

**Wisconsin Wildlife Federation**  
**Forestry, Parks & Recreation Committee**  
"Report of Meeting of January 25, 2008 held at Sentry Insurance"

Meeting was called to order at 1:10 P.M. with the following members in attendance: Tim Bucheger, Dan Stenger, Jere Hamel, Dick Baudhuin, Matt Guidry, Jerry Peters, Dale Zaug along with Bob Mather of WDNR Forestry Dept, George Meyer and Jerry Knuth.

The following committee members were excused: Mike Lane, Dave Verhage, Mark Hoffman, Randy Terazynski and Jake Macholl.

We started the meeting with introductions which included comments from each committee member as to why they were interested in this subject. I moved forward with some brief background indicating that this committee was in a restart mode having been dormant for a couple of years; but now see the need to address specific issues that are on the horizon.

Bob Mather proceeded to discuss some hot topics that are on the Departments plate at the current time:

- Bob talked about **Invasive Species (NR-40)** and the Department's need to enter private lands. This updated invasive species list is very lengthy in categorizing fish and plants from restrictive to prohibitive classes. He encourage each member to review the current list in NR-40 and watch for the up-coming 30-day period for public comments.
- He moved on to discuss **ATV's on the Northern Highlands**. Not much for any middle-ground on this subject. You're either "for it or against it". Report to the Natural Resources Board is coming up and will indicate that there are 2.5MM visitors with about 250,000 riders who are interested in expanding a state-wide trail system. ATV clubs are still organizing and are not at the same level as are the Snowmobilers. Right now, the system is funded with the ATV license and some gas tax dollars. Need additional dollars if the trail system is to expand. This will be an agenda item for the February NRB meeting.
- **Black River State Forest Master Plan** is a pretty lengthy volume and is now available on-line. We are encouraged to review it.
- Moved on to discuss **AB-607** which creates an exception for Wind Turbines on Managed Forest Lands "MFL". On a motion by Dick Baudhuin and a second by Dale Zaug, the committee vote was unanimous in support of AB-607. This will be taken to the February Directors Meeting.
- Discussed recent issues relative to stewardship bonding which can now be used to purchase lands. Will require administrative rule changes. Counties are looking closely at these changes in the stewardship program.

Following Bob Mather's report we moved ahead in our agenda items with a long discussion about **leasing of hunting rights on managed forest lands**. Bob & George took the committee back through much of the history of the MFL which has been around since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and initially did not allow "leasing". In 1992 the program was changed to allow "leasing as long as it didn't interfere with the forestry intent of the program". We then went through a long discussion of Tigerton Lumber's leasing of 12,000 acres at \$40 per acre. In effect, it was legal to double-dip with (a) cheap tax rates and (b) big lease dollars which restrict outside hunters. In 2002, the MFL froze tax dollars available to the counties. This has placed a lot of strain on the three-legged partnership – i.e. landowners, hunters and the counties. A provision in the state budget prohibited MFL lands from being leased. They see this as a "tax fairness issue". There are about 3800 participants involved in the MFL program. ( A subsequent bill is being introduced to allow leasing but reducing the tax benefit to landowners to 45% of normal property taxes.

The committee went on to discuss **public hunting access on stewardship purchased lands**. The WiWF has been very effective by quietly opening up thousands of acres for additional hunting opportunities. We discussed the situations in both Dane County and Waukesha. On a motion by Jerry Hamel and a second by Jerry Peters it was decided that we would develop a resolution for the Annual Meeting in 2008. Committee was unanimous in their support and George will put pen-&-paper to it and forward the resolution electronically to the committee for any additional input.

Matt Guidry, UWSP Student and President of the local chapter of WISPIRG went through a short version of "**Your Carbon Footprint**" program which is available on-line. The program asks a few questions about your power usage, mileage and the like. It then converts your annual usage to an equivalent number of trees required to offset your carbon footprint. This is an interesting program. It would have been a good opportunity for the committee to experiment further had Matt's laptop worked in the underground conference room that we were using. We'll try it out at another meeting. Matt is a senior at UWSP and is a welcomed addition to our committee.

Issues from the committee included a discussion topic brought forward by Jere Hamel relative to consultants writing of the management plans relative to the MFL. Bob Mather was able to give the committee a good amount of background on the subject. The MFL now requires consultants to write the plan whereas the county foresters used to do the entire program. The landowner now must hire the consultant and there is a 50% rebate available if the landowner qualifies. This rebate was offered to offset cost-sharing from the federal government. It still takes about a year to get into the program. Jere's point was that he didn't think we needed to offer the 50% rebate given the tax-breaks available. There was some additional discussion pro-&-con. The committee didn't see a need to take further action on this topic at this time.

This meeting proved to be a good re-start for the Forests, Parks and Recreation Committee. It's a great group with a mixed set of backgrounds; but all with conservation in mind. I thank each of these folks for taking an afternoon from their busy schedules and invite others who may want to join our committee.

Meeting adjourned at 4:15 P.M.



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Jerry Knuth, Chairman