Beaver Mgmt Meeting
Rhinelander 9/28/2011

Poster session from 6:30 to 7:00 PM. Eighteen (18) folks in attendance in addition to 6 presenters/facilitators.

Deb Beyer called the meeting to order at 6:48PM and introduced herself. Thanked everyone for coming. Discussed cleaning up any issues with parking Tickets.

Deb asked how people heard about the meeting: Newspaper (1), Organization (most), Email from friend (2)

Deb covered the reasons why we are having the meetings. Updating the plan, beaver task force and membership, input from state holders. Websites and webinar information was provided, and passed around.

Intros –

John Olson – discussed management aspect, hands on issues related to beaver management, mentioned the 80's, high beaver numbers, WDNR Wildlife Management (WM) is responsible for the rewrite of the beaver management plan. All stakeholders are involved. WM is looking for reasonable balance. There are areas where beaver numbers are too high and too low. Need to take all information and build a final management plan. Will be a number of writers, and goal to have final draft by Christmas of 2012, and see how long it takes to get it approved. Positives and negatives – need to work on balance.

Dave MacFarland – estimates beaver population and beaver harvest. Population estimated through aerial surveys, zones A and B. Don't directly survey south of line. Will be surveying beavers with aerial surveys this year. Detect changes between surveys. The beaver survey is one of the better surveys we have in the state. Also have a beaver trapper survey, and this sample allows a projection of the statewide harvest. Last year was around 25,000. Dave also mentioned the departments Fur Harvest Survey. Results of these surveys are available online.

Jason Suckow – USDA Wildlife Services partners with a number of agencies. Work usually deals with conflict management. WS has been partners with the WDNR since late 1980s, and partners with various other agencies to maintain – roads, timber, wild rice, cold water ecosystems. WS came into play with last beaver management plan to reduce beaver populations in the northeast. Beaver management is a very complex issue to find balance – homeowners, and various other users.

Matt Mitro – Trout and coldwater research. Matt discussed his poster and impact of beaver on coldwater streams. Beaver control is one of the most effective means to manage coldwater streams. Negatives of beaver – siltation, water temperatures, etc. Beaver control is supported by fisheries management – Ed Avery's research. Matt

mentioned climate change and there's evidence of stream temperatures increasing over the last twenty years. Looking at how climate may influence management in the future. Could potentially loose many coldwater systems. 54,000 miles of stream, 10,000 have trout, and only 2,000 managed for beaver.

Jim – what constitutes too high or too low for a beaver population?

John O – too high is where beaver are causing damage. Mississippi river is one of these areas – Zone D. Brian Stemper mentioned beaver numbers on the big river are an issue. Difficulty due to waterfowl hunters and dogs. Will likely take a compromise to allow more beaver to be trapped. Too many is usually a social thing.

When it's too low, research will have to provide the input. Lack or beaver ponds can have an impact on other communities (river otter, black ducks, others). Harder to define when they are too low.

Follow-up – will we be able to make changes after the new plan comes out?

John - It will be at least 20 years before the next plan comes out. Guidance says to have flexibility on how we manage beaver. Old plan was focused on reducing and successful, new plan will be more flexible. We are at the very beginning, and we will be taking input for the next year plus. Many opportunities, but we need to get something on paper.

Brian - Some places you may want to increase the beaver population, warm water streams? Suggestion to increase beaver on warm water stream, this can be done by increasing logging on these warm water streams. Foolish to have no cut logging zones along streams. With new equipment can harvest trees up to stream bank.

John Gillien – The WDNR practices sustainable forestry, and leaves a riparian management zone, consisting of a residual basal area. Depends on ownership of the property. Need to leave 60 square feet within these management zones. Now have new BMP for management in these zones. Northern Highland to have 25 cuts coming up in the next month.

Sue – BMPs are in place to maintain water quality. You can harvest within RMZ.

Jim – as soon as beaver come in APHIS is right behind them. From Pembine, would have hard time taking anyone out and showing them a beaver. Doesn't find any of that stuff around. Feels like we've swung to far the other direction. 80s too high, now too low.

