**Notes from Beaver Task Force**

**Wausau, WI**

**January 8, 2014**

Attendance:

Brad Koele

Heather Stricker

Jean Gillen

Steve Avelallemant

Brian Stemper

Kurt Waterstradt

Jason Suckow

Sue Reineke

Bob Manwell

John Olson

Bob Obma

David Swanson

Todd Naas

Kevin Kleinschmidt

Ed Harvey

Jerry Knuth

Bill Vander Zouwen

Rick Stadelman

Matthew Mitro

Robert Rolley

Richard Clark

Dave MacFarland

Deb Beyer (non-member, facilitator)

Geriann Albers (non-member, notetaker)

Bullet points are the actions that need to be taken to adjust the draft of the narrative portion of the plan.

Meeting called to order, 9:45 a.m.

Intro/agenda repair

Today, focusing on narrative and edits/comments suggested, move toward (after narrative complete) objectives/strategies for next meeting.

Review of Task Force Activities and survey responses (Powerpoint – request from Deb Beyer)

Discuss the utility of web-based surveys. Web surveys can be good for issue identification, but there is no randomization or control. Not great to gauge public support. Surveys can be biased. Groups aligned with one view may bias surveys. The survey was a tool to gather ideas to complement in-person public meetings. Not statistically valid.

* Background and meeting process may be good to capture in plan as an appendices. Try to capture what we did to get to a final plan and steps involved. Would likely reference in executive summary.

Delays that have occurred in regards to the Beaver Management Plan. Wolf harvest and emergency rules became focus, so lost momentum. Also had a lot of authors in an effort to have teamwork, but did not really work. Lot of re-writing had to occur to fill gaps and make consistent. But we will move forward.

Overview of beaver management in Chequamegon-Nicolet NF (poster, available as pdf from Sue Reineke). Data analysis still occurring, more detailed review at Feb 6 meeting by researchers. Poster a little out-of-date. When compare managed to non-managed sections, colonies on both seemed to be at about same level and have been mostly static since 1996. So something is going on with the population on Nicolet, likely habitat and not trapping related. Chequamegon is doing alright. Only goals on NF are reducing beaver on trout streams, otherwise no goals. Had issues with structure damage on west side of Nicolet. Haven’t heard any complaints about timber damage. Just roads. Full report on research at next meeting.

Draft Comments:

Two versions of draft, one with all 78 comments, another more recent draft with 13 comments (“January 2 verison”) to discuss with the rest of the comments already addressed.

USDA APHIS Wildlife Services name clarification. What should be used. Can use Wildlife Services to simplify if desired, after giving full name initially.

RR comment about Executive Summary. Should one exist before we have the plan done? No, the one that exists is a placeholder and can/will be changed once plan is complete.

For now, “goals” are placeholder, will discuss strategies/objectives at next meeting and set/prioritize those.

Refresher on definition of “core populations”, because use seems to be a little different than previously discussed. No real good definition and not defined in plan. Will need to discuss management goals and how we will do that at the objectives meeting.

* Remove the word “core”

Key for this meeting history of beaver and their impacts, management. Discuss where we go later. Suggest table any discussion related to moving forward and focus on history, research today.

First paragraph was re-written and seems like a strange way to start an introduction.

Suggestion was to not have a background and intro, but make one section. There was a comment that we should not setup a “pro” vs. “anti” into the first paragraph. Wound up being an acknowledgement section.

* Suggest delete first paragraph of intro or potentially move to the end of the intro. Also could potentially move to goal section.

Seems like 1-8 are goals and not an intro or background. Can see where it comes from, but seems more like goals going forward, not an intro.

“Native” trout question. Need to decide whether native is just brook or includes naturalized trout and decide where stock trout fit in.

* Just say “healthy trout” delete “native”

For number three, instead of “rare resources” expand to include other areas where damage can occur and say “natural resources”. The concern with that is public roads, private property natural resources. Maybe say “important natural resources”. Concern that if get too general, like “natural resources” any beaver anywhere can be eliminated for any reason and there needs to be some kind of protections. Some of those concerns are covered by 1. One suggestion was rather than list everything that could be damaged, compromise and say “continued protection, minimally, of “…list already have.

