



## State of Wisconsin \ DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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### Recreational Forest Users and Invasive Species: Looking for Common Ground among Partners

Sponsored by the Wisconsin Council on Forestry  
Forestry Invasives Leadership Team

April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2006 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 Noon

Wisconsin Department of Tourism, 201 W. Washington, Ave, Conference Rm. 2B, Madison

#### Participants

Bill Menke – North Country Trail Association  
Brett Richardson -- Wildlife Forever (non-profit arm of North America Hunting & Fishing Clubs)  
Hank Wozniel – Wisconsin ATV Association, National Off-Highway Vehicle Insurance Services  
Gary Severson – Wisconsin Conservation Congress  
Fred Clark – Wisconsin Council on Forestry  
Kelly Kearns – Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Bureau of Endangered Resources  
Brigit Brown – WDNR Bureau of Parks and Recreation  
Kimberly Curry – WDNR Bureau of Parks and Recreation  
Todd Miller – WDNR Division of Forestry  
Will Christianson – Wisconsin Department of Tourism

#### Welcome, Introductions and Background

Will Christianson welcomed the group to the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, host of the meeting. Fred thanked everyone for attending and explained that this initiative grew out of the Wisconsin Council on Forestry's concern about the potential threat to the Wisconsin's forests posed by invasive insects, diseases and plants. He explained that the purpose of this preliminary meeting was to learn whether various recreational forest user groups are aware of the problem posed by invasive species and whether they are interested in addressing the problem as a coalition.

Fred stated that people who use Wisconsin forests for recreation can aggravate or mitigate the spread of invasive species. He mentioned how transporting firewood across county and state lines can result in new infestations by moving the harmful phase of the invasive species itself (e.g., adult emerald ash borers), other life stages (e.g., gypsy moth egg masses) or other vectors (e.g., beetles can spread oak wilt and Dutch elm disease).

In Wisconsin, there is now a legal restriction on the movement of firewood. Kimberly explained how the DNR Bureau of Parks and Recreation has sent postcards to people who have camped

in the parks, notifying them of the need to buy firewood locally, rather than bringing it from home. She said that State Parks are also using local points of firewood sale as targets of information campaigns. Fred added that California is trying to address the fact that the spores of sudden oak death syndrome are spread by hikers (for recommendations that California has proposed to forest users, see: [http://nature.berkeley.edu/comtf/pdf/Recreational\\_Sept2004.pdf](http://nature.berkeley.edu/comtf/pdf/Recreational_Sept2004.pdf)).

### **Overview of Invasive Species (Kelly Kearns)**

Invasive plants can be divided into three broad categories: aquatic, terrestrial, and wetland.

Aquatic plants – There is an aquatic invasive species program coordinator in each DNR region, including signs at boat landings about how boaters can avoid spreading invasive species such as zebra mussels. There is control work being done on aquatic invasive species funded by grants derived from gasoline tax.

Terrestrial plants – There are education programs, but no grant programs. Laws are minimal. In forests, some species of invasive plants cause harm by blocking sunlight from tree seedlings. Others limit tree growth by girdling (strangling) and altering soil chemistry. Many people don't realize that earthworms in Wisconsin are European, not native, moved in with gardening and use as bait. The earthworms eliminate the spongy organic layer in the forest, harming maple seedlings and predisposing sites to invasive plants. In areas with invasive plants, deer feed selectively on native plants, causing declines in native plant populations. Invasive plants reduce habitat quality of grasslands and wetlands (e.g., red-winged blackbirds don't nest in reed canary grass).

Sources of invasive plants – A botanist at UW-Madison (Tom Rooney) conducted soon-to-be-published research that ATV's can carry weed seeds from one area to another. Gardeners are the biggest culprit for introducing invasive plants. However, anything that transports soil such as campers, ATV's, snowmobiles, hikers and horses, also spreads seed of invasive plants. Typically, garlic mustard will come into a campground, first. Then, seeds are unintentionally dispersed along trails by hikers. Finally, the seeds invade the adjacent forest.

Most feral hogs in Wisconsin are ones that have escaped, but in some cases there have been intentional releases. Feral hogs cause damage to the soil by their digging.

### **Current Regulations and Initiatives (Kelly Kearns, Fred Clark)**

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture has regulations controlling three species of noxious weeds (Canada thistle, leafy spurge and field bindweed), but only enforced if neighbors and two species of nuisance plants (purple loosestrife and multiflora rose). Forest pest laws are adequate, but aquatic invasive species laws may only be enforced as a boat is being put in the water. It would be more helpful if law officers could enforce cleaning of the boats as they are taken out of the water.

