

**WCC Bear Committee  
December 5, 2008  
Stevens Point, WI**

**Meeting began at 7:05 pm**

Members Present: RICHARD KIRCHMEYER, JO ANN KUHARSKA, WRIGHT ALLEN, RICHARD ALVIN, ANTHONY DALLMAN, DALE DETAMPEL, ALLAN FLANNERY, RICK FRUIT, RUSSELL HITZ, DENNIS JONES, ROBERT KAMINSKIS, ROBERT KNORR, KENNETH KOCHEAVER, DAVE LOIS, GARY MABIE, JAMES W MORNING, EUGENE MUENCH, MICHAEL MURPHY, LARRY OSEGARD, SCOTT PLOCAR, BRUCE PRENTICE, WILLIAM SCHOMMER, DANIEL SEIPEL, SCOTT STROOK.

DNR Liaisons Tim Ebert and Keith Warnke were present as well as WCC Liaison Kurt Thiede.

Excused Absence: Al Lobner

Guests Present: Dave McFarland (UW Bear Researcher), Ed Harvey (WCC Chairman), Cassie Chandler, Mark Oswald, Mark Maradec, Marlin Split, Mike Arrowold, and Dave VanGorder

**Mission Statement:**

Mike Murphy questioned "other methods" that were mentioned in the Mission Statement approved at last year's meeting. Kirchmeyer responded, "Other methods were described as sitting under a tree, walking along, anything other than a bait pile or dogs."

Mike Murphy made the motion to accept, Richard Aldin made the second. All were in favor.

**MISSION STATEMENT**

**BEAR COMMITTEE OF CONSERVATION CONGRESS**

The Bear Committee of the Conservation Congress mission is to ensure that we maintain a population of black bear in WI that allows the citizens the ability to harvest a percentage of that population each year but leave an ample amount of mature bears to continue the breeding process.

We also want to promote all legal methods for hunting the black bear which include;

- 1) Training season for hounds
- 2) Hunting with aid of hounds
- 3) Use of hounds and bait
- 4) Ability to use bait
- 5) Other methods

The charge of the committee is to help make it possible that everyone that hunts the black bear has a chance to have an enjoyable and maybe a successful hunt and that the future of the black bear in WI remains a noble and well sought after animal

**Tetracycline Study**

Dave McFarland UW Madison speaker on "Mark recapture estimate of Wisconsin's pre-hunt Black Bear population"

Formula: (bears marked with tetra x ribs analyzed from harvested bears)/ tetra positive ribs

$N_1$ =PRE-HUNT population

Baits are .25kg of bacon packed with tetracycline. Bait put in boxes to reduce loss to non-target species 500 volunteers put out the baits.

The basic results of this study show that the bear population suggests that there are 3 times as many bears as previously thought.

**See handout A.**

Dave then discussed the other nearby states and compared our data to theirs. **See Handout B.**

Dave admits that bears do walk “off the map” (travel out of the study area) and we have bears walking “onto the map” (travel into the study area). We know that the data is not perfect. This is true of most studies. In the future, we would like to do the tetracycline study at the same time as other states (MN and MI), same baiting density. This way we would have more accurate data. The marks in the bone show up like rings in a tree with the calcium in the bone. It does stay in the teeth better than the bone. We use bone because it lays down in the bone 100% of the time and only 90% of the time in the teeth.

The total cost of this project is \$150,000.00—with grant money. This includes grant money. There are many donations of bait, boxes, and volunteer time. A big chunk of the budget was from out of state analysis of our data. This does not include other invested monies; this is just the grant money total.

Zone C does not have a defined boundary, so they don't feel as comfortable with the accuracy of their data in Zone C.

Potential problems with this study: bait density, sows with cubs unavailable for harvest, hunter's preference for harvesting larger bears. This could result in an increase in the estimate. They recommend using the mid to lower numbers for population estimation to error on the side of caution. Dave's study recommends that the strengths and weaknesses of the two models (tetracycline research model and DNR's current model) should be considered before management decisions are made.