* Change “rare resource” to “important resources” to include other important resources, without getting too broad.

Brian Stemper comment on concern with Big River (Mississippi) remains, but relates to objectives meeting. (Will there be a numeric goal by zone? Mississippi a concern, discussed other plans had numbers and were tough to deal with).

Mission and goals last paragraph is same list as 1-8 on previous page.

* To minimize redundancy, suggest remove last paragraph.

Biology section, disease outbreaks, going to add in severe disease outbreaks. Providing additional sentence to give more documentation of Wisconsin outbreaks. “significant” to one person may not be significant to another. For historical purposes, that information is good to know. WH tried to have good background in the plan, but narrowed down and broke it up to better fit plan.

* Provide additional sentence documenting disease outbreaks in beaver in Wisconsin (RR)

Habitat suitability have flagged places we need citations. This text from John Gillen, need full citation in a few spots and will get from him.

* Get needed missing citations (JG)

Changed “volume” to “acreage” – “acreage” seems more important and relevant.

Environmental Impacts section added two sentences to provide more balance.

* Remove adjective “amazing” before “engineers”

Comments on this section, JS said too positive, HS said too negative. Just needs to be balanced.

RR summarized studies on beaver (pages 12-13) and rather that pull all citations, list and say “brief summary to follow?” Purist says find original documents and look up and cite, but for expedition, summarized 2 review papers. For expediency didn’t cite every study, but need to state that the paragraphs and a summary of two review papers. Should we insert all of them/number? For purposes of this document to review reviews is fine. May be worth looking for things that have been published since these were finalized to see if anything additional exists. Not a published review paper, so approach taken is fine. Readability would say less technical reference would be better, as long as we make it clear.

* Indenting paragraphs to show part of summary and say “are summarized below”

Fisheries moved back to damage. Should it be moved to environmental impacts? Sufficient body associated with fisheries, but have as separate subsection at end with beaver/trout rather than try to weave in. Expand beyond trout and say impacts on coldwater resouces, which would include trout and also allow for broadening. Will MM write a subsection? Take pieces of already written and move into environmental impacts, but keep bulk and not repeat in damage section. Maybe could even reference damage section in this section. Species richness isn’t good in coldwater for instance. This would be a good place to have that information.

* MM and RR will work on adding a coldwater resources section into the environmental impacts

Western states doesn’t talk about stream temps, says because of gradients beaver are beneficial. Maybe make clear when discussing western studies (add citations) that gradients and western beaver/trout interactions, not the same as midwest/east interactions. “coldwater temps are limiting” does that mean temps are too cold, so warming provided is beneficial? Think that was the meaning in the papers.

* Clarify meaning of “cold water limiting” in western states. The too cold temperature of the water is limiting.

Beaver may alter density/distribution of species instead of fish are tolerant of beavers in those areas. Alter is neutral word. Can say “change” as alternative. Makes it sound like a beaver activity, though, when it’s the fish’s reaction.

* Make sure density/distribution and beaver/trout interactions is neutral in the summary

Seems a little light in impacts on wildlife. Largely beaver ponds which replicate wetland conditions. May not be research on beaver pond/wildlife impacts, but should be on wetland/wildlife impacts. Should include what type of wetlands beaver create and those impacts on wildlife. Need references, though. Need to keep moving forward and not spend hours looking for citations. Anything generally about value of wetlands to wildlife, floodplain benefits, etc., could be included. Some already in the plan in top of section. Must also include negative impacts like killing cedar swamps, too, then. Beaver create many types of wetlands, humans create one wetland type. More beneficial because of diversity of types, then human-created ponds. Would like a statement related to that. There is an economic study that identifies 10 of 22 values of wetlands. But economics, not ecological, so that’s later on. How come we don’t have more emphasis on value of wetlands? Difficult to find good research here, but do have one additional study to include on that topic.

* Add additional citation suggested by Heather Stricker

MM comment about needing a reference on beaver temps/trout and clarification, adjusted. There is conflicting information about whether they increase temp at all and that should be reflected as well. Will include in new subsection discussed above. Some of that info is in there, too, just need to decide where they belong.

Economic impacts section, everyone should have two reports referenced, one is a highlights version of a longer study (NorthStar Trout study, full version available from G. Albers or R. Rolley).