In 2002, the Invasive Species Council (which had been established by the state legislature) mandated the DNR mandated to create administrative rules regarding invasive species. A research committee has developed a classification system, and is placing species into the following four categories:

1. Prohibited – species are either not currently in Wisconsin or are sufficiently infrequent that eradication is possible (e.g., emerald ash borer, sudden oak death and kudzu)
2. Restricted – species that are so widely established that eradication is unrealistic, but which (e.g., purple loosestrife, buckthorns, garlic mustard)
3. Unrestricted – – species that are so widely established that eradication is unrealistic, but are also of economic importance (e.g., scotch pine, Kentucky bluegrass, feral cats)
4. Watch – further study is needed to determine whether these species would survive or become extremely problematic (e.g., Norway maple)

Advisory committees for different taxa (e.g., terrestrial invertebrates, vertebrates, aquatic species, and terrestrial plants) are being formed. Informational hearings will be held to obtain input from stakeholders who will be affected. Rules are expected to be in place in two years.

In the 1990's, the DNR Division of Forestry developed Wisconsin's Forestry Best Management Practices for Water Quality with broad-based input from many interest groups. Because these voluntary standards are being implemented and monitored has shown reasonably good adherence, Wisconsin has avoided regulation of forestry by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. These standards have also been taken into account in forest certification (a process that verifies whether a forestry operation is ecologically and economically sustainable, a positive evaluation that is good for marketing).

In 2002, The Wisconsin Council on Forestry was created by state statute to advise the governor, the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Commerce and other agencies on forestry issues. The Council doesn't have its own funding, but because members represent the entire spectrum of stakeholders including industrial forest companies, private forest landowners, state and county forests, and non-profit conservation organizations, it has considerable clout. In 2003, the Council identified invasive species as one of five key issues to focus on, and appointed Fred to chair the Forestry Invasives Leadership Team (FILT). FILT decided that it would be most valuable to develop best management practices to control invasive species for the following four audiences:

- 1) forestry professionals/land managers – a committee has formed and has met twice; the DNR Division of Forestry has staff working on this project (Todd is coordinating)
- 2) urban forestry – the Urban Forestry Council has agreed to host this effort; this committee (not yet formed) will include arborists, representatives of landscape businesses, municipalities, and other organizations
- 3) right of way – pipelines, power lines, roads; no action has been taken on this project yet
- 4) recreation – today's meeting is preliminary; this is not the definitive group

## Discussion

*What types of overall strategies would be most effective at reducing the threat of invasive species from recreational activities? What similar efforts have been effective elsewhere?*

Brigit, the DNR's trails coordinator, proposed five areas of improvement with regard to trails:

- 1) forest management practices near trails (user, construction,
- 2) layout and construction of trails (e.g., the use of local materials, rather than bringing in materials that alters soil chemistry and often don't make good trails)

- 3) hiker education – e.g., you don't need lug soles, "leave no trace" program
- 4) forester/logger education
- 5) restrict trails – don't need trails everywhere

Fred asked Brigit whether she saw any benefit to partnering with professionals from different fields on this. She replied that input from foresters, botanists and engineers would be helpful, and added that trails affect more people than any other topic. Kelly mentioned that since weeds often grow in gravel pits, imported gravel can be a source of weed seeds.

Gary mentioned that the Wisconsin Conservation Congress (WCC) is aware of the problem and that Dave Ladd (who is on the WCC Executive Council) has been trying to get funding to address invasive species.

Bill said that the long-distance hiking communities such as the Ice Age Trail are trying to eliminate invasive plants, but that he is not aware of any efforts to educate members about the problem. Brigit said that she has partnered with off-road biking groups on other projects.

Brett explained that Wildlife Forever is currently partnering with the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service on invasive plants. He said that the consensus was that "an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure." He said that since Wildlife Forever is non-profit, it qualifies for reduced rates of advertising and they are taking a "shotgun" approach.

Hank said that his organization has partnered with "tread lightly" groups regarding the inspection of undercarriages and washing of tires. He sees the need to promote education and citizen participation since the groups don't have a lot of money. He suggested public service announcements, a coordinated TV, radio and print campaign to reduce the spread of weeds. He mentioned that there are 250,000 ATV'ers and 100 clubs in Wisconsin, and their Web site gets 7,000- 8,000 hits/month. He said that some of Wisconsin's membership is from out-of-state. Brigit mentioned that there is a separate out-of-state trail pass. Someone mentioned that some previous public relations efforts have been successful, such as seatbelt education and Smokey Bear relations effort. Brigit said that, even without funding, many groups would be willing to cooperate on this kind of effort. Kimberly said that the Bureau of Parks and Recreation can contact people via registration lists and clubs.