Dave entertained some questions about his study. Keith was then questioned about the differences between bait box data and bait station information (traditional method of collecting deer population trend data that is conducted by the DNR).

**Handout C is from Keith Warnke—DNR Bear Ecologist.**

Page 1 is the long-term harvest history, by zone. These numbers do not include any tribal harvest and damage, no car kills either.

Page 2 Data shows harvest data from 1960 to present, followed by information by zone.

Page 3 Data shows the hunter success rate.

Page 4 Data shows the bait station trends. This is an index that helps show trends. This shows trends over time. Zone C is difficult because the population is expanding into new areas that that do not have data coming in from this area yet.

Page 5 Bear Harvest permit success rate. This helps us determine the quota. Formerly you could cross data from A and A1 that is why D is now it is own zone. Better management.

**Handout D Proposed Bear Kill Quota and Permit Levels for 2009**

We are only allowed to harvest 18% of the harvestable bear population according to the state statutes. Keep that in mind.

**Zone A** is getting 1200 more than last year, because of the agricultural damage, nuisance complaints. Proposed permits for 2009 are 2580 for an estimated population of 10,600.

Mike Murphy Question: What is the population goal you would like to have. Keith would like to have a goal of 4600 bears. We know there have been more bears than that for quite awhile. This year we are trying to move that goal down, but not too drastically.

Jim Morning Question: What is the chance of an over harvest? Keith responded that is why we are going with the middle number and not the maximum number.

Mike thinks it's too much too fast, and Jim thinks it is about time, and it is not high enough. Keith states they are trying to reach a balance in the middle.

Bill Schommer—too many bears, permits should be higher.

Motion to accept numbers for zone A: Jim Morning  
Motion 2<sup>nd</sup> by Russ Hintz

All in favor except Mike Murphy and Bill Schommer.

### **Zone B**

The proposed harvest tags would increase by 200 permits.

Tony Dallman Question—What part of Zone B is the population low in? Keith does not think that any area is weak. He thinks we will see a steady rise in the population.

Question Scott Strook—I think the numbers from B are way low. We hunted over acorns for deer, all we saw is bear. We have friends who could not hunt over deer bait, because all they see are bear. Keith said he does not disagree with Scott, but they don't want to take too aggressive of an approach. They have been steadily increasing the permits.

Question Ken Kocheaver—Why not go as far as other zones with changes? Warnke responded that Zone B has the highest rate of female bear harvest. Some people feel that we may have been harvesting too much of the female population in the last few years in that zone.

Are there as many nuisance complaints? There was a change in nuisance complaint levels, but not as great of a change in Zone B.

Question Alan Flannery—Stated that if you are sitting at bait pile for deer, you will see several different bear at bait over the course of one day. He feels that people are not really respecting the department's position on management. He feels groups are going to take legal action if permits don't increase.

Question Bill Schommer—Bill said you could have a 100% success rate if people harvest everything, rather than waiting for a trophy as many hunters do. He suggested the DNR shouldn't drag their feet and increase permit levels. Keith stated he has been gradually increasing permits for 4 years. He will take our concerns back to the department. Keith showed the committee that the DNR had combined estimates from the DNR model and tetracycline study when coming up with the DNR's proposal. He reported that they decided to stay at the bottom end of the projections to be on the safe side.

Rob Kaminskis- He baited for 11 weeks, based on his observations he believes the numbers are much higher.

Point of order: Stay on the discussion of Zone B

Scott Strook would like to have Keith recommend 1300 permits recommend to the DNR. Scott made the motion to increase the permits to 1300 proposed permits and seconded by Tony Dallman.

Tony Dallman made comment that perhaps the fact that the sow harvest in B is due to research that indicates, when a population of bears is high, the boars are the first to leave. Wouldn't it make sense if the female population is high, the harvest would be high and it is because the boars do leave the area? Keith indicated that it may be a possibility.