Two tables in back that overlapped, made into one table available as handout. Numbers cited do work out once include all the numbers.

* Appendix 3, Ron Eckstein, not Rock
* “Positive ecosystem benefits” line, wondering if positive is putting spin. Should say “economic benefits of ecosystem services” to be neutral. Page 14.

As placeholder added an estimate of acres of wetlands colonies create, use economics to estimate monetary value of those wetlands. Something JO did, not from study. Need scientific basis for estimates. Likely a lit search will yield an estimate? Will vary by habitat type, location, etc. May make general statements, but probably can’t come up with numbers.

* Page 15, will clean up the “5 acres economics” section. Good to quantify if possible, but must be science based. Remove “at little or no cost” (JO, RR)

Last few sentences of “limited” paragraph on page 14 are too definitive. Add qualifiers.

* “Beaver trapping provide service to local communities” and following too definitive. Need “can” or “may” in those sentences

A paragraph was omitted somewhere. Beaver activity on coldwater streams has been eliminated between Dec. and Jan versions. Did it get moved? Does that paragraph need to be there, as paragraph before enumerates those things. Easy to quantify investment from trout stamps, but was there beaver control, segments, miles, would be complicated and long. Citation related to investment (trout stamp account annually) may be sufficient. Never saw the suggestion to remove, so just curious why it was eliminated. Paragraph remaining address those impacts. Thought it was important to setup NorthStar study. Can add statement related to investment as an intro to that last paragraph? What component of financial investment is on waters may be important, but difficult to parse out. Would have to disentangle to control beaver funds from funds used for other activities.

* Can add statement related to investment (Trout Stamp, etc.) as an intro to that last paragraph of the economics section, with focus on the northern region. (SA)

Driftless area study needs to be qualified. Destination fishery, but not where majority of beaver management are happening so economics in Forest County vs. Vernon County is not same and where control work occurs varies so makes this study seems misleading.

* Clarify NorthStar study economic impacts in Driftless area vs. beaver damage control in the north

Cultural Considerations: More tribes exist than currently referenced, good to reflect diversity that may occur. Do we need list of tribes in a Beaver Management Plan as suggested? As not listing every interested party, don’t necessarily see value. HS doesn’t think it’s necessary. Add perspectives from Ho-Chuck and should cover all tribes. There was a comment the “Great Lakes tribes” doesn’t apply, but if used in a regional context does apply, as just mean all tribes in that region, not the tribes of the great lakes.

* Include Karen Karash’s draft statement on cultural significance to Ho-Chuck peoples. Change to “tribes currently in the Great Lakes Region” to clear up confusion and be inclusive.

History of beaver. Jan 2 version some things out of chronological order, may need to move things around to make them more clear and chronological consistency. Rearrangement is a good parse historically, just need to get dates in line.

* Last sentence in second paragraph, says “fewer than 500 individuals”, needs to say “fewer than 500 beaver” to not confuse with peoples.
* Second paragraph on what’s on paper (Jan 2 verison), says “this woodland culture” on page 17, may need to say “these woodland cultures” as not everyone was in the woods. See what Karen adds on this topic, but may need to clarify.
* Make history chronological
* “history of beavers”, should say “history of beaver populations and beaver management”

1990 Plan section, moved it to history potion.

* Plan accomplishments “became official management direction of Department” should be removed.
* Make more neutral accomplishments.

How did accomplishment rankings take place? Whether they were done or not. We had some beaver assessment needs, figured out what had been done and what had not. That’s how these fell out. Is there an opportunity to change order? For example, switch 3 and 4 from moderate to significant accomplishments? May make sense to look for recommended implementation from 1990 plan and put whether implemented or not. Maybe take ones present. Was suggested to have appendix of 1990 plan. Plan already really long, best to say big items that were accomplished and not accomplished. No ranking. Plan largely said reduce beavers in A and B, and we did that.

* Generalize “accomplishments” or “recommendations implemented” and leave at that (bullet), don’t rank for 1990 Plan section. List what did not happen as “recommendations not implemented”.
* Combine under “modest accomplishments” 3 and 4 as basically the same.

