparison with carcasses from wolves harvested with the aid of dogs; get information on how many wolves show signs consistent with fighting with other canines.

Additional Discussion - Discussion directed by Dave MacFarland, with comments provided by committee members.

- The DNR administration requested that the WAC develop a list recommendation options regarding various subjects or management objectives for collecting public input; population goals and objectives, zone delineations, etc. Options should include a description of the goal the WAC wants to achieve.
- The public input process will include a 1 ½-2 month period this fall via the internet and a series of public meetings.
- Some committee members expressed concerns and disagreement with this new public-input process. The WAC implemented a public survey to collect public opinions; additional processes appear unnecessary. Committee members have spent considerable time learning wolf issues and developing recommendations. If the input from WAC members is going to be circumvented, then those members who voluntarily participate on the committee are having their time wasted.
- The WAC will collect and review the additional public input. Ultimately, the WAC will still develop final recommendations.
- When the federal government does environmental assessments or inventories they provide a suite of options and recommendations to the public to help the public identify management directions and to allow the public to comment on items missed.
- In the state process, this additional public input process is currently used to collect public input on other controversial issues such as habitat issues.

Comments from the Public in Attendance

- Two letters from tribal members were provided to the committee to read at a later date.
- Comment 1 - Glad to see the reduced harvest quota for 2014. Reiterates opposition to some harvest methods and to the wolf harvest. Some data indicates that Wisconsin residents oppose trophy hunting for wolves. Opposed to wolf hunting with the aid of hounds; threat to animals and disruptive to landowners. Trapping is inhumane for a variety of reasons.
- Comment 2 - Concerned that one committee member views the increased public input in the process as a "slap in the face" as it was a slap in the face of wolf advocates and the general public

when advocacy groups were excluded from the WAC membership. The DNR administration is unlikely to consider the additional public input. There are many people concerned about hound hunting as it is viewed as state-sanctioned dog fighting and animal abuse. Agrees that a roll-call vote should be used; it is the right of the public to know how each group votes on issues.

- Comment 3 - Our brains do not always pick up what our eyes see.

Next Meeting: The August WAC meeting will be on Wednesday, August 27, 2014.

September Meetings (2): The September WAC meetings will be on Wednesday, September, 10 and Tuesday, September 30, 2014

In order to meet the timeline for developing a draft management plan by October and providing a final draft to the Natural Resource Board in February, some months will require two committee meetings.