Larry Oscar states that delegates and bear hunters should volunteer their trail cameras to take pictures of the DNR bait stations to see how many bears are actually hitting the baits. Keith said Jeremy Holtz, the biologist in Mr. Oscar's area would be happy to work with him on that.

Al Flannery: Our kill ratio is always higher, because we have more bears, because we are not killing enough bears. Our success ratio is because we have more than other areas.

Keith indicated that if the committee wanted higher permit levels they should come up with a number and a defense for the number.

Motion: To increase the number of permits for Zone B by 200 (1,300, DNR had proposed 1,100) as a result of observations and reports from hunters that the population of bear in Zone B is higher than the DNR estimate of 4,500.

All those in favor: All in favor and 1 abstention.

**Zone D:** DNR proposes a 71% increase in permits to 1230 in 2009. This is the first year A and D have been separate. We started at 800. Local biologist said 850 is low. They wanted to see 1000.

Question Robb Kaminskis—The permits have decreased in the last 4 years. Why can't they go up more? Keith stated that we have to take more conservative action in this single new area. This is a balancing act, and we do not want to make a drastic change in a negative way. Rob states that this is a trophy area for bears, and people are passing up smaller bears to get a big one. Rich stated that A1 permits were higher in the past because of the nuisance complaints. Keith said that he has been trying to raise the numbers. He gives his word that he will react to the data. Rich stated that we have been moving permits up in Zone D in the past years.

Bill Schommer states that people may just quit complaining about bear damage or with no increase in permits and that, people may just shoot the bear instead. Instead of selling a tag to kill the bear, people just kill the bear.

Jim Morning, asked if the DNR gets the reports from APHIS ? APHIS typically says take down the feeder. Jim wanted to know if Keith gets that info. Jim states that people may just shoot the bear if they don't get resolution to their complaint. Wright Allen states that they had 6 bears this year and all of them had bird shot in them, even in the face.

Motion to accept the numbers from Zone D by Russ Hintz, seconded by Dennis Jones. All accepted except Mike Murphy who voted nay.

**Zone C—** DNR recommended a 24% increase in permits for 2009.

Motion by Mike Murphy to accept the motion. Seconded by Russ Hitz.

Jim Morning—You have to remember the zone is large and includes whole bottom half of the state. The permits for this area are low. If you take the road kill, just Chippewa County had 58 bear killed on the road, below Hwy 64. I recommend that you would vote this down, because we need higher permit numbers.

Russ Hintz—You would have to look at the population of the people living there. Russ stated that people are now farming corn, which is feeding the bear. Farmers would have to let hunters on their land to kill the bear. Some people like to see the bear. Russ feels the public needs to be educated on the effects of high bear populations near urban areas or people will not let hunters on their land to harvest the bears. Keith states that Zone C it is a difficult area to manage.

Pepin County—Don Seipel – shot the first bear in Pepin County this year; unfortunately, it was full of birdshot. Ag tags being issued for nuisance bears. He recommends a 50% increase in tags.

Larry Oscar—feels we should open the season earlier in this zone, and the hunter success rate will be higher. Rich reminded him that with a higher the success rate, the lower the number of tags available...and a longer wait for a tag. Rich told him to write a resolution and bring it to the spring hearings if he wanted to recommend a change to the bear season.

Kaminskis— Suggested that if you were to move the season later the bears will hit the bait and the fur will be better.

Call the question. All in favor of the motion in favor to accept the motion made by the Department--8, those opposed—13; motion fails.

Jim Morning makes a motion to increase the permits to 2420 with a harvest goal of 950. Daniel Siepel seconded.

Discussion: Al Flannery thinks this would be a decent proposal because we use hunting to manage our bear population. If we take too many we could back off next year. There has been a consistent harvest in Zone C.

Tom Minch states that people are successful in Zone C in some of the counties, but not on the border between Zone C and Zones A and B to the north.