MM comment, currently just list projects, but currently no summary of research projects. Should we have summary? A lot of the results of the research are in other parts of the plan. Didn’t want to be redundant, so with history of research section, just attempted to list studies so not repeating what is elsewhere. Difficult to write, not sure if it works or not. Suggestion to drop section if studies are all covered somewhere else. Original intent was this would set up future research needs. In objectives, one of the strong recommendations will be strong research. Without knowing what’s happened, will be difficult to move forward. Could move everything out of other sections and put into research portion as alternative option. The section is specific to WI, which has value, as other potions are more general or broad range. Showing in-state research has value. Pulling WI research into this section has value. Could end up distracting from stories we are trying to tell elsewhere in plan. Some when they see this title, they expect something about beaver, all you see is negative things beaver do. Concern that it shows little to no research on beaver itself. Knutson has the most comprehensive study. Some of that in there. MM added a paragraph to give context to studies, possibly put in wrong spot. Could add to objective on future research to give context for recommendations. Ashbrenner part could be pulled to different section. Hard to pull together every piece of research and summarize as some are not management orientated, difficult to find, or old. No other plans have a history of research section. Many don’t even have citations. Can still do needs based upon what we know and don’t know.

* Remove “research history” section and fuse content into other sections

Beaver pop status section. Yes, 2011 was most recent survey. Due in 2014.

About half of beaver population management is talking about humane euthanasia and handling, which may be a stretch to handle in population management. Wildlife Management may be a more appropriate heading. Beaver in captivity section reads as recommendations and not background. Either move to objectives, or make past tense. Also more detailed than necessary (reference documents in place for rehab policies). Rehab seems to have a disproportionately large part compared to other activities that occur more often.

* Change “beaver population management” section to “Wildlife Management”
* Remove adjectives “knowledgeable, trained citizen trappers”, “talented and trained”
* Revise beaver in captivity section and make past tense and cite captive wildlife policies in place. State we don’t recommending rehabbing beaver. Make any prescriptions in objectives section.
* Incorporate numbers of beaver rehabbed into plan to give context (5)

Forest Management, will get references from J. Gillen. Last paragraph on page 27 (Jan 2 version) reads more as a strategy. May need to move. This part is supposed to give ‘what are we doing now’ to set the stage.

* Re-write paragraph at bottom of page 27 “If land managers…” to be a description of what is happening now.

Should fish management go next, or be in damage section? Should be own section after forestry section. Currently, fish starts, goes, starts over again. Suggest use text that starts on page 37 “Wisconsin has a total of…”. Need percentages by counties. Have been too prescriptive. Should speak mostly to north where damage management is occurring. Potential issues paragraph, Avery has a compendium germane to specifics spelled out in potential issues, which supports that statement. Citing Avery will support. Next paragraph on page 38 “While the 18 year study of beaver…” was put together to describe non-Avery cases. Next paragraph leads into damage. Next paragraph deleted. Last paragraph is a summary. Some concern with web survey done for Task Force because of earlier concerns with biases. Could just go with Petcheniks.

* Get percentages of streams by counties (SA)
* The “complete removal” paragraph needs to be replaced with MM paragraph on 31-32.
* Keep damage paragraph “the agreement between WDNR…”
* Delete “fisheries management conducts…”
* Last paragraph “the damage to trout” should be “the impacts to trout”
* Add “a randomized mail survey of….” Paragraph and summarize findings

Damage management section, state with “various ways to manage populations..”, but that’s what previous section is about. Should separate damage from populations. “Various ways to manage conflicts with beaver”. Discussion on setting traps on beaver dams on private land. In Admin code, so setting on dams could be a possible recommendation for objectives. Landowners have authority to set traps, can have agents remove beaver, but agents can’t set on beaver dams. Only landowner and family members can.

* Replace “various ways to manage” with “various ways to manage conflicts with beaver”.
* Strike snare sentence “allowing use of additional tools, such as cable snares…”
* Strike subsidies sentence.
* Strike “when only minor damage is occurring…” sentence.
* Include we don’t know how many beaver are removed through landowner controls
* Clarify who may set traps in second paragraph on page 29 “beaver may be removed from a landowners…”
* On page 28, instead of “DNR-designated high quality trout streams”, just say “trout streams”
* Don’t need to include tribes as Heather’s comment suggests in damage section as addressed elsewhere, so disregard that comment.
* In first paragraph in USDA section, say “beaver damage management efforts…” sentence instead of Zones A and B, reference a zone map. Reference zone map everywhere and include in figures.
* Delete last sentence of “Trout Streams—“ subsection. “WDNR estimates this saves a potential…” This will be covered under economics.

