

Wolf Management Round Table

23 March 2013

Fitchburg

Present DNR Administrators and Staff: Scott Gunderson, Kurt Thiede, Bill Vander Zouwen, Adrian Wydeven, Dave MacFarland, Brad Koele, Dave Oginski, Shelly Allness, Tim Andryk, Henry Bauman, Bill Cosh, Bob Manwell

Present Guests: Joe Koback, Scott Meyer, Lucas Withrow, Randy Jurewicz, Peter David, Lacy Hill, Mike Brust, Virgil Schroeder, Jason Suckow, Darlene Konkell, Tim Van Deelen, Heather Stricker, Randall Wollenhaup, Pat Pelky, Karen Karisch, Marie Ericksen-Pilch, Mary Anderson, Lee Farhney, Ralph Fritsch, Dan Eklund

Purpose: The Round Table was developed for getting feedback and input on wolf management and monitoring issues from a cross section of tribes, stakeholder groups, and agencies. Comments of participants were recorded on a flipchart and not debated. These comments are found in this document. They will be considered by the DNR Wolf Advisory Committee and DNR leadership as we move forward with development of the 2013 wolf harvest quotas, revision of the wolf management plan, and promulgation of the permanent rule on wolf hunting and trapping. The Round Table will be assembled again in the future to review draft products of the Wolf Advisory Committee.

Staff Roles: Scott Gunderson and Kurt Thiede led the meeting. Other staff were present to answer questions and take notes.

Recorded Comments: The following is from round table participant comments as understood or interpreted by recorder Bill Vander Zouwen. Records were not kept on who made each comment, and these notes are not quotes from audio recordings (no audio recordings made). These comments were not debated and there was not attempt to reach consensus on any of them. They represent individual opinions.

Impressions of the 2012 Season

Quota reached quickly; is population higher than thought?

New hunt....easier to take wolves in first year

Road access and good equipment helped

Concern that wolf surveys don't detect some wolves

Trappers consider it successful and believe that there are more wolves and would like to expand quotas

First season went very well for a first season

DNR was really on top of the wolf kill

Information was readily available on harvests and zone closures

State responsibility in managing the hunt will be valuable for federal review and lawsuits

Success is linked to population size

Season was managed very well

The WTA/DNR wolf trapper education class was valuable

Success was linked to good hunters and trappers in Wisconsin

Perfect season – harvesting quotas, zone closures; don't need hound dogs for hunting
If a less than perfect season in the future, we may need all tools including dogs; it will get harder to harvest wolves
Using dogs on wolves is different than using them for other species
Wolf hunting guides in Canada suggest that dogs are an effective tool
Concern for hunting dogs impacts on sheep
Quota reached quickly
Wisconsin's population data is as good as anywhere; keep it that way
If success rate is high, lower number of licenses will be needed
Maybe the season could be shortened

Impressions of 2012 Depredation Control and Compensation

Questions addressed by Brad Koele included:

- revenue from license sales and application fees - \$290,000
- claims paid – 54 at \$140,000
- claims after October 15 – few
- use of revenue beyond claim compensation – to wolf management including contract with USDA Wildlife Service for depredation control actions

4 of 5 harvested wolves did not come from packs where depredations occur
Less than 20% of packs are involved in depredations
This was the first year we had full depredation control authority. Somewhere down the road when wolf populations are reduced, depredations should be reduced
Get landowners together with licensed hunters and trappers (note: landowner access provisions of law don't start until 2013; DNR can make landowner information available)

Wolf Management Zones

Central forest shouldn't be managed as a wolf core area for higher population levels due to conflicts there
Bad River Tribe wants 6 mile buffer from reservation boundaries with zero quotas; have proposed road boundaries
Potawatomi Tribe has disjunct ownerships with no established boundary but would like their own wolf management zone
Stockbridge-Munsee tribe will be asking for a zero quota buffer area
Tribes are generally ok with depredation control actions where there have been depredation problems, even near reservations.
Zones used this past year make sense; modeling suggests that light harvest areas are needed to have a sustainable wolf population
Differential wolf population management by zone idea is a good one for harvest management, but the zones don't correlate with depredation control action levels
Suggest quota by zone include both hunting/trapping harvest and depredation control kills
Changing quota zones might not make much difference if wolves get harder to take
Statute is written to prevent refuges; all areas are supposed to be in harvest zones

Quotas and License Numbers

Concern that quotas are based on incomplete counts

Can't we estimate populations using models like with other species?

Concern for using minimum counts rather than estimates; want estimates

Mark-recapture methods need investigating

Note USFWS monitoring requirement post de-listing

Try MN method of occupancy model

Estimated cost for wolf monitoring now is over \$250,000 including LTE salaries, travel costs, captures and radio-telemetry equipment, flights to monitor radioed wolves and count packs, etc.