Jason – your probably right about no beaver, Pembine area is an area of high work. A lot of high quality streams are in the northeast. How do we pick and choose what ecosystems are going to manage for? If beaver get into some of these spots, millions of dollars could be going down the tubes. How to prioritize? Will be major challenge of

writing the plan. One concern – nothing like the western states. IN the west, beaver dams are good. IN Wisconsin, doesn't take a large dam to hold a lot of water.

A lot of unique habitats, old growth cedar and hemlock for example, have been protected in the Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests.

Jim – gradient level is not a lot different than in Canada where there is dam after dam…and there's trout too. Looking for a balance in the northeast as well.

Kelly Crotte – needs to be balance in funding wetland and other management in Marinette Co. and improve waterfowl habitat in other counties. Has heard a lot of negative comments from the public – trout work is good, but not a lot of wetlands. Duck hunters are not hunting because there are no ponds. Need balance in this area. Don't want to see trout fishing go down, but need a different management tool.

Mike Kortenhof – Wildlife Services had detailed reports, but TU did not have any figures on the number of beaver they trap.

John – updated folks on the meeting in 2010, US Wildlife Services has superb records and keep track of everything. Internally, department was trapping beaver – and they didn't know how many beaver and otter we we're taking. Wildlife Services is working at the request of the department – if there is an issued with wildlife services it should fall back on the department. Will try and work on that.

Mike – concerned TU was trapping other streams, maybe not classified as class 1.

John – need to clean this up and figure out who is doing what.

Dan- on coldwater streams, are you only going in on coldwater streams?

Jason – working on streams laid out by fisheries management. Have been in maintenance phase for quite some years. Maintenance is done from the spring to fall and managed as a free flowing system.

Dan – do you have record of incidental rate of otter to beaver – is dependent on the year and water levels. Over the last few years – have recorded when and where they set – and if the otter catch is greater or lower.

Jason – only trap when beaver are present, not blind sets. Not intent to catch everything – intent is to keep it free flowing. No purpose or benefit to wildlife services to catch incidentals.

Ralph – time period to new management plan…are you going to set in a 5 year review? Is that going to be part of it?

John – it might be part of it- wording will allow for flexibility and allow changes to be made. Co. Forests have found a 10 plan was too overwhelming – when you finish the plan, it's time to start the process again. Will try to identify more concerns about the ecosystem and public input.

Ralph – maybe two years would be better. No beaver left in the northeast. If there is a problem after the plan is in place, is there a way to change it before the 10 years are up…need to have flexibility and react before it becomes a bigger problem.

John – a plan is a plan. The beauty of WM – we have an advisory committee that reviews issues yearly. John mentioned ACT 21 – will extend the time to make rule changes to up to 4 years. We're going to implode on the North American model of Conservation.

Ralph – could you have a fluctuation point? Way to circumvent the process? Develop something in plan to avoid going through this procedure?

John – right now ACT 21 is the law of the land. Education is the other thing we need to work on. Need to educate others on the tremendous value of beaver.

Dave – one of the problems we have with the current management plan is it's one-sided. If we make recommendations outside of the current plan, we get shut down. Plan itself needs to have flexibility and multiple management focuses. Try to have initial rules written the first go around. Management flexibility to allow for adaptive management.

Laurie - Spring trappers meeting in 2010 – hasn't even started- don't have to have ACT 21 to change every year. Shouldn't have to change it all the time.

Aaron – does anyone have comment on wolves, number are up and now we are seeing a decrease in beaver?

John – Adrian W. reported last July that 3 different studies suggest wolves eat large amounts of beaver. Another good reason to manage wolves.

Sue – has not seen a decrease in beaver where there are lots of wolves.

Jim – comment on beaver and food. Reproduction is higher when there is more food. Very important.

Mike K – you estimate colony population, how does that work?

Dave – we don't estimate the size of each colony – average size in around 5.5 beaver per colony. Need additional research to refine population techniques. Midwest research is in the ball park. Survey counts the colonies and uses that to determine number.

Mike K – might be something else causing the decrease in the population. Disease? Wolves?

Dave – no current research on beaver. Room for more research.

John G – is question on survey – research is funded by license fees. Can you identify the specific means that supports research?

Dave – federal funding comes from PR funds. Portion goes to research. Two Senators had funding allocated to look specifically at beaver research. Trapping license does not cover much of research. Most funding – our time is a match for federal funding.

Meeting Adjourned – 8:03 PM