Rich Kirchmeyer wanted the committee to be aware of potential “border battles” along the northern Zone C border that could be likely if permits are increased.

Seipel talked about baiting and how many bears are present in Zone C and that Zone C is huge. People can hunt all the way down to the Illinois border.

Russ Hintz—there is not enough information out there about where you can hunt for bear. We need to let the public know about what the goals are.

Motion All those in favor of increasing the Zone C quota to 950 and the Zone C permits to 2420: 15 in favor, opposed 6. Motion carried.

#### **Handout E APHIS DATA**

Last year about 1400 complaints 1200 were nuisance complaints. 2007, 1200 total complaints. Keith reviewed the rest of the packet for us as well.

New for 2009, for nuisance complaints, the first bear trapped is no cost to the landowner, the DNR is responsible for the total cost. The second bear trapped will cost the landowner \$175, the DNR will cover the remaining \$175.

#### **Handout F Road kills information.**

Mike Murphy wanted to know if there are any months that are higher in bear salvage tags. Keith responded that there are not too many in the winter.

#### **Tim Ebert. Youth Bear Hunt Update. Handout H**

This is now run out of Madison. Madison teams up the hunters and role models, with a local warden.

Where do you find the information? On the website.

Is there going to be more advertising? Yes, we plan on having more advertising this so people have time to apply.

Is it true there were two days of training? No, only 4 hours. Mentors on Friday meet with their youth a specific mentorship site

Deadline dates: April 1 to May 30. Mentors apply anytime. Hunt is Aug 29 and 30. Drawing is June 10.

#### **Law Enforcement Updates.**

No major problems.

Federal forests are very displeased with people bringing in rotor tillers, who are tilling up the area to get tracks instead of bringing up sand. They did not mind sand, but roto-tilling forest roads are very problematic. Every bear bait should be registered in the national forest.

#### **Guest Michael Arrowood Resolution 200508 Handout G**

The resolution states that people should be responsible to pick up the garbage from the bear baits.

Mike Murphy makes a motion to reject. Mike suggests finding out who the bait is from and taking it up with them. Jim Morning seconds the motion. Jim states the warden should be staking out these sites and ticketing the individuals baiting.

Arrowood says that this is the law in Minnesota. Al Flannery says you are punishing everyone, and that does not mean that this is the person who damaged the bait. You could end up with people sabotaging other people’s baits.

Wright Allen—these guys probably bait the same area every year. I sympathize with you, but I couldn’t go along with it.

Arrowood does not feel it would be an imposition to put up a sign with this information.

Motion to reject accepted by all except Richard Alvin.

**Resolution 370108 Training of Bear Dogs in Zone C**

Mike Murphy made a motion to reject. Dallman seconded.

This person would like to see dog training banned in this area.

Kurt Thiede reported that the Hunting with Dogs Committee rejected this resolution.

All those in favor to reject; Unanimous rejection.

**Resolution 350307**

This resolution was tabled in 2007.

Resolution remained tabled due to lack of a motion to bring it back for discussion.

**Application for learn to hunt. Handout I.**

Rich distributed a DRAFT application and reported that the WCC will get a tag in 2009 to give to a novice hunter.

Kurt Thiede indicated that some of the questions the Exec. Committee would like the Bear Committee to address are:

Should the WCC accept the tag?

Who is going to be doing the selection?

What the deadline should be?

The congress needs the confirmed winner by May 15

Mike Murphy makes a motion to request a learn to hunt permit for bear for the Conservation Committee. Seconded by Robb Kaminskis

Carries Unanimously

Committee: Mike Murphy, Ken Kochevar, Rich Kirchmeyer, and 1 hunting with dogs committee member, and 1 outdoor heritage committee member will make up the committee choosing the winner of the WCC bear tag.

Tony Dallman is making the motion that the committee is composed of the abovementioned committee. Jo Ann Kuharske seconded the motion.

Motion was approved unanimously.

Wright Allen moves that we adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at 10:26 pm.