Where does value of trout habitat number come from? Larry Clagget number. Stream mileage figure. Original figure was busy USDA APHIS map, suggestion to replace with a replacement map that is both DNR Fisheries and USDA APHIS work. Need to reference that figure in another place, as well (SA will work on). Beaver zone C shading needs to occur to be more distinct. Need a higher resolution. Or put what numbers mean in legend.

* Rework shading of beaver damage removal map (to be grayscale or patterned), provide number for all counties statewide, including counties with zero (which will be all counties that have not specified Fisheries or WS removal activities), clarify map doesn’t include private trappers and specify those counties that don’t have data. (SA, fisheries). Remove titles as we will use figure legend to describe figures.
* Should consider listing acronyms in Intro and use consistently throughout, right after table of contents.

Wondering if would be more informative if calculated as percentage of trout water. Kind of confounded with how many streams exist. Is 4% in Oneida, 100% of streams? Used perennial mileage to use damage control in context of beaver habitat. What you don’t get is what percent of trout water has active beaver management. Is that important to include? Most of APHIS streams are trout streams, but often multi-purpose. Better to provide in context of all damage management relative to habitat. Will need to address Zone C. APHIS-only map is not going to be used. Will table to more useful than map? For people relating to where they live, figures are better visually and for grouping. Could have tabular and county map, but will add pages. Fisheries report talks about beaver work by miles, do we need to make clear that is above and beyond citizen trappers. Figure legend will clarify that.

* Move Batker citation after D to B’s.
* Fix Stricker citation
* Table 1, possibly make clear WDNR take is WDNR Fisheries
* May want to acknowledge the relative quality of harvest estimate relative to other species in background section (possibly in population status already).

Timeline for retrieving comments from what we just went through is two weeks. Will then put together next draft for everyone’s review.

Next step is to work out strategies and objectives to move forward with plan. Came up with an outline of how to construct them. We have a working list of those that were submitted, and those developed by Research and WM so far. This is a starting point that needs to be edited, reviewed, critiqued, and added to. Many of these are the result of previous meeting when people were selected to outline candidate strategies/objectives. There is a funding one that may be currently not drafted. Not discussing today, just setting the stage for the next meeting. Want comments on these objectives by what date? What do we want in the ways of comments? Two of these objectives suggest different ways to go. Looking for edits and “don’t like this strategy”, “can’t live with this”, etc. Also strategies people felt were missed. Work with others in your programs to develop those, at least as a framework to build from.

**Submit your feedback on section #2 of the plan – draft goals, objectives and strategies (also pg #3 of narrative portion – mission and goals) to John Olson, Deb Beyer and Geriann Albers by January 24th at 5 p.m.**

Will compile and have by February 6th.

What about mission and goals? Will this be part of the review for next time? That’s summary of everything else. Page 3, Mission and Goals. Those will have to fit with objective/strategies. Shouldn’t bother with that till the end.

Will re-send meeting notes from flip-chart meeting, current draft of strategies and objectives, and notes from this meeting to everyone. Feb. 6 agenda (9:30 a.m. start time) will have presentation from FS research (30 minutes present, 10 minute questions), update on narrative, edits, and how that is progressing, then rest of time spent reviewing comments, goals/strategies/objectives. Notify Deb Beyer and John Olson of any other agenda items that should be added.

When plan in complete: This group is advisory and is trying to pull in the best data and objectives possible. NRB will need to approve, and for that to happen the different programs will have to sign-off first. WM, CS, NHC, SS, LE, and Fisheries Policy Teams will all review and Administration will have to pull together all the different Bureaus to discuss any issues, or accept as it is. Will likely then go to public review to see if any problems are identified before it goes to NRB. Anything rule-related will have to go through rule process. Anything Statutory can be in plan, but won’t push legislature to make changes/suggestions. Would just be an option for legislators.