Kimberly said that we need to think about how to reach the casual user and what the message is. Someone suggested that recreational organizations could put links on their Web sites to the DNR Invasive Species Web site.

Kelly said that the invasive aquatic species program is a good model: very discrete use group and very discrete message. Will suggested focusing on the most important message for each group

*What process would best secure the support of recreational user groups in promoting strategies to prevent the spread of invasives?*

Brigit said people need to know the "why?"

Kimberly warned about creating conflicting messages. She mentioned that there is already a decline in interest among children in the outdoors.

Todd proposed that members from each group share with us how invasive species impact their recreation.

Brett mentioned that Wildlife Forever has used the old western "WANTED" signs.

Kelly mentioned that the Bureau of Land Management has an office in Milwaukee.

Fred asked if there would be value in forming a partnership among the various groups or whether the groups are so different it didn't make sense.

Bill said that, ultimately, an organization like the DNR may need to get out regulations, but different groups need to express their concern so the DNR has support to move forward.

Brigit said that we need to figure out what we want people to do if they encounter an invasive species and Kimberly said we have to demonstrate what's in it for the volunteer. Kelly replied that although it may not be productive to ask volunteers to remove invasive species they encounter that are already established in Wisconsin, there is a need to prevent new infestations. The benefit is keeping the new infestations from occurring.

Brigit proposed three stages:

- 1) science
- 2) pre-implementation committee (user group determines what is reasonable to implement)
- 3) implementation

Todd suggested that the first two stages should be combined since those working on the science will need specific information known only to users about a particular recreation and will also need access to the equipment.

Someone suggested breaking the problem down recreation into major categories of users such as motorized, animal-based, pedestrian and distilling the message down (e.g., if you boat in Wisconsin ...). Kimberly warned that user groups may fear that this may be a ploy to reduce interest in that type of recreation. Brigit said that we shouldn't sell groups short. Gary suggested not focusing on the dangers. For example, in hunter safety, there are four basic rules. In this case, perhaps we come up with a few basic rules such as always wash your tires and clean your shoes.

Todd suggested also looking at this project as an opportunity to show user groups how learning about natural resources can enrich their recreation (so they can appreciate the pre-Emerald Ash Borer forest)

*What other partners would need to be present and could help support such an effort?*  
*What group might help lead such an effort?*

Fred asked whether the DNR Lands Division has resources to coordinate this project. Kelly mentioned that Colin Kelly in DNR's Forestry Division has done a literature review on the impacts of invasive species on forests

Other user groups that were suggested include:

WDNR Parks and Recreation (Kimberly)  
Wisconsin Off-Road Bicycling Association  
Campers  
Dog trainers  
Boy Scouts

Future Farmers of America  
Gardeners  
Land developers  
Resource Conservation and Development  
Wisconsin Wildlife Federation  
Pheasants Forever  
Brigit said that she has lists of organizations that use trails  
Other state agencies:  
UW Extension, especially basin educators  
UW (research)  
Wisconsin Park and Recreation Association (part of National Recreation and Park Association)  
Public works departments

Kimberly said that all groups need a heads-up that this is an area of concern, invite them to come to the table, develop message and get message out. Someone said that a clearinghouse is needed. Kimberley replied that it would be better if this it's not perceived as a DNR-issue

Fred asked if anyone/organization at the meeting could take the lead. Kelly asked if we need a grant to move forward. Brett said that Wildlife Forever has previously gotten funding from agencies, has done work on multi-species issues with hunters and anglers in Minnesota and the Mississippi Basin. He added that Wisconsin could be serve as a national model.

All present said that their organizations would support the idea for the project, but that financial support would be difficult. Brigit thought that user groups might be able to donate a small amount of money. Kelly thought that many groups would be willing to help put up signs.

Easier to get buy in because there's overlap in organizational membership  
(e.g., WCC  
Spread by everyone:

*What next steps, if any, should we consider taking today?*

Kelly suggested that we identify grants and mentioned that she can share some information. Agencies, foundations and companies mentioned were:

Patagonia  
REI  
BLM America's Outdoor Program  
National Forest Service (Leon?)  
Natural Resources Foundation  
US Fish & Wildlife Service  
National Fish & Wildlife Foundation general grant fund

Fred suggested that a small group of people developed a proposal for review for by the committee. Brett and Fred offered to serve on that group. Several people hoped that Todd would be involved, but Todd said that was up to Darrell Zastrow (Director of DNR Office of Forest Sciences) to decide. Kelly said that she would send grant info to Todd. The group will need to determine the deliverables, timeline, prospective stakeholders and budget. Kimberly mentioned that this might tie in with the DNR Division of Land's new "Nature is our Business" approach.