Wolf count is at a time of year when population is lowest in the annual cycle

Numbers make sense compared to adjacent states

Estimates have confidence limits, so you can't just rely on a single number

It was requested that the white paper on wolf monitoring be sent to participants

There was a demonstration of the result of using % of radio-collared wolves harvested to come up with a population estimate, with the suggestion that this was a poor way to estimate population that is subject to significant bias and substantial differences in estimates based on just a couple less or more radioed wolves harvested

Keep quotas about the same; be conservative and go slow

Managing the population based on minimum counts doesn't make sense; the quota is too low with this approach

Should increase quotas....maybe to harvest 200 wolves

Last year, we needed to be conservative and learn

We only harvested 117 out of a total quota of 201 last year

Need to add depredation control kills to harvest quota; then it would be close to 200 killed last year

Tribes consider depredation control kills as part of state's take and want the state's side of the quota to include those wolves

The population goal is still 350 in the plan

Need to clarify depredation control kills vs. quotas

Concern that we won't have all the data we need to make decisions on quotas, so stay conservative

Need to harvest enough wolves to cause the population to be reduced toward the population goal

Tribal belief that treaties were not just about killing wildlife but also the value of having them alive

Want to get population closer to goal

Will be revisiting wolf plan and reassessing the population goal; should see if goal changes before trying to reduce the wolf population to the current goal of 350

We are taking small steps and not trying to get to 350 this year

Hunting and Trapping Methods

It was noted that most methods to be allowed are spelled out in statute

Focus on rule-related methods

Distance to trails and administrative sites should be considered in trap placement rules
Baiting period causes user conflicts on national forests
Can't bait March – October 10
(note earlier comments on use of dogs)

Wolf Surveys and Models

Question about whether we have 40% less trackers. Answer that lost 20 out of 170 trackers and that DNR has filled gaps with staff, retired staff, and contracted persons.
Volunteer tracker requirements and location of classes is a concern; develop a program to get more people involved to get better survey coverage and better data
Should be some reimbursement of tracker mileage
Trackers are very dedicated
People can turn in their wolf observations on-line
DNR filled in gaps in survey coverage with additional staff, contracted trackers, and retired biologist trackers
Need for more use of hunters, trappers, and other volunteers
Trail Cam survey may help
Seeing a lot of wolves in northern Marathon County
How do we get people trained to track and collect data to meet standards with the least amount of commitment
How can we reimburse trackers for some of their costs
Build on the new Deer Management Assistance Program with data collection on wolf numbers

Future Population Goal

How does this relate to the lawsuit?
How does this relate to the delisting expectations of the US Fish and Wildlife Services
Comments about the wildlife management principle called the yield curve related to carrying capacity and harvest potential; suggestion that a goal of 350 could be below the maximum sustained yield (harvest) level of one-half of carrying capacity
Consider whether wolf harvest is compensatory or more likely additive or super additive
With incomplete knowledge and control with a low density population, there could be a risk with managing for a goal less than one-half of carrying capacity
Concern that plan could be changed and how that could affect vulnerability legally
Concern that raising goal to 500 could lead to raising it even higher in the future and the consequence of less public acceptance of wolves
Maybe lower the goal
Don't want to be more vulnerable on challenges
Do away with a numerical goal, like Dr. Kroll suggests for deer, and instead focus on metrics like tolerable level of depredations and desired annual harvest potential with different population levels; most states don't have a numerical goal for their populations
Work with legal before change plan
Would there be a federal restriction on what we can do with the population goal during the 5 years post delisting

Recovery goals are the wrong approach to setting a management goal; we are not looking for a minimum that we have to have

Wolves will control their own number; don't need to manage the population level

Wolves may help Lyme disease infection rate, forest regeneration, and CWD control; need to talk about values of wolves

Want sustainable population

Wolf population structure is different from that of other species

Need to look at data on people's attitudes toward wolves and social carrying capacity and need to look at trends in this

Public has been frustrated because our hands were tied; will attitudes change with management of wolves?

If a goal would be based on conflict only, we are only talking about 25% of packs causing problems (depredations)

There are a lot of people waiting to see how this will play out

Need to keep public trust on management in order to keep public tolerance

Have livestock producers given up or taken matters into their own hands?

Goal of plan needs to be to keep management authority with the state

Feels that beef growers have given up because system hasn't worked

Many landowners are working with USDA Wildlife Services on wolf depredation control

USDA Wildlife Services is a great service in Wisconsin

Trophy status helps with seeing value of wolves

Comment that social science shows that there is a declining tolerance of wolves among some groups and less tolerance with proximity and more likely to take into own hands with that situation; too soon to tell if opinions will change with management

Future Depredation Control and Compensation

Farmers want to be able to solve their problems with wolves

Don't reimburse for dogs lost while hunting wolves

Highly commend USDA Wildlife Services and asking DNR to keep them on contract

Dealing with livestock depredation is extremely important to acceptance of wolves

Thanks goes to all those who gave up a Saturday, and in some cases drove for hours, to participate in the Wolf Management